

# Pivotal Response Training Fact Sheet

## Brief Description

Pivotal response training (PRT) is a naturalistic intervention based on the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) to teach learners with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). PRT builds on learner initiative and interests, and is particularly effective for developing communication, language, play, and social behaviors. PRT was developed to create a more efficient and effective intervention by enhancing pivotal learning variables: motivation, responding to multiple cues, self-management, and self-initiations of social interactions. According to theory, these skills are pivotal because they are the foundational skills upon which learners with ASD can make wide-spread and generalized improvements in many other areas. Key procedures include child choice, reinforcement of attempts, incorporation of maintenance tasks, and direct/natural reinforcers contingent on appropriate behavior.

## Qualifying Evidence

PRT meets evidence-based criteria with 1 group design and 7 single case design studies.

## Ages

According to the evidence-based studies, this intervention has been effective for toddlers (0-2 years) to middle school-age learners (12-14 years) with ASD.

## Outcomes

PRT can be used effectively to address social, communication, joint attention, and play skills.

## Research Studies Providing Evidence

Harper, C. B., Symon, J. B., & Frea, W. D. (2008). Recess is time-in: Using peers to improve social skills of children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 38(5), 815-826.

doi: 10.1007/s10803-007-0449-2

Koegel, R. L., & Frea, W. D. (1993). Treatment of social behavior in autism through the modification of pivotal social skills. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 26(3), 369-377. doi: 10.1901/jaba.1993.26-369

Kuhn, L. R., Bodkin, A. E., Devlin, S. D., & Doggett, R. A. (2008). Using pivotal response training with peers in special education to facilitate play in two children with autism. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*, 43(1), 37-45.

Nefdt, N., Koegel, R., Singer, G., & Gerber, M. (2010). The use of a self-directed learning program to provide introductory training in pivotal response treatment to parents of children with autism. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 12(1), 23-32. doi: 10.1177/1098300709334796

- Pierce, K., & Schreibman, L. (1997). Multiple peer use of pivotal response training to increase social behaviors of classmates with autism: Results from trained and untrained peers. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 30*(1), 157-160. doi: 10.1901/jaba.1997.30-157
- Robinson, S. E. (2011). Teaching paraprofessionals of students with autism to implement pivotal response treatment in inclusive school settings using a brief video feedback training package. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 26*, 105-118. doi: 10.1177/1088357611407063
- Stahmer, A. C. (1995). Teaching symbolic play skills to children with autism using pivotal response training. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 25*(2), 123-141. doi: 10.1007/BF02178500

**PIVOTAL RESPONSE TRAINING FACT SHEET—SUGGESTED CITATION**

Wong, C. (2013). *Pivotal response training (PRT) fact sheet*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Adapted from:

Vismara, L. A., & Bogin, J. (2009). *Overview of pivotal response training*. Sacramento: University of California at Davis School of Medicine, M.I.N.D. Institute, The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders.