



# Communicating in a Mask

## Tips for Caregivers and Educators

### PREPARE CHILDREN FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- Remind children that they may need to speak **louder** and **more slowly** while wearing a mask to be understood.
- Remind children to **face their communication partner** and keep a calm body in order to listen and be heard.
- **Take off hats and sunglasses** when communicating in a mask so that eyes can be seen.
- **Practice self-advocating** when they didn't hear teachers' messages (e.g., I didn't understand. Could you say it again, please?)
- Develop short phrases and nonverbal signals (i.e., special hand raise) to have at the ready when help is needed, as teachers may not be able to pick up on kids' facial expressions of frustration/sadness as readily.

### TIPS FOR ADULT COMMUNICATION PARTNERS

- Use gestures (e.g., pointing, thumbs up) to emphasize your message.
- Speak a little louder and slower, as masks muffle voices.
- Check frequently for comprehension.
- Exaggerate eye movements in facial expressions.
- Make sure speakers and listeners are facing each other.

### UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

- Familiarize children with how emotional facial expressions look when masked. Practice guessing how someone is feeling by looking at their eyes.
- Discuss body language to help children understand how people are feeling even when they can't see facial expressions.
- Adult partners can verbalize their emotions more explicitly (e.g., I'm feeling happy that we get to see each other today!)

*Some information summarized from:*

The Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT) funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services  
<https://paautism.org/resource/desensitization-mask-communication/>

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations  
[https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Wearing-Masks\\_Tipsheet.pdf](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Wearing-Masks_Tipsheet.pdf)

Integrated Children's Therapy  
<https://integratedchildrens.com/masks-and-communication-a-guide/>

