

# Utilizing a Prompt Fade to Promote Acquisition of Picture Exchange Communication

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## Introduction

- Deficits in verbal and communication skills have been found to be limited among individuals with autism spectrum disorder (Malhotra et al., 2010).
- The ability to communicate wants and needs is an essential skill that, if absent, can contribute to maladaptive behavior (Suberman & Cividini-Motta, 2019).
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) can be utilized to equip individuals with means of communication, promote increases in positive social interactions, as well as decrease maladaptive behaviors (Charlop-Christy et al., 2002).

## Methods

### Increasing Communication via Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Addendum

#### Manding/Tacting

- Clinicians established Client motivation by conducting an informal preference assessment between preferred tangibles, activities, or edibles.
- Once motivation had been established, clinicians ensured that Client was engaged in an attending response prior to holding up the physical target item, orienting them to their PECS board (array of 3 visual stimuli) and presenting the S<sup>D</sup> “What is it?” or “What do you want?”
  - Note:* The size of the pictured stimuli on attached to the target item systematically reduced in size (3”, 2.5”, 2.25”, 2”, 1”)
- Correct responding was identified as Client independently selecting and handing the corresponding visual stimuli from their PECS board to clinicians.
- Differential reinforcement and least-to-most prompting procedures were utilized throughout this program to promote correct and independent responding.

### Systematic Prompt Fading in PECS

#### Objective 1

- Once Client was engaged in an attending response, clinicians utilized the visual stimuli on the targeted item to prompt her to look at each picture in the array on the PECS board while emitting the S<sup>D</sup> “Look” or another functionally equivalent response.

#### Objective 2

- Once Client was engaged in an attending response, clinicians utilized the visual stimuli on the targeted item to orient them to their PECS board by dragging the corresponding pictured stimuli across the array.

#### Objective 3

- Once Client was engaged in an attending response, clinicians emitted the S<sup>D</sup> “Look” or another functionally equivalent response to orient them towards their PECS board.
  - Differential reinforcement and least-to-most prompting procedures were utilized throughout this program to promote correct and independent responding.

**Mastery Criteria:** Targets within each program were considered mastered contingent on Client responding with at least 90% independence across three consecutive sessions and at least two clinicians.

### Increasing Communication via Picture Exchange Communication System Addendum (PECS)

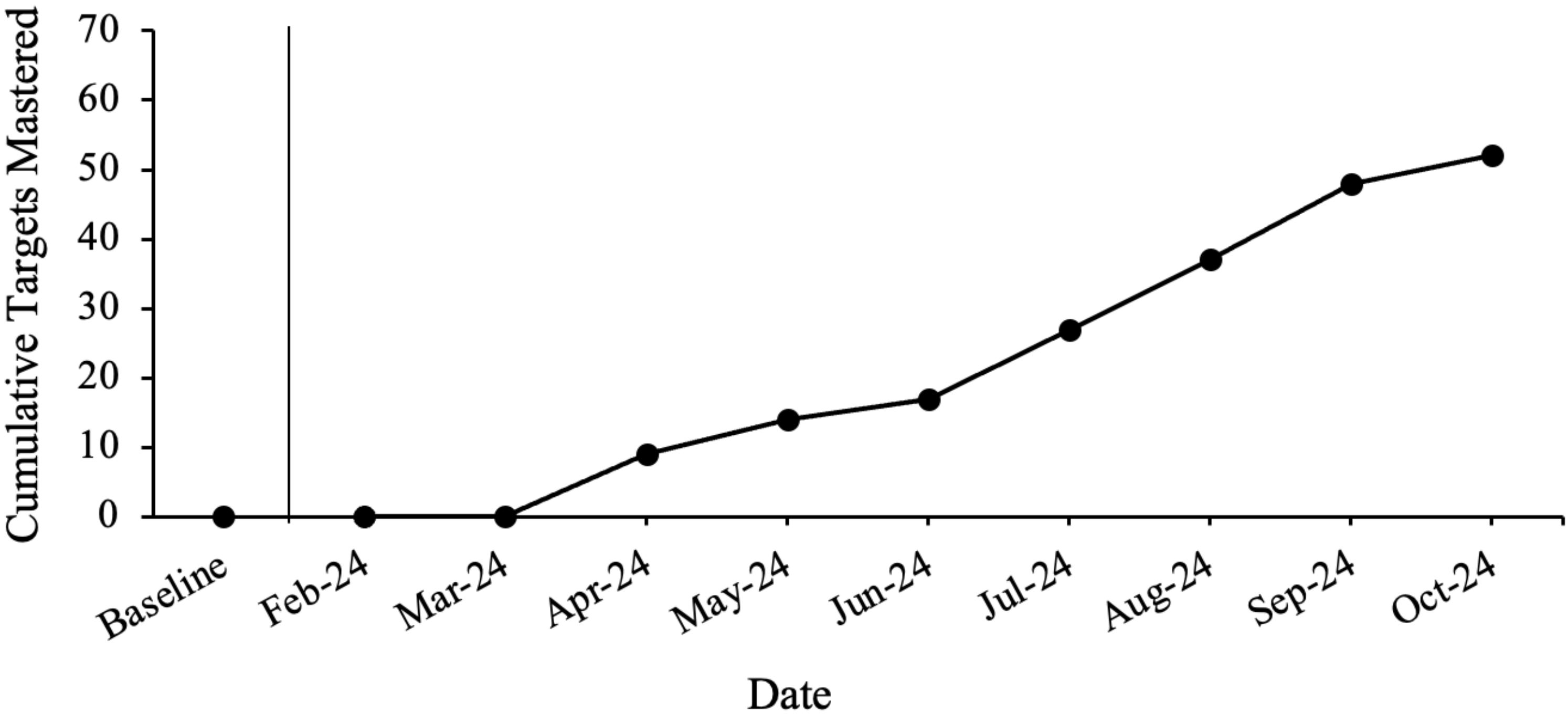


Figure 1. The graph above depicts the cumulative targets mastered within the Increasing Communication via Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Addendum.

