

Remote Fade-In Guide

Children with selective mutism often have difficulty speaking to new and unfamiliar people (e.g., teachers, coaches, peers). Conducting a “fade-in,” whereby new individuals are *gradually* introduced to the child, is an effective strategy to support kids in speaking with others. Fade-ins can be conducted both in-person and remotely using videoconferencing. Prior to engaging in a remote fade-in, we encourage you to review the [Understanding & Treating Selective Mutism \(SM\) Handouts](#), which provide information on a number of strategies referenced throughout this guide. This resource was developed as a complementary resource to provide additional guidance on how to conduct fade-ins remotely.

Materials Needed

Caregiver

(or other familiar adult)

- **Videoconferencing device**
(e.g., laptop, tablet, smartphone)
- **Videoconferencing platform**
(e.g., Zoom, Skype, FaceTime)
- **Constructive/creative toys**
(e.g., blocks, paper/crayons, dolls)
- **Cell phone** (optional)
- **Reward**

New Person

- **Videoconferencing device**
- **Videoconferencing platform**
- **Cell phone** (optional)

Abbreviated Step-by-Step Instructions

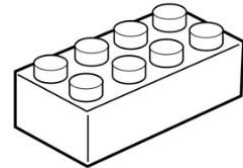
- 1) Set up a few creative toys the child might be interested in playing with
- 2) Set up the videoconferencing device somewhere close by
- 3) Tell the child, *“It’s special play time and you can play with whatever you want!”*
- 4) Begin to use Child-Directed Interaction (CDI) skills
- 5) Tell the child, *“We are going to practice brave talking today. Every time you use your brave voice, you’ll get a check on your chart*! Once you fill the chart 5 times**, you’ll get your reward!”*
- 6) Instruct the new person to join the videoconference

Note: Continue using CDI skills at each and every step of the fade-in

- 7) Instruct the new person to *gradually* come into view
- 8) Instruct the new person to begin using CDI skills
- 9) Signal to the new person that it is time to ask a forced-choice question
- 10) Return to CDI between questions
- 11) Have the new person and child engage in a game
- 12) Excuse yourself from the room
- 13) Provide the reward!

Comprehensive Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1) **Set up** a few creative toys the child might be interested in playing with



- 2) **Set up** the videoconferencing device somewhere close by



- 3) **Tell the child**, *“It’s special play time and you can play with whatever you want!”*

- 4) Begin to **use Child-Directed Interaction (CDI) skills**
- Use labeled praises, reflections, and behavior descriptions. Avoid asking questions or giving commands for the time being.



For more information, contact the Mental Health Interventions & Technology (MINT) Program:

Phone: (305) 348-7836

Email: mint@fiu.edu

→ Once the child is playing comfortably...

5) **Tell the child**, “We are going to practice brave talking today. Every time you use your brave voice, you’ll get a check on your chart*! Once you fill the chart 5 times**, you’ll get your reward!”

- * Checks/charts can be replaced with other consistent reinforcement strategies (e.g., stickers, tokens)
- ** The target behavior for the child to earn the reward should vary based on individual goals (e.g., filling the chart a different number of times, speaking with the new person in the room, speaking to that new person)

Bravery Chart!				
✓	✓	✓		

→ Once the child is speaking consistently to you...

6) **Instruct the new person to join the videoconference**

- Use your chosen method of communication (e.g., text, email)
- The new person may join with the camera on, but the person should not be visible (e.g., the child can see the room, but the person is not in sight)
- **Alternative:** the individual may join the videoconference at the beginning of the session, but should have the camera turned off until this step



For more information, contact the Mental Health Interventions & Technology (MINT) Program:

Phone: (305) 348-7836

Email: mint@fiu.edu

NOTE: Continue using CDI skills (e.g., positive reinforcement, selective attention) **at each and every step of the fade-in**

- **Positive reinforcement:** continue to use labeled praises, reflections, and behavior descriptions, as well as provide checks, stickers, or tokens, for all appropriate/approach-oriented behaviors displayed by the child (e.g., staying within view of the camera, continuing to speak, making eye contact)
- **Selective attention:** ignore any avoidant behaviors (e.g., hiding from the camera, using nonverbal communication), while describing your own play (e.g., *“I’m going to make this tower the tallest I can possibly make it!”*), and provide positive reinforcement the moment the child displays any form of approach-oriented behavior again (e.g., looking toward your play, returning to the play area, engaging in the interaction)
- **Example scenario:**
 - **Caregiver:** “I love how tall you’re making this tower!”
 - **Child:** (Notices new person’s camera on and hides)
 - **Caregiver:** (Ignoring the hiding behavior) “Hm, I think I’m going to add this really long red block on top to make it even taller. And I think I’m going to take this Lego guy and put him on top so he can look at the view. He’s balancing so well up there! This building is super sturdy.”
 - **Child:** (Inches closer to the play area)
 - **Caregiver:** “Thanks so much for coming back to help me with this! You’re a great builder so I really appreciate you coming back to help me.”
- **Example statements:**
 - *“I love how you’re playing with me while Mrs. Honey is watching!”*
 - *“You’re doing such a nice job staying on screen so that my friend can see what we’re making.”*
 - *“Great job answering my question so loudly that Mrs. Honey could hear you! You just earned another check on your chart for using your brave voice.”*
 - *“I’m so proud of you for talking to me in front of a new person. You get another sticker for being so brave in front of someone new!”*

