



Step-by-Step Plan to Teach Need-Based Communication for a vision Impaired Child with Autism

A child who has **autism**, **significant vision impairment**, and **limited communication** requires a **multi-sensory, highly individualized approach**. While visual tools like PECS may not be usable, there are **effective alternatives** you can implement.

1. Functional Assessment

Before setting goals, do a functional communication assessment to understand:

- Does the child vocalize sounds or syllables?
- Can she reach, touch, or point?
- Can she hear and respond to sounds?
- Does she show signs of understanding (e.g., turning toward familiar voices, calming with music)?
- Any tactile sensitivity?

This helps decide which sensory modality is best for communication.

2. Choose an Alternative Communication Modality (Non-Visual)

A. Auditory-Based Communication (Voice + Sound)

Use real voice output with simple, clear words (e.g., "water", "toilet", "more").

Use auditory cues (e.g., jingles for routines, or different tones for yes/no).

Introduce single word request training with consistent auditory prompts.

B. Tactile-Based Communication

If her hearing is good but vision is impaired:

- **Tangible Symbol Systems:** Use real objects or parts of objects (e.g., a spoon for "food", a small piece of cloth for "bath", a bottle cap for "water").



- Teach the child to feel the object symbol and associate it with an action.
- Keep these symbols consistent and high-contrast in texture.

C. Voice Output Devices with Auditory Scanning (Advanced)

Devices like GoTalk or Step-by-Step Communicator with auditory scanning can be introduced if she learns to make consistent choices.

You say the options ("Want water?", "Want snack?"), and she presses a switch to indicate a choice.

Therapy Goals

◊ Goal 1: Requesting Basic Needs (Tactile or Auditory Cue)

Short-Term Goal:

Child will learn to request 3 basic needs (e.g., water, food, toilet) using tactile symbols with physical guidance in 4 out of 5 opportunities.

Long-Term Goal:

Child will independently use object-based or auditory-based communication to express at least 5 core needs.

◊ Goal 2: Auditory Discrimination Training

Short-Term Goal:

Child will show a consistent response (e.g., turn head, reach out, smile) to familiar auditory cues for common activities within 3 months.

◊ Goal 3: Build Turn-Taking and Response Behavior

Short-Term Goal:

Child will respond to name, touch cues, or familiar voices during structured interaction with physical prompting in 4/5 sessions.

Tips for Teaching Communication

- Start with hand-under-hand prompting rather than hand-over-hand, to respect autonomy.
- Keep routine-based teaching: pair symbols or sound cues with everyday tasks (bath time, meal time).



- Use scented items (if tactile is limited): for example, lemon for food time, rose for bath time.
- Reinforce every small attempt to communicate—be it a gesture, vocalization, or touch.

Recommended Tools

Tool	Description
Tangible Symbols Kit	DIY or ready-made object symbols
Auditory Scanning Device	Step-by-Step Communicator or GoTalk
Tactile Schedule Book	For daily routines using textures
Voice Cues + Music	Consistent songs/sounds for daily activities

Team Involvement

- SLP (Speech Therapist): To guide AAC alternatives.
- OT: To support sensory integration and fine motor training.
- Special Educator: To align daily routines with communication goals.
- Family Training: To generalize skills at home.

Please feel free to connect with me at +91-7021954379 if you need further guidance and support.

Regards,
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