

# Attention & Imitation: Non-Verbal Imitation

Student will learn to copy actions demonstrated by the teacher. Student will begin by modeling simple gross motor actions, progressing to fine motor and more complex actions.

## Suggested Actions

This list offers some suggested ideas for actions to use in this lesson. Get creative and add more actions!



### GROSS MOTOR WITH OBJECTS

- ★ Tap hammer on table
- ★ Put block in bucket
- ★ Drink from cup
- ★ Roll ball
- ★ Stack blocks
- ★ Push toy car
- ★ Ring bell
- ★ Shake tambourine
- ★ Bang drum
- ★ Put on hat
- ★ Honk horn
- ★ Shake snow globe
- ★ Put on sunglasses
- ★ Rock doll
- ★ Blow whistle

### GROSS MOTOR

- ★ Clap hands
- ★ Raise arms

- ★ Wave
- ★ Knock
- ★ Tap head
- ★ Put arms out to side
- ★ Stomp feet
- ★ Pat tummy
- ★ Slap knees
- ★ Cover ears with hands
- ★ Tap shoulders
- ★ Touch toes
- ★ Tap table with hand
- ★ Stand up
- ★ Sit down

- ★ String beads
- ★ Turn door knob
- ★ Pick up item with thumb & index finger grasp
- ★ Blow bubbles

### ACTIONS AWAY FROM CHAIR

- ★ Knock on door
- ★ March in circle
- ★ Look out window
- ★ Mark on chalkboard
- ★ Touch spot on wall
- ★ Put item on shelf
- ★ Put object in drawer
- ★ Throw item in trash
- ★ Turn on & off light

Student:

Projected activities for: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ to \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

## Notes

# Attention & Imitation: Non-Verbal Imitation

## Lesson Focus

Student will learn to copy actions demonstrated by the teacher. Student will begin by modeling simple gross motor actions, progressing to fine motor and more complex actions.

## Lesson Format

The primary lesson is for 1:1 instruction with a teacher or therapist.

## Location

This lesson begins as an indoor activity that requires the teacher and student to be in the same room with little or no distractions. This action is best started with the teacher and student sitting in chairs, facing each other, with no table or impediment between them.

## Preparation

Find a room, or a space within a room, with the least amount of distraction possible. Secure a clean copy of the *Skills-Based Lessons Data Sheet* to record:

- Non-verbal actions presented for imitation.
- Number of trials presented.
- Student performance (correct, incorrect, non-responsive, or prompted response).
- Prompt used.
- Any additional notes on performance or behavior.

## Procedures

Start with a very simple gross motor action. Many students respond better to an action which involves manipulating an object, such as putting a block in a bucket, ringing a bell, banging a toy hammer, etc. Make sure you have identical objects for you and the student to each use.

1. Sit in a chair across from the student.
2. Make sure you have the student's attention.
3. Provide an identical object for you and for the student to manipulate.
4. Give the instruction, "Do this" and complete a motor task such as tapping a toy hammer on the table.
5. If the student is able to complete action, reinforce immediately using praise or a reinforcing object or food.
6. If the student does not comply, prompt as necessary.
7. Reinforce the student when they correctly mirror your non-verbal action.

## Prerequisites

*Non-Verbal Imitation* is an introductory activity. The only prerequisites include:

- ★ **Lesson 1:** *Pairing & Accepting Reinforcers*
- ★ **Lesson 2:** *Giving Up Reinforcers*
- ★ **Lessons 4 to 6** (helpful, but not required)

## Standards

### Head Start

- ★ P-LC 1; IT-C 11

### Common Core

- ★ N/A

### ABLLS-R

- ★ D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, D7, D9, D10, D14

### VB-MAPP

- ★ MI 1-a, MI 1-b, MI 2-a, MI 3-a

## Record Keeping

### Data Sheet

- ★ *Skills-Based Lessons*

### Home Communication Sheet

- ★ *Attention, Imitation, & Following Directions*



## Teacher Tip

Using a variety of fine and gross motor actions that are commonly used in the classroom will help the student generalize this lesson in a natural setting during other class activities.



## Lesson Progression

Non-verbal imitation is a key skill in early learning, forming a foundation upon which other important skills are based. Imitation provides an easy opportunity for reinforcement, helping to form positive relationships between the student and the teacher. Imitation is also a great way to reestablish attention and compliance if a student gets off track.