- 7) **Instruct the new person to *gradually* come into view**
- Use your chosen method of communication (e.g., text, email)
 - The duration of this step will vary based on the child's comfort level (e.g., quickly, if the child appears comfortable and continues to speak/engage readily; slowly, if the child appears cautious or avoidant each time the new person becomes more visible)
 - Throughout this process, you should use the Verbal-Directed Interaction (VDI) sequence outlined in the [Understanding & Treating Selective Mutism \(SM\) Handouts](#) to ensure the child is successful in responding to you on a consistent basis



→ **Once the child is speaking consistently to you...**

- 8) **Instruct the new person to begin using CDI skills**
- Use your chosen method of communication (e.g., text, email)
 - The new person should use CDI skills (only) to begin engaging in the play interaction, while you continue to use CDI and VDI skills



For more information, contact the Mental Health Interventions & Technology (MINT) Program:

Phone: (305) 348-7836

Email: mint@fiu.edu

→ **Once the child has spoken several more times...**

9) **Signal to the new person that it is time to ask a forced-choice question**

- Use your chosen method of communication (e.g., text, email)
- The new person should proceed through the VDI sequence to obtain a verbal response from the child
- ***If the child is able to answer***, provide enthusiastic positive reinforcement!
- ***If the child is unable to answer***, use the shaping strategies outlined in the [Understanding & Treating Selective Mutism \(SM\) Handouts](#) (e.g., allowing the child to first tell you the answer)
- **Example scenario:**
 - **Mrs. Honey:** “Tyler, are you building a car or an airplane?”
 - **Child:** (no answer for 5 seconds)
 - **Mrs. Honey:** “Are you building a car or an airplane?”
 - **Child:** (looks up at the videoconference screen)
 - **Caregiver:** “I like how you’re looking at Mrs. Honey”
 - **Mrs. Honey:** “Is that a car or an airplane that you’re building?”
 - **Child:** (mouths something)
 - **Caregiver:** “Oh, I see you’re moving your mouth, but we couldn’t hear you.”
 - **Mrs. Honey:** “Tyler, is that a car, yes or no?”
 - **Child:** (whispers “yes” to Caregiver)
 - **Caregiver:** “Yes! Thanks for telling me. Now tell Mrs. Honey”
 - **Child:** (louder; looks at videoconference screen) “Yes”
 - **Caregiver:** “Nice job answering Mrs. Honey! You get a check for your brave answer!!”



For more information, contact the Mental Health Interventions & Technology (MINT) Program:

Phone: (305) 348-7836

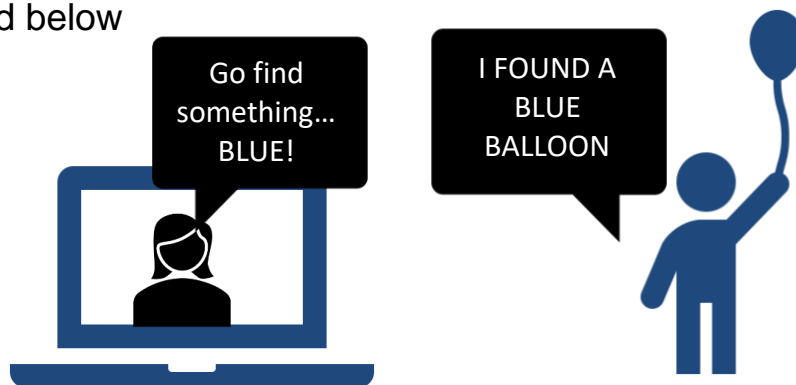
Email: mint@fiu.edu

10) **Return to CDI** between questions

- Both the familiar and new person should continue using CDI skills (only) following the child's answer to the new person
- Wait a few minutes between questions
- Continue with this procedure until the child is consistently answering the new person's questions without hesitation

11) If possible, **have the new person and child engage in a game** through the videoconference device (e.g., scavenger hunt, computer game, drawing)

- Links to interactive games that can be played via screenshare are shared below



→ **Once the child is engaged with the new person...**

12) **Excuse yourself from the room**

- You may either gradually “fade-out” (e.g., physically distancing, becoming less verbally involved) or inform the child you need to step away (e.g., “*I have to go make a phone call. I will be right back.*”)
- The new person and/or child should continue to use the reinforcement system (e.g., checks, stickers, tokens) for brave talking while you are out of the room

→ **If/when the child was successful meeting the goal...**

13) **Provide the reward!**

For more information, contact the Mental Health Interventions & Technology (MINT) Program:

Phone: (305) 348-7836

Email: mint@fiu.edu

Online Game Site Options for Remote Fade-Ins

<https://www.helpfulgames.com/>

<https://disneynow.com/all-games>

<https://lol.disney.com/games>

<http://www.nick.tv/games/>


<https://www.blueorangegames.com/nhl/>

<https://poki.com/>

<https://pbskids.org/games/>

<https://wheeldecide.com/> or <https://tools-unite.com/>

<https://www.highlightskids.com/games>



Use positive
reinforcement
and selective
attention at each
and every step of
the fade-in
process.

For more information, contact the Mental Health Interventions & Technology (MINT) Program:

Phone: (305) 348-7836

Email: mint@fiu.edu