

## How to say Yes and No



### Ways to Indicate Yes and No

There are so many ways we all say yes and no every day. None of us is limited to just one means and our students should be either. In teaching our students a yes/no response we aim for the most universal - verbal and/or head nod/shake (at least in the USA, in English) but if those are not possible any other system is better than none at all. Here is a list of some I have seen used by people with significant special needs over the years:

Verbal response (yes/no, ok/no, yeah/nah, si/no, uh ha/ut ah)

Head Nod/Shake

Body Language (smile/frown, look/look away, reach/push away)

Pointing to symbols with

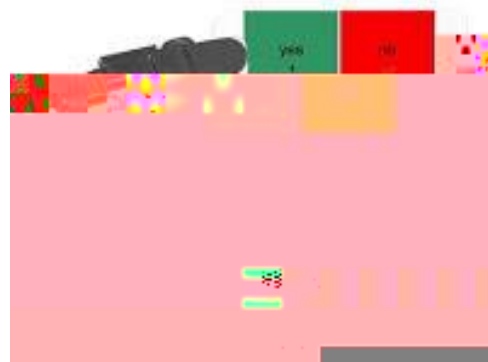
- o Finger
- o Hand
- o Foot
- o Head
- o Eyes
- o Other

Activating a voice output switch

- o Finger
- o Hand
- o Foot
- o Head
- o Eyes
- o Other

Activating a speech device

Yes/no wrist bands - raise hand or look at hand



Yes/no symbols on arm rest with hand movement or eye gaze to symbols

Sign yes/no (or sign approximations)

Eyes up for yes, eyes down for no (and vice versa)

Eyes left for yes, eyes right for no (and vice versa)

Facial expressions - smile for yes, frown for no

Thumbs up/thumbs down

Look at partner for yes/look away for no

## Yes/No Questions

There is so much more in the world to say than yes/no, yet it is still a vital skill, especially in fast moving situations and medical situations. We times see goals on IEPs for learners with severe special needs about yes/no and I will be the first to admit I have done this poorly in the past. Like many people I had a tendency to believe that if we just practiced enough we would eventually successfully teach yes/no. Thus many of my students sat through daily "drill" in which they were asked ten yes or no questions and were given positive reinforcement or rewards when they were correct. Not surprisingly this wasn't effective for many of them.

First we must understand not all yes/no questions are created equally. "Do you want a cookie?" is far from "Was Washington the third president?". Think about "Do you want to go home?" versus "You do want to go home, don't you?" All of these questions are yes/no questions. Anyone of these could be tossed out in a yes/no drill. Yet they presume different cognitive and language skills and different types of motivation.

Some of the different types of yes/no are:

5. Choice "Do you want your blanket?"

- o Choice "How about the blue one?"

5. Possession

- o Possession "Is this your coat?"
- o Preference "Do you like the red one?"
- o Label "Is this a table?"
- o Function of objects "Does a vacuum walk?"
- o Test knowledge "Is it facing north?"
- o Comparison "Is a dog older than a puppy?"
- o Relative time "Did that happen first?"
- o Preference "Do you like apples?"

5. Preference "How about them apples?"

We need to avoid the other kinds of yes/no until we are sure that the student understands that yes is accept and no is reject. Then we will work on different types of yes/no questions.

One way to work yes/no is accept/reject this is by offering choices in the following manner:

teacher: "Do you want milk or no?"

student: eyegazes to milk

teacher: "yes, you want milk." while modeling the students yes response, whatever that is

Another example:

teacher: "Would you like the purple one or no?"

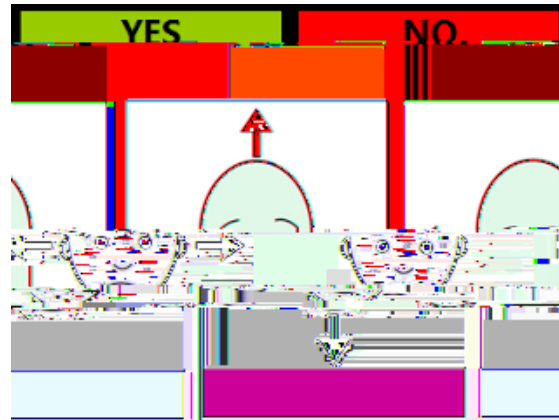
student: pushes away the purple one

teacher: "No, you do not want the purple one!" again, while modeling the way the student would show this

We must be careful in doing this type of accept/reject question that we do not assume that we know what the child wants. A child might love soda, so you ask, "Do you want soda?" and the child communicates "no". A "no" is a "no". Perhaps the child already had plenty of soda, or perhaps he or she has a sore throat, or perhaps his parent told him "don't you have soda today!". Or maybe the child doesn't yet understand yes/no.

