

PECS

Picture Exchange Communication System

What is it and why do we use it?

PECS is a unique alternative/augmentative communication system developed in the USA in 1985. PECS was first implemented with pre-school students diagnosed with autism at the Delaware Autism Program. Since then, PECS has successfully been implemented worldwide with thousands of learners of all ages who have various cognitive, physical and communication challenges.

PECS consists of six phases and begins by teaching an individual to give a single picture of a desired item or action to a “communicative partner” who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to use modifiers, answer questions and comment. Initially PECS aims to teach these individuals to give a photograph in exchange for an item, as individuals make progress across the phases (Phases 1-6) they begin to discriminate between photographs and learn how to make sentences. Those using PECS, may even begin to answer questions and make comments. We use a mixture of both photographs and Makaton symbols dependent on pupils understanding.



Who is it for?

PECS is an approach for teaching communication skills to children and adults. PECS is used to further support individuals who struggle to communicate.

The primary goal of PECS is to teach functional communication. Research has shown that some learners using PECS also develop speech. Others may transition to a speech generating device such as SwiftKey.



What does it look like?

PHASE I - How to Communicate

Individuals learn to exchange single pictures for items or activities they really want.

PHASE II - Distance and Persistence

Still using single pictures, individuals learn to generalise this new skill by using it in different places, with different people and across distances. They are also taught to be more persistent communicators.

PHASE III - Picture Discrimination

Individuals learn to select from two or more pictures to ask for their favourite things. These are placed in a PECS Communication Book—a ringed binder with self-adhesive hook fastener strips where pictures are stored and easily removed for communication

PHASE IV - Sentence Structure

Individuals learn to construct simple sentences on a detachable Sentence Strip using an “I want” picture followed by a picture of the item being requested.

Attributes & Language Expansion

Individuals learn to expand their sentences by adding adjectives, verbs and prepositions.

PHASE V - Responsive Requesting

Individuals learn to use PECS to answer questions such as “What do you want?”

PHASE VI - Commenting

Individuals are taught to comment in response to questions such as, “What do you see?”, “What do you hear?” and “What is it?” They learn to make up sentences starting with “I see”, “I hear”, “I feel”, “It is a”, etc.

