



## Skill 3 Asking for More

### What does asking for more mean?

Being able to ask, or request, more of an item or activity is an important part of life for children, teens, and even adults! Asking for more is simply a way of saying I would like another (e.g. a piece of food or candy) or I would like to continue an activity I enjoy doing (e.g. playing a game) or even a way of saying I need something more abstract such as more time or more information. Think of how often we ask for 'more' throughout the day! I might ask my spouse for more coffee in the morning and in the afternoon ask my boss for more time to complete a complex work task. There are many reasons a child might ask for more including:

1. An infant might reach out with their hand as if to ask for another piece of food.
2. A toddler might use the sign for 'more' to ask for bubbles during playtime.
3. A very young child might ask their caregiver for another push while swinging.
4. A preschooler might ask for more crackers during snack time.
5. An older child might ask their friend for more time together playing a game.
6. A teenager might ask for more money in their allowance.
7. A student of any age might ask for more information on how to do an assignment.

### Why is this skill important to teach?

Being able to request and ask for more are some of the earliest language skills a child develops in life! In fact, requesting and asking for more are part of critical social communication interactions between babies and caregivers. Think of how often a baby asks for more while a caregiver feeds them small bits of Cheerios. The caregiver provides two Cheerios, the child eats the pieces of cereal, and then the child reaches out with their hand as if to say, "Can I have another?" Toddlers and very young children constantly build on that skill and learn to ask for more food, more play together, more movies, more books, and so on. Asking for more is something we do throughout our whole lives! It's important to understand that if a child does not learn to communicate "I want more" through body language, verbal speech, or using a form of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) such as sign language, picture exchange, or a communication device, the child will use interfering behavior such as crying, screaming, or kicking as a means of communication.

## Why is asking for more difficult for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Children with ASD face many challenges when it comes to understanding and using body language, imitation, communication, and social interactions. Very young children learn through imitation and are often watching caregivers and siblings use body language and words like “More, please!” to get what they want. However, young children with ASD may not always learn by simply watching others. They may not have picked up body language such as reaching out or pointing to express interest in an item or may not have understood and associated the words ‘more’ and ‘please’ with getting what they want.

Some children with ASD may have an understanding of more concrete items such as pieces of food or toys they enjoy and are able to ask for these items when they want and need them yet may struggle with asking for abstract concepts like asking for more time or asking for more information.

## What are some considerations for teaching asking for more?

Teaching a child to ask for more will require a good understanding of your child’s preferences. After all, an important aspect of this skill is that a child will only request an item or activity that they really want or need. Motivation will be a critical component of teaching a child to ask for more!

Take some time to consider when your child has wanted more of an item such as food, drinks, or toys or when they wanted more of an activity such as being pushed on a swing, blowing another bubble, or wanting to watch another video. Narrow down your list to situations where you have control over how much, how often, etc. a motivating item or activity can be provided. For example, you don’t want to try practicing this skill for the first time at a restaurant when you have to wait for a server to bring a child more lemonade! To start teaching this skill, caregivers should create a situation where they have a lot of control! For example, if I know my child really enjoys watching two cars race down a toy ramp, I can use this play time as a way to teach asking for more. When the cars come down the ramp, I can hold them in my hand and wait for my child to request “More!” or “Again!” A very important part of teaching this skill is practicing the pause and waiting for the child to respond. Many children with ASD need extra time to process information, wait at least 5 seconds when you practice the pause!

Because learning to ask for more can be a complex skill, it will be important to provide a child with many different opportunities to practice the skill. It will also be important to practice using this skill with different people, different items or activities, and in different environments.

## What materials will I need?

Families might need the following items for teaching “asking for more”:

- Preferred and non-preferred items / activities / experiences / people
- White board
- Markers
- Pre-printed visual supports to include cue cards or sentence strips
- For Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) users, be sure the child has access to the vocabulary needed to participate including sign language, picture exchange items, or a communication device that is programmed with the appropriate pictures and words.

