

“Ready Hands” Teaching Protocol

WHAT IS IT?

Teaching “ready hands” serves as a Functionally Equivalent Replacement Behavior (FERB) for problem behavior maintained by escape from demands. The intervention targets avoidance responses in which the student engages their hands (e.g., hitting, grabbing, or fidgeting) to delay or terminate tasks. The goal is to establish a socially appropriate alternative by teaching the student to maintain their hands in a neutral position. This response can be prompted at the first indication of problem behavior to interrupt escalation and support task engagement. Examples of “ready hands” include placing hands on top of one another, holding one hand with the opposite hand, or interlacing fingers.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- **Instructional access:** Increases the student’s ability to attend to instruction and materials
- **Behavior reduction:** Competes with interfering behaviors
- **Social participation:** Promotes appropriate body boundaries in group settings

WHEN DO I USE IT?

Introduce and practice “ready hands” during:

- **Structured teaching times:** Table work, group instruction, or 1:1 sessions
- **Transitions:** Waiting periods, lining up, or moving between activities
- **High-risk moments:** Times when interfering behaviors are likely
- **Before escalation:** Proactively, not only after problem behavior occurs

Frequency and consistency of implementation across staff and environments is important for generalization.

HOW DO I IMPLEMENT IT?

1. **Clearly [define](#)** the target “ready hands” position and **identify the function**. First, confirm that the challenging behavior functions as escape before using this strategy.
2. **Teach the student to imitate** the target “ready hands” position by saying “do this” **while modeling the position**. Provide [prompting](#) as needed to imitate the position. If the child can already imitate the ready hands position without prompting move to step 6.
3. **Repeat “do this” with modeling then check** to see if the student imitates without prompting.
4. **Briefly distract** using known demands (eg: touch nose, stand up, etc.) **then say “do this” with a model** again to check for independence.

HOW DO I IMPLEMENT IT (cont.)?

5. **Reinforce all correct responses immediately** with praise and preferred reinforcers. If errors occur, provide prompting to guide the correct response. Provide less magnitude or quantity of reinforcement for prompted responses.
6. **Teach the student to engage in ready hands after an auditory prompt** by saying “ready hands” while modeling the position. Provide [prompting](#) as needed to engage in the position.
7. **Repeat without a model** to check if the student can engage in “ready hands” without prompting.
8. **Briefly distract** using known demands (eg: touch nose, stand up, etc.) **then say “ready hands” without a model** again to check for independence.
9. **Reinforce all correct responses immediately** with praise and preferred reinforcers. If errors occur, provide prompting to guide the correct response. Provide less magnitude or quantity of reinforcement for prompted responses.
10. **Generalize** to practice across different settings, people, and tasks relevant to the student. The ready hands position may change depending on the task.
11. **Collect data** using this [data sheet](#) to [fade prompts](#) and increase independence over time.
12. **Train and monitor staff implementation** using this [fidelity checklist](#).

QR CODES FOR MORE LEARNING



Video Instructions



TASN Video



Video Model



Visuals/Social Story

REFERENCES

Cooper, J. O., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (2020). *Applied behavior analysis* (3rd ed.). Pearson.

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network. Teaching Ready Hands: A Helpful Skill. Retrieved from <https://www.pattan.net/>.

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