



How to Use the Push-Pull-Puzzle ©

Aside from our music, our Push-Pull-Puzzle is, without question, my most valuable speech therapy tool, and I believe it will be a wonderful tool for anyone who works with young children or has young children at home. This puzzle has helped countless numbers of my students learn many crucial skills. Depending on the child's developmental level, needs, and skills, the use of this puzzle can vary. The most important suggestion, however, is to initially DO this puzzle WITH your child. Here are some questions, comments, and suggestions that will help you in using our Push-Pull-Puzzle. (Attention: the Push-Pull-Puzzle has two sides, which will be referred to as the **Puzzle side** and the **Push side**).

1. **Following a Point** - Does your child need to work on visually following you when you point to things?
If so, start by pointing to a puzzle piece on the Puzzle side. Push the piece out, so that it flies out by your child. Keep pointing to the pieces one by one as your child follows your pointing.
2. **Learning to Point** – Does your child need practice pointing to objects on command or pointing to get someone to look at something in the environment?
As you demonstrate how to push the pieces out of the puzzle, it won't be long before your child will want to start pushing the pieces out instead of watching you do it.
 - a. Continue working on having the child follow your pointing. Turn the puzzle to the Push side and point to the picture you want your child to push. It is important to teach your child to push the piece YOU want and not just random pointing. Children need to attend to the requests of others, but before they can respond to specific names of objects and push the one you are requesting, they need to push the one you are pointing to. That is a form of direction following.
 - b. After your child is able to push out the puzzle pieces that you point to, give only verbal directions such as, "Push the ball." or "Where's the ball?" If the child is not responding correctly, give the added pointing cue - but 100% success is important. Give the cues needed to be successful in pushing the one you have requested. (You may also need to help your child develop a pointing response with his/her pointer finger.)
3. **Completing the puzzle** – There are many ways to stimulate language when completing the puzzle.

- a. Following directions: Hold up two pieces of the puzzle and ask your child to “Put in the _____.” If he/she attempts to grab both objects, offer only the one you named.
- b. Teaching choice questions: Ask questions such as “Do you want the _____ or _____?” and either show the objects or give just the verbal question to see if he/she will answer with a verbal response.
Choice questions often work better to get verbalizations from children than a request to imitate words. Requests to imitate often lead to shut-down.
- c. Teaching Wh questions:
 - “Where does this go?” is an excellent question to teach a child. Encourage your child to scan for the correct opening, match the objects, and then point to indicate the correct location.
 - Answering “What’s this?” and imitating object names. Our song, “What’s That?” from our *Rocking and Talking* CD was written to correspond with the pictures on our Push-Pull-Puzzle. On this song, the question is asked three times for every object on the puzzle.
 - More complex questions can also be asked while completing this puzzle. Some of those include asking about functions of objects. Some questions include: “Which one flies in the sky?” and “What do we eat?”

4. Taking Turns with the Scarf – Does your child understand the process of taking turns talking? Our scarf can teach children in a visual way how to take turns – the important “give and take” of communication. When the pieces are out of the puzzle, put a corner of the scarf through one of the holes on the puzzle. Name the object and ask your child to pull it through the hole. Now your child can take his/her turn by putting a piece of the scarf through one of the holes. See how long your child will go back and forth with this “visual conversation”. This simple task can be the beginning of taking verbal turns.

5. Other Activities

- a. Put puzzle pieces in a bag. Take turns pulling the pieces out of the bag. Hold each piece up to your face and name the object you are holding. This gives your child the needed visual cues to improve imitation skills.
- b. Magnetized pieces. Because these puzzle pieces are magnetized, they work nicely on the refrigerator or on a cookie sheet.
- c. Our picture Follow Along sheet from Illustration Station. Use our pictures from the song, “What’s That?”. Just print the “What’s That?” pictures from the Illustration Station CD ROM. Your child can match the puzzle pieces to the picture song sheet.

I hope you enjoy our Push-Pull-Puzzle as much as I do.

Rachel Arntson
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