## Activity #1 Teaching a child to request an item or experience with one word.

- Make sure the child has access to the vocabulary needed through cue cards or various forms of AAC such as sign language, picture exchange, or vocabulary on a communication device.
- Make sure the activity you have chosen is motivating for your child. In this example, we will use blowing bubbles but you could easily use other activities such as:
  - a. Pushing toy cars down a ramp
  - b. Using a toy that plays music the child really enjoys
  - c. Using a toy that moves or dances at the push of a button
- With the blowing bubbles activity, start by saying “Look, bubbles!” and then blowing several bubbles with the wand.
- Blow bubbles two or three times in a row.
- Then practice the pause by stopping and waiting for 5 seconds.
- Look at your child as if you are waiting for them to tell you “More!” or “Again!” or “Bubbles!”
- If the child responds, immediately blow more bubbles. Repeat this several times while the child is engaged in the activity.
- If the child does not respond, prompt the child by:
  - a. Pointing to the bubble wand
  - b. Pointing to a cue card that says bubbles or a sentence strip that says I want bubbles.
  - c. Model communication by saying “More!” (or “Again!” or “Bubbles!”)
  - d. For children who use AAC, model using the sign for more, pointing to the picture of more or bubbles, or pushing a button on a device that says more or bubbles while also modeling verbal speech at the same time.
- If the child responds, immediately blow another bubble.
- If the child does not respond after waiting 5 seconds, model saying “More!” and then immediately blow more bubbles.
- Continue this activity for as long as the child is still interested. Try to end the activity and move to something else before the child wanders off or loses interest.

## Activity #2 Teaching a child to ask for more with two or more words!

- Make sure the child has access to the vocabulary needed through cue cards or various forms of AAC such as sign language, picture exchange, or vocabulary on a communication device.
- Make sure the activity you have chosen is motivating for your child. In this example, we will use swinging but you could easily use other activities that the child enjoys!
- Begin the activity by pushing your child on the swing.
- After a couple of pushes, stop and hold the swing.
- Practice the pause and wait 5 seconds for the child to respond.

- If the child says “More push!” or “More swing!”, immediately start pushing the swing again.
- If the child just says one word such as “more” or “push,” model using two or more words by:
  - a. Saying the phrase you want such as “More push!” or “More swing, please!”
  - b. Point to the cue card or sentence strip the child is using
  - c. If the child uses AAC, model using the signs for “More” and “please,” or model using picture exchange or a communication device to say “More swinging, please!”
- If the child responds, start pushing immediately.
- If the child does not respond, model the communication you want to see and then start pushing.
- After a few pushes, stop the swing again and repeat the process.
- Continue this activity for as long as the child is still interested. Try to end the activity and move to something else before the child wanders off or loses interest.

### Activity #3 Teaching a child to request more using a full sentence.

- Make sure the child has access to the vocabulary needed through cue cards or various forms of AAC such as sign language, picture exchange, or vocabulary on a communication device.
- Make sure the activity you have chosen is motivating for your child. In this example, we will use pushing toy cars down a ramp but you can use anything that the child really enjoys!
- Begin the activity by placing the toys at the top of the ramp. You can say something like “1,2,3 – go!” and then let the cars race down the ramp.
- Grab the toy cars when they get to the end and wait for the child to respond.
- If the child responds with, “I want more cars, please!” then hand over the car or place them at the top to race again.
- If the child does not respond or responds with only “More, please,” prompt the child by:
  - a. Holding the cars up where the child can see them
  - b. Pointing to the cue card or sentence strip that says, “I want more cars, please!”
  - c. Model saying “I want more, please!”
  - d. If the child uses AAC, model using the signs to communicate a full sentence or point to the picture exchange system or communication device that says, “I want more, please!” while also saying that.
- Wait 5 seconds for the child to respond.
- If the child says the full sentence, “I want more, please!” immediately place the cars at the top and start the race.
- If the child does not respond with the full sentence, prompt the child by saying “I want \_\_\_\_\_” and wait for the child to finish the sentence with “more, please!”
- Continue this activity as long as your child is interested in the game. Try to end the activity and move to something else before the child wanders off or loses interest.

