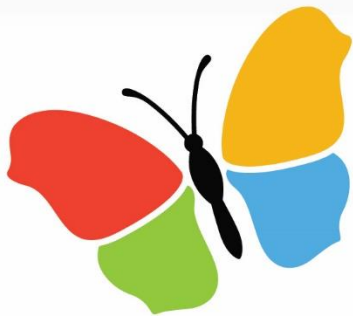


Facilitator's Guide



Take Flight

Empowering educators and
equipping learners with ASD to soar



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Identifying and Selecting Reinforcers

Take Flight Facilitator's Guide

Reinforcement Part 2: Identifying and Selecting Reinforcers

After viewing the Take Flight video, "The Power of Reinforcement Part 2: Identifying and Selecting Reinforcers," have participants complete the activities below.

Activity #1:

Questions for Discussion and Further Examination:

1. How would you explain to a learner's family or school team why it is important to conduct preference assessments on an ongoing basis and to identify a variety of potential reinforcers?
2. Why is it helpful to allow the learner to engage with some items that will be included in the preference assessment, or to play with the item along with the learner, for a brief period before the assessment begins?
3. Why is it important to switch the position in which each item is presented (i.e. to the learner's left one time, then to the learner's right the next time) during a preference assessment?
4. Why is it often valuable to assess types or categories of potential reinforcers separately from one another (for example, assessing preference for snack items separately from leisure activities)?

Activity #2:

In a small group, brainstorm how you would carry out each of the following preference assessment approaches in your own setting.

1. Free access preference assessment
2. Single stimulus preference assessment
3. Forced choice (paired stimuli) preference assessment
4. Multiple choice (multiple stimuli) preference assessment

Consider and discuss such things as:

- Where you might conduct the assessment? Why would you choose that location?
- What materials would you select?
- How would you arrange the environment?
- How would you collect data on the learner's preferences?



Activity #3:

Practice Activities:

A. View the video example of the Free Access Preference Assessment from “Identifying and Selecting Reinforcers” once again (beginning at time marker 5:35). Use the sample data sheet below and a stopwatch or watch/clock with a second hand to record Marcus’s response to each of the items available in the environment and the duration (in seconds) for which Marcus engages with each of the items he selects. Rank the items in order, based on duration of engagement with each one, below the table.

Free Access Preference Assessment – Practice Activity

Learner: Marcus

Date: _____

Staff Member / Adult: _____

- Allow the learner free access to a variety of items/activities (list all of the available items).
- Record whether the learner approaches and engages with each item, and for how long.

Name of Item or Activity	Approached (Y/N)	Engaged with (Y/N)	Duration (seconds)
Lego			
popper			
matching game			
fidget spinner			
paddle ball			
football game			
mirror			
ATV toy			
hacky sack			
truck/car toy			

Order of preference of the items for this learner:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.



B. View the video example of the Forced Choice (Paired Stimuli) Preference Assessment from “Identifying and Selecting Reinforcers” once again (beginning at time marker 13:20). Use the sample 4-item data sheet below to record Marcus’s selections and to tally the number of times he chooses each item.

Forced Choice Preference Assessment: 4 Items – Practice Activity

Learner: Marcus
 Staff Member / Adult: _____

Date: _____

- Allow the learner to sample or try out the items briefly before the assessment begins.
- Present each pair of items side-by-side, and instruct the learner to choose one.
- In the table below, circle the letter of the item the learner chooses when each pair of items is presented.
- Allow the learner to interact with the selected item for up to 30 seconds, or to consume an edible item.
- If the learner does not select either item within 5 seconds, remove both items and cross out that trial.
- It is a good idea to present every item in combination with every other item and to be sure that each one is presented on the right side and left side during the preference assessment.
- At the end of the assessment, tally the number of times the learner chose each item.

Items (indicate the name of each item below the letter)	A	B	C	D
	fidget spinner	popper (green)	rubber ball	book

	Session 1		Totals	
	Item	Item	Item	# of times chosen
1	A	B	A	
2	C	D	B	
3	B	D	C	
4	A	C	D	
5	B	C	<i>Notes:</i>	
6	D	A		



- C. In a role-play situation with a partner, practice conducting a 4-item Forced Choice (Paired Stimuli) Preference Assessment.
- a. Use the 4-item data sheet included in the Learning Guide for this activity
 - b. Use any materials available in your current setting for this role play
 - c. Set up your data sheet before you begin by listing your items at the top
 - d. Have partner 1 play the role of the adult, and partner 2 play the role of the learner. Administer "Session 1" of the assessment.
 - e. Switch roles (partner 1 becomes the learner and partner 2 becomes the adult) and practice administering "Session 2" of the assessment
 - f. Use the data collected in both sessions to tally the number of times each item was selected