HO that is the case, modeling that NO means you rejected the thing

# How to Play the Game!



*"In every job that must be done  
There is an element of fun  
You find the fun and snap!  
The job's a game!" - Mary Poppins*

How to Play the Game!  
@j Y. \[\Yf n\gbc Zf UWdhfY\WlUbX\][\Yf

This game is all about being silly! You can play it to work on accept/reject yes/no responses or something at a higher level. Essentially you do something super silly, like try to put on the child's coat yourself, put the child's sock on their hand or whatever the child will know is absurd. Then you ask, "Do you want it this way?" or "Do you like it this way?". Keep in mind that the child may, indeed, want it that way, because being silly is fun. So if he says "yes" to the sock on his hand, keep it up and put the other sock on his other hand. Create a build up and keep asking yes or no questions. When it is time to stop, if the answer is still, "yes", then you say, "Oh, I am so silly! No (model how the child says no)! It doesn't go like this!" If the child is working on higher-level yes/no you can ask, "Do socks go on hands?" and other higher order questions.

How to Play the Game!  
@j Y. \[\Yf n\gbc g\_]`gfUWzZ bM]cb cZcV\WzWa dU]gpbzY\Wz

Prepare a list of yes/no questions at the level your students are working on or use yes/no question cards (see list below). Decide if the student will compete individually or in teams. Create a scoreboard with student names or team names. Be sure each child has access to their best way of expression yes/no. Using your list or cards, ask each question one by one. After each question be sure to wait up to a minute. You can either play that the first correct answer wins a point or every correct answer wins a point. I find this game works better if you have everyone answer at once (thus none of the students refuses to answer just for the attention given when they don't). Whoever has the most points at the end wins a prize!

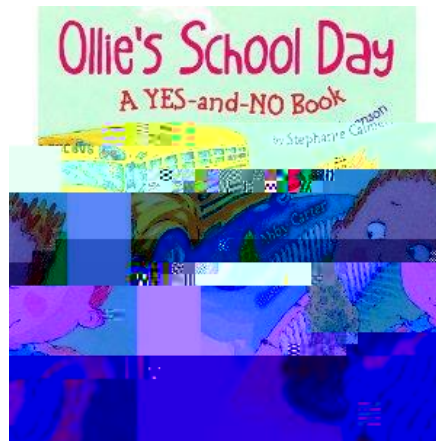
; i YggK \c3  
@j Y. \[\Yf n\gbc

You can play this with the commercial game, with the commercial game replacing the cards with your own or you can create your own game. To create your own you need to print out two sets of photographs of people (can be real people in your setting, celebrities or characters of books, etc). We like to make these

a

## HYMgBc Gf]Yg! DUh: j Y

I gb[ 6cc\_ghc HMUW UbXF Y]bZcfWMgBc



### [Ollie's School Day: A Yes and No Book](#)

- o Go with Ollie through his day making yes and no choices

### [No/No Yes Yes](#)

- o this board book presents behaviors and labels them yes and no

### [I'm Going to Read: No Yes](#)

- o this is a simple story told by a series of yes and no statements

### [Yes, No, Maybe So](#)

- o another simple story about reinforcing positive behavior

### [No, David!](#)

- o this Kindergarten favorite has the adults in David's life telling him, "No!" to all of the impulsive things he does and is a great way to get all the kids calling out "NO!" whatever way they happen to do that!

### [Yes/No Little Hippo](#)

- o a book about safety through yes and no

### [Yes Day](#)

- o the best day of the year, when every question is answered with "Yes!"

### [Eli, No!](#)

- o a simple story about unconditional love told through a dog who gets into trouble

### [Yes/Yes Yaul!](#)

- o Yaul only like to say, "No!" until his friends help him learn to try "Yes!"

### [Stop and Go, Yes and No](#)

- o this is a book about opposites and is best suited for teaching core words/antonyms, but it does contain yes and no

### [Yes, Please! No, Thank you!](#)

- o a book of silly questions







Watch this clip from the 1970 French film, *An Infinite Tenderness*, look for all the "best yes" responses and how the same child uses different "best yes" answers. (The story is a puppy love