## Social Skill Extension Activity:

Once the child understands and is able to ask for more items or to continue an activity or game, now you can work on more complex skills. This might include skills like:

- Asking a friend if they would like to play again when they finish a video game.
- Asking for more time to complete a chore like cleaning a bedroom or to play outside
- When engaged in conversation with someone, saying, “Tell me more” to keep the conversation going.

### Extension Activity #1: Different ways to ask for more or again.

- When working on asking for more, it’s easy for a young child to get in the habit of saying “More!” with an excited and demanding tone of voice. While this might be appropriate when playing an exciting game with caregivers as they learn this new skill, it’s not always appropriate when at school or with friends. Caregivers can help young children practice using a quieter tone of voice for when they are at school or the library. Caregivers can also help children practice different ways of asking for more that are more formal (“May I have some more, please?”) and informal (“Wanna play that again?”) by role-playing different scenarios such as eating dinner with grandparents versus playing a video game with close friends. Be sure to practice using different volume of voice, different tones, different body language or facial expressions, and different phrases. After all, I can say “Yeah, more of that, please” in a sincere or in a sarcastic way depending on my tone of voice, body language, and facial expression!

### Extension Activity #2: Asking for more time!

- The first step for this activity might include using a social narrative to explain when asking for more time is appropriate. After all, asking for more time simply isn’t always feasible such as in an emergency or even when doing something that might make you late for school or work. A social narrative can explain when asking for more time is appropriate or an option but can also explain how to ask for more time.
- The next step will be to role-play or act out different scenarios where the child can practice asking for more time. For example:
  - a. A child might enjoy playing in the backyard. When the child goes out to play, the caregiver sets a timer near the child for 5 minutes. When the timer goes off, ask the child, “Do you want more time to play?” When the child responds, set the timer for a longer period such as 10 or 15 minutes.
  - b. While a child takes their bath or shower every night, a caregiver can set a timer for 5 minutes. A caregiver can ask, “Are you all done or do you need more time?” The child can then practice communicating, “I need more time, please!” while the caregiver sets the timer for 5 more minutes.
  - c. Be sure to help a child as they stop an activity and transition to something else by using a schedule, visual support, and / or using positive reinforcement.

## Extension Activity #3: Conversational skills!

As a child with ASD grows and develops, it may be helpful to work on refining conversational skills. Remember, communicating and interacting with others can be difficult for children with ASD. The child may need practice with conversational skills including those things that we say to keep a conversation flowing. For example, if a friend of mine is telling me about their vacation and I know it is really important to them, it will be equally important for me to share their excitement and to say things like, "Oh, tell me more! What happened next?" Or if my spouse is telling me something that is complicated, I might respond, "Wait, I'm not sure I understand. Tell me more about this idea." Role-playing different scenarios with your child is a great way to practice this skill. Using a choice board with several options for appropriate phrases is a great way to support the child as they learn this skill. This skill is closely related to asking for information so be sure to check out the Asking for Information Toolkit!

### Links: Links to resources on our website!

- View Video - VCU Autism Center for Excellence  
[https://vcuautismcenter.org/te/how\\_to/simpleVideo.cfm?video=27](https://vcuautismcenter.org/te/how_to/simpleVideo.cfm?video=27)
- Autism Q & A: Providing Choices  
<https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/factsheets/printView.cfm/1194>
- Autism Q&A: Introduction to Teaching Young Children with Autism ...  
<https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/factsheets/printView.cfm/1077>
- Functions of Communication - VCU Autism Center for Excellence  
<https://vcuautismcenter.org/ta/vagoals/communication/...to.../functions.cfm>
- How To Video Series - VCU Autism Center for Excellence  
[https://vcuautismcenter.org/te/how\\_to/](https://vcuautismcenter.org/te/how_to/)
- Evidence-Based Practices - VCU Autism Center for Excellence  
<https://vcuautismcenter.org/te/topics/evidence.cfm>
- Communication - VCU Autism Center for Excellence  
<https://vcuautismcenter.org/resources/communication.cfm>