### Systematic Prompt Fading in PECS

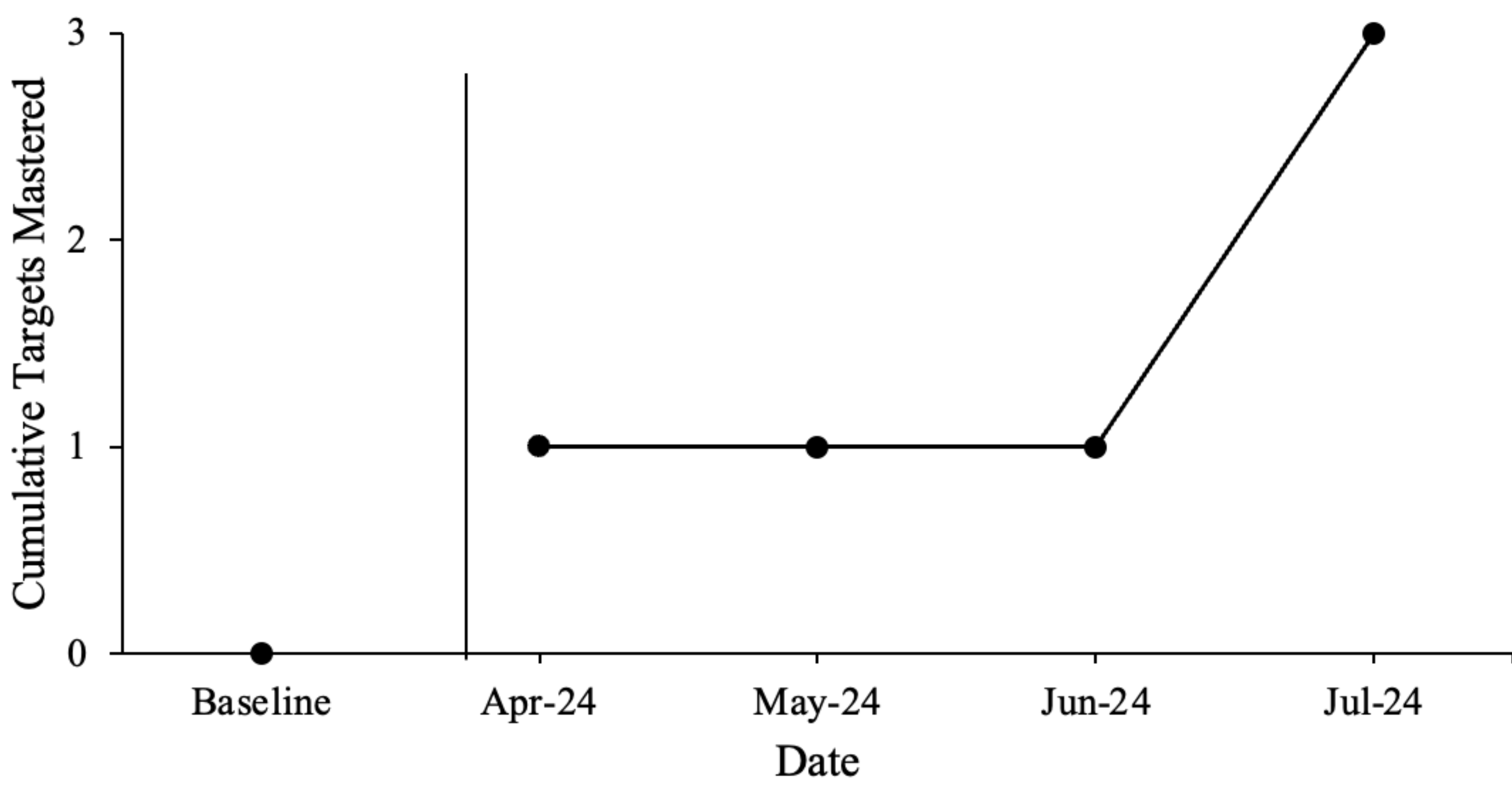


Figure 2. The graph above depicts the cumulative targets mastered within the Systematic Prompt Fading in PECS program.

## Discussion

- Lack of acquisition with PECS was observed prior to the introduction of the Systematic Prompt Fade program due to deficits in Client’s visual scanning repertoire
- Following the implementation of the Systematic Prompt Fading program, client’s visual scanning and discrimination skills increased characterized by the immediate acquisition of the Increasing Communication via Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Addendum.
- Since Client demonstrated mastery of the Systematic Prompt Fading program, they have demonstrated increased independence and accuracy in manding and tacting various items in their natural environment.
- Moreover, Client has demonstrated correct responding when using their PECS to tact/mand for stimuli that were not formally trained.
- In the future, clinicians could capitalize on Client’s newly acquired communication skills via PECS to target their independence in:
  - Manding/tacting stimuli in their environment when the number of PECS cards on their PECS board are systematically increased
  - Manding for preferred activities
  - Receptively identifying various stimuli
  - Tacting colors via PECS
  - Tacting animals and their sounds via PECS
- Additionally, clinicians might consider transferring over to a Proloquo2Go device to increase the efficiency of Client’s communication skill.
- Clinicians will continue to program skill acquisition program to strengthen Client’s communication and social interactive skills using PECS.

## References

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