Within the *Non-Verbal Imitation Lesson*, there are 5 major progressions to follow:

1. Imitation with an object: Copying your action of manipulating an object is often the easiest concept for students to grasp, so this is a great place to start. Make sure to use each object in more than one way, so the student is paying attention to the action and not just the object. For example, one time you should stack the blocks, and another time you should drop them in the bucket.
2. Gross motor imitation: This includes actions like clapping hands, slapping knees, raising hands over head, stomping feet, etc. Gross motor imitation should be the second phase in non-verbal imitation.
3. Fine motor imitation: Fine motor actions for this phase include actions like touching nose, squeezing playdough and grasping something with index finger and thumb. Opening mouth is also an action you can ask the student to mirror, as this is a great precursor to verbal imitation.
4. Imitation of multiple actions: Once the student can imitate about 10 gross motor actions, have the student follow along with you as you link together a series of actions. For example, clap your hands and then raise your arms. Start with 2 actions, before progressing to longer chains. At first, you may have to give a quick verbal reinforcement between actions in the chain. Ultimately, the goal is to defer reinforcement until the chain is finished.
5. Imitation of actions away from the chair: Now you can move to actions which involve going to a location away from the chair, such as knocking on a door, putting a block in a bucket that is across the room, or giving someone a high 5. The student should remain in the chair until you have completed the action and returned to their chair. You may need to use another adult to prompt the student to wait in their chair until you return.

## Generalization

Keep track of the actions that the student is able to imitate. Once the student is able to successfully imitate a non-verbal motor skill in a 1:1 setting with a specific teacher:

- Have the student practice imitation of known actions with another staff member.
- Have the student practice known non-verbal imitation in settings outside of the classroom, such as on the playground.
- Mix up the verbal cue to other phrases which have the same meaning as “*Do this*,” such as “*Do what I’m doing*,” “*Copy me*,” etc.
- Communicate progress, commands used, and successful prompts to parents and home staff using the *Attention, Imitation, & Following Directions Home Communication Sheet* so the parents know which non-verbal actions to practice at home.

Generalization of non-verbal imitation is a little different than some activities. In many activities, it is a specific word or action that you are trying to teach. With non-verbal imitation, it is the actual skill of imitating you are trying to teach. So true generalization of non-verbal imitation will occur when the student is able to copy (to the best of their ability) any action that you perform and ask them to imitate. Therefore, consistently try new actions in new settings to see if they have generalized the ability to imitate.

## Whole-Child Lesson Ideas

### Hokey-Pokey

Try this classic children’s song to reinforce non-verbal imitation skills. You can begin the game by either standing face-to-face from the student, or side-by-side, whichever is easier for the student to follow. Start by singing the lyrics line by line very slowly. It’s okay if the student does not yet know left from right, or even all the lyrics, because the focus is on imitating your physical movements. It will be easier to start with body parts the student already knows.

The lyrics and gestures are as follows:

*You put your left foot in (point left foot toward one another),  
 You put your left foot out (point left foot away from one another),  
 You put your left foot in, and you shake it all about (shake left foot toward one another)!  
 You do the Hokey Pokey (raise hands in the air and wiggle fingers),  
 And you turn yourself around (turn in a circle).  
 That’s what it’s all about (clap with each syllable)!*

## Prompting

When you first begin this activity, you may need to use physical guidance to help the student understand what you want from them. You will fade the prompt from a full physical assist, to a light touch, and then a slight gesture. Suggested prompt ideas, in general from least to most invasive:

1. Point to the student’s corresponding body part to remind them to mirror your action.
2. Lightly touch their hands, feet, legs, etc. to prompt them to move that body part.
3. Hand over hand prompt the student to complete the motor action.
4. Use another adult to guide the student to copy your action.

## Next Steps

Once the student has mastered *Non-Verbal Imitation*, you can move to:

- ★ **Lesson 9: Verbal Imitation**
- ★ **Lesson 10: Following Single Verb Commands**





# Skills-Based Lessons DATA SHEET

**STAGES**  
learning materials

LESSON NUMBER

LESSON TITLE

STUDENT'S NAME

DATE

Prompt Codes				Notes
V	Verbal	P	Physical	
PV	Partial Verbal	PP	Partial Physical	
M	Model	G	Glance	
PM	Partial Model	L	Location	

Command: \_\_\_\_\_

Desired Response: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle + (correct), - (incorrect), NR (no response), or P (prompted) and fill in Prompt Code.

Date: _____	Staff Initials: _____	Notes: _____								
Time Started: _____										
Time Finished: _____	% Correct: _____									
Trial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Response	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P
Prompt Code										

Date: _____	Staff Initials: _____	Notes: _____								
Time Started: _____										
Time Finished: _____	% Correct: _____									
Trial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Response	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P
Prompt Code										

Date: _____	Staff Initials: _____	Notes: _____								
Time Started: _____										
Time Finished: _____	% Correct: _____									
Trial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Response	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P
Prompt Code										

Date: _____	Staff Initials: _____	Notes: _____								
Time Started: _____										
Time Finished: _____	% Correct: _____									
Trial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Response	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P	+ - NR P
Prompt Code										