

IEP Communication SMART Goals

When creating effective Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals, it's important to consider both what they should and should not include to ensure they are meaningful and tailored to your child's needs.

IEP Goals Should:

- Use the **SMART** criteria (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound).
- Be based on an assessment of your child's **current skills** in the targeted area to ensure the goals are relevant and achievable (e.g., will participate in a small group by raising their hand once per 10-minute session to respond to a question).
- Be **individualized** to your child, not generic goals for the whole class and should be within their reach without needing constant help or support (e.g., will learn to understand and label 5 new words per week).
- Have **criteria** that match the practice needed for your child to learn that skill (e.g., PECS requires at least 40 practice exchanges per day, as shown in research).
- Include **data collection** to track progress. This is essential to check if teaching methods are working and producing the desired results/learning [e.g., data will be collected to track the frequency (number of times) that the student responds in a small group session by first raising their hand].

IEP Goals Should Not:

- Include specific teaching methods or prompts, as the goal is focused on your child achieving the skill independently. Teaching steps and strategies **should** be listed separately in short-term outcomes.
- Be repeated term after term without progress. If there's no progress, the goal may not be appropriate for your child or may not be properly taught.
- Be measured by guesses or informal observations. They **should** be based on actual data to show progress or highlight the need to adjust the goal.

Samples of IEP Functional Communication SMART Goals



- Below are examples of functional communication goals written using the SMART model.
- These goals may not apply to your child but are intended to illustrate the types of goals that may be required for language and communication development.
- Each goal must be tailored to the individual to consider their current skill levels and baseline assessment results.

Goal: Increase early communication skills,
such as joint attention, imitation, and persistence.

1. The student will consistently and independently look between an object that is being presented (e.g., teacher pointing to pictures in a book or holding up an item) and the people involved for 80% or greater of opportunities provided over 8 weeks as measured by direct data collection.
2. The student will correctly imitate a model provided using the same AAC system as the child (e.g., sign language, PECS, speech generating device) for greater than 90% of opportunities provided over 6 weeks as measured by direct data collection.
3. The student will persist in independently exchanging the picture (PECS) or pressing the device button (SGD) until the communication is received by an adult (e.g., traveling to find the PECS binder or to get the SGD) who provides an appropriate response to the request for 10 opportunities per day for 8 weeks as measured by direct data collection.

**Goal: Increase functional communication,
using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)**

1. The student will use a communication device (such as a speech-generating device- SGD or tablet with a communication app) to make independent single-word requests for preferred items or activities at least 20 times per day for 8 weeks as measured by trial-by-trial data.
2. The student will initiate single-word requests using the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to express basic needs (e.g., "bathroom," "drink," "cracker") when motivation is apparent across at least 3 different environments in the school (classroom, hallway, gym, etc.) with 80% or greater accuracy (as assessed by response) at least 20 times per day for 6 weeks as measured by trial-by-trial data.
3. The student will use a pointing response to make choices between two or more preferred items presented (during snack time, free play, structured teaching) during greater than 90% of opportunities provided over 6 weeks as measured by direct data collection.
4. The student will show responsibility for their own AAC system by carrying it with them, placing it in a specified place for quick access, and take the device/binder with them when transitioning to other places 90% of the time or greater at each opportunity across 8 weeks as measured by direct data collection for each target.

Tip:
Search “IEP Communication SMART goals” online to find goal banks with more examples of goals!

Goal: Increase receptive language skills,
which are needed as foundation skills for expressive language.

1. The student will increase their vocabulary (i.e., pictures from various categories) used in their AAC by 10 new 'words' with an accuracy of 80% or greater per opportunity over 8 weeks as measured by specific tracking of each word by date and frequency of use.
2. The student will discriminate between the questions, "Who is this _____?" vs "Where do you find/go _____?" (e.g., Using pictures or objects, ask, 'Who is this?' – doctor; 'Where do you find them?' – hospital) and respond with 100% accuracy to both questions when using their AAC system over a 6-week period as measured through data collection of accuracy between Who vs. Where answers.
3. The student will show 50 functional action words shown in pictures and/or videos by selecting the picture/word using their AAC system with 90% accuracy for 30 trials per day with 3 pictures targeted per session across 13 weeks as measured through trial-by-trial data collection.

This article supplements the webinar,
"Aligning IEP Communication Goals for Academic Success".
[Click here to watch this webinar.](#)