

# TEACHING NEW BEHAVIORS

*Social Skills, Classroom or Playground Desirable Behavior Conflict Resolution, etc.*

There are four basic steps to follow when teaching any new behaviors:

1. **Modeling:**  
Students are shown examples of competent use of the behavior;
2. **Role-Playing:**  
Students are requested to practice the behavior;
3. **Performance Feedback:**  
Students are provided with constructive feedback regarding the adequacy of their performance;
4. **Generalization and Maintenance:**  
Students are encouraged to use their newly learned behaviors in many settings. Support in the classroom, at home, and in peer groups optimizes outcomes.

*Each step is discussed below:*

## **Modeling** “learning by imitation”

Characteristics of the selected models:

- a. Skilled at the behavior
- b. High status with peers
- c. Same sex, approximate age, social status
- d. Friendly and helpful
- e. Rewarded for modeling (\*very important)

Modeled behavior:

- a. Keep simple - one skill at a time
- b. Minimize irrelevant details
- c. Use repetition
- d. Use several different models

At least two examples should be modeled for each behavior so that the students are exposed to examples in different situations.

## **Role Playing** Students need to learn to only what to do, but how to do it.

Works best when student:

- a. Chooses to participate
- b. Has commitment to behavior role playing

## **Feedback**

Positive reinforcement for enacting role-playing behavior. Forcing role-playing is not recommended.

## **Generalization**

Training sessions should be conducted in settings that most closely resemble the application setting. For social skills, assign “homework” in which students try out the social skills they have role-played, in real life situations and report back on success. Sometimes pairs of students can agree to observe each other trying it out in other settings.

Encourage staff, relatives, and friends to provide verbal praise to students. Train students to reinforce themselves when practicing a new skill as well.