

Generic Ideas

Requesting

- To ask to go to the toilet
- To choose a toy, activity etc.
- To ask for something in a shop
- To ask for something needed in an activity
- Ask for help e.g. to complete a puzzle
- To ask for an activity to stop

Commenting

- Indicate "more"
- Indicate that they want something e.g. "I want the ball"
- To reject an idea e.g. "I don't want to"
- To ask for help
- To describe toys, activities etc. what they can see, e.g. 'I see a boat'
- To say how they feel

Who can use PECS?

- Students who have social communication difficulties and/or Autism
- Students who are non-verbal
- Students who may be verbal but too shy to communicate in a group situation
- Students who may be verbal but too shy to communicate with unfamiliar adults

What is PECS?

This system:

- Teaches communication and interaction
- Is used to teach initiation and continue to build on discrimination of motivating objects/ photos/ symbols
- Most commonly used to say "I want....."
- Can be used to support sentence building to make requests & commenting including descriptive language e.g. "I want big blue ball" "I hear tambourine"
- Is portable and useful in virtually ALL environments

PECS

Picture Exchange Communication System



Who can help?

- **Speech and Language Therapist** can support with suitability / consideration of other systems if necessary
- **Occupational Therapist** can support with accessibility and positioning
- **Teachers** trained in PECS in each department at The Foreland School who are using it with pupils every day

Curriculum Ideas

Story time

- To say what they see in a picture book, e.g. I see ball'
- To request 'more' or 'stop'
- To make a choice

Number time

- To say how many
- To name shapes

Music

- To join in with a familiar song, e.g. pointing to 'cow' during Old MacDonald
- To ask for 'more'/'stop'
- To request a song
- To comment on likes/dislikes

Art & Design

- To request colours/tools/materials

Cooking

- To request ingredients/ equipment
- To comment – "I smell....."

Social Activities

Circle time

- To choose a song and join in with songs, e.g. picking the animal for Old MacDonald
- To request 'more'

Snack time

- To choose food
- To ask for 'more' or 'stop/enough'

Going for a walk

- To say what they see/hear/smell

PECS Stages/Protocol

Phase I: Teaches learners initiation of communication through the use of a single picture for a desired item. During phase 1 the trainer reacts to picture exchange as though the pupil has just spoken. This reinforces the act of communicating.

Phase II: Teaches learners to be persistent communicators by seeking out pictures and communication partners in order to make requests. During phase II the pupil learns to initiate spontaneous communication without prompting.

Phase III: Teaches learners discrimination of pictures and how to select the picture which depicts the desired item.

Phase IV: Teaches learners sentence structure; making requests by expressing "I want ____ ____."

Phase V: Teaches learners to respond to the prompt, "What do you want?" For the pupil to respond "I want ____" regardless of if the item is present.

Phase VI: Teaches learners to respond to questions as well as comment spontaneously on their environment.

Expansion of Vocabulary: Teaches learners to use attributes in their requests, such as shapes, colours, and sizes.

Why Use PECS?

- Simple to use and add more vocabulary to.
- **Versatile** – can be used throughout the day in a variety of situations
- Non-verbal students can **be included** into activities
- They are **easy to transport** so can be taken and used in different environments
- **Promote independence** – a student is able to make a request without relying on an adult

PECS

Picture Exchange Communication System



PECS – A review

- PECS system parallels early typical language development.
- Begins by teaching social approach and "How to communicate"
- Basic skills sequence is spontaneous – requesting, sentence structure, vocabulary concepts, requesting and commenting
- Does not inhibit speech development – in fact evidence shows that pupils benefit from the modelled speech and use of sentence structure.

PECS Golden Rules

The Role of two trainers

Adult 1 - The Communicative partner whose job it is to entice and reinforce.

Adult 2 - The Physical prompter whose job it is to wait for the pupil to reach for preferred item before prompting to pick up and exchange symbol. Then to fade out physical prompts.

Motivators

Assess what your pupil really wants to get their hands on before starting out. What are they motivated by?
If it's food start with that!

Symbols

Photos, symbols or words can be used as appropriate to individual pupil's needs. The size of the cards will depend on the pupil's fine motor skills and how many need to be stored/accessed at any one time.

PECS Common Errors

- Use of only 1 trainer at the early stages.
- Not using a powerful enough reinforcer i.e. something that the pupils is desperate to gain access to.
- Communicative partner not responding quickly enough.
- Moving too quickly to using sentence strips when pupils need to develop distance & persistence and discrimination of symbols.