Take Flight Facilitator's Guide – ANSWER KEY

Reinforcement Part 2: Identifying and Reinforcers

Activity #1:

Questions for Discussion and Further Examination:

Question 1:

- Learners with ASD may not be motivated by the same things that might motivate typical learners (praise, stickers, activities with peers, etc.)
- Interests and preferences of learners with ASD may change from week to week, day to day, or even session to session
- One specific reinforcer may be effective in one context and/or for one behaviour, but the same item or activity may not be reinforcing to the learner under different circumstances
- If the same reinforcer, or a small set of reinforcers, is used over and over, the learner may become satiated due to over-use and may lose interest in that item or activity, making it no longer effective as a reinforcer

Question 2:

- The learner may not be familiar with all of the items included in the stimulus preference assessment and may need some time, with support from the adult, to learn how to play with some items
- Interacting with each of the items for a few seconds prior to the start of the preference assessment may increase the learner's interest in those items and may spark interest in accessing them again

Question 3:

- Some learners tend to favour one side over the other and will select items on one side more frequently than items on the other side, regardless of interest or preference

Question 4:

- A learner may have a general preference for one **type** of potential reinforcer (i.e. snack items), and may always choose items in that category, rather than considering preference for specific items individually.

Activity #2:

Answers will vary



Activity #3:

Practice Activity A:

Free Access Preference Assessment – PRACTICE ACTIVITY ANSWERS

Learner: Marcus

Date: _____

Staff Member / Adult: _____

- Allow the learner free access to a variety of items/activities (list all of the available items).
- Record whether the learner approaches and engages with each item, and for how long.

Name of Item or Activity	Approached (Y/N)	Engaged with (Y/N)	Duration (seconds)
Lego	N	N	0
popper	Y	Y	19
matching game	N	N	0
fidget spinner	Y	Y	19
paddle ball	N	N	0
football game	N	N	0
mirror	N	N	0
ATV toy	N	N	0
hacky sack	Y	Y	10
truck/car toy	N	N	0

Order of preference of the items for this learner:

1. **popper / fidget spinner**
2. **hacky sack**
3. n/a
4. n/a
5. n/a
6. n/a
7. n/a
8. n/a



Practice Activity B:

View the video example of the Forced Choice (Paired Stimuli) Preference Assessment from “Identifying and Selecting Reinforcers” once again (beginning at time marker 13:20). Use the sample 4-item data sheet below to record Marcus’s selections and to tally the number of times he chooses each item.

Forced Choice Preference Assessment: 4 Items – Practice Activity

Learner: Marcus

Date: _____

Staff Member / Adult: _____

- Allow the learner to sample or try out the items briefly before the assessment begins.
- Present each pair of items side-by-side, and instruct the learner to choose one.
- In the table below, circle the letter of the item the learner chooses when each pair of items is presented.
- Allow the learner to interact with the selected item for up to 30 seconds, or to consume an edible item.
- If the learner does not select either item within 5 seconds, remove both items and cross out that trial.
- It is a good idea to present every item in combination with every other item and to be sure that each one is presented on the right side and left side during the preference assessment.
- At the end of the assessment, tally the number of times the learner chose each item.

Items (indicate the name of each item below the letter)	A	B	C	D
	fidget spinner	popper (green)	rubber ball	book

	Session 1		Totals	
	Item	Item	Item	# of times chosen
1	A	(B)	A	1
2	(C)	D	B	3
3	(B)	D	C	2
4	A	(C)	D	0
5	(B)	C	<i>Notes:</i>	
6	D	(A)		



Practice Activity C:

Answers and role-play situations will vary. After both partners have played each role (adult and learner) facilitate a group discussion regarding:

- What do groups feel went well in the practice role-play?
- What challenges did they encounter?
- How might they use this strategy with their own learners?
- What additional support and/or resources might they seek out in their area or setting to assist in assessing preferences for their own learners?





The Autism in Education (AIE) Partnership is an inter-provincial collaboration of the Departments of Education & Early Childhood Development / Early Learning & Culture of the four Atlantic Provinces. Created as a new initiative of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) in 2010, the AIE Partnership provides support to educational personnel working with students with ASD across the Atlantic region and facilitates the sharing of information and expertise among stakeholders. Priorities of the AIE Partnership include:

- Research to clarify and articulate standards of practice in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Dissemination of information and current research on issues of concern among the four Atlantic Provinces
- Professional development and learning opportunities for educational staff, partner professionals, and families



aie.apsea.ca

**5940 South Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 1S6**

**Tel: 902-423-8418
Fax: 902-423-8700**

Email: aie@apsea.ca