

LEARNING TO TALK AND UNDERSTAND CAN BE FUN!

UPLAYTM

INTERACTIVE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY SYSTEM

Play this way every day!



AUTISM AND THE U-PLAY MAT

How To Use the U-Play Mat with Individuals Diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy with the U-Play Mat

“The layout of the **U-Play Mat** provides an ideal structure within which to teach. In addition to being able to accommodate multiple pictures simultaneously, the unique layout of the **U-Play Mat** teaches the learner to use “**search skills**”.

While most picture communication systems place all of the pictures directly in front of the learner, the **U-Play Mat** places the pictures in a semicircle around the learner forcing him/her to look in multiple directions to find what he/she is looking for.”

- Dr. David Kuhn

“The shape of the **U-Play Mat** fosters an ideal setting for children to engage in one-on-one play, face-to-face with an adult. Our original instruction manual, and this supplement, give parents, teachers and therapists the foundation to **PLAY THIS WAY EVERY DAY!**”

- Dr. Jennifer Canter



By David E. Kuhn, Ph.D., BCBA-D and
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For Play This Way Every Day LLC

With an Introduction by:
Jennifer Canter MD, MPH, FAAP (“Dr. Jen”)
Pediatrician and Inventor of the U-Play Mat

www.playthisway.com

INTRODUCTION

by **Dr. Jennifer Canter**, Inventor of the U-Play Mat

The idea for the U-Play Mat arose during a speech therapy session with my son. As he played with a paper poster and cards, I thought of a “U” shaped mat, created with the child being the center of the play environment.

As a pediatrician and a mother of two sets of twins, it is my goal to develop ways for all children to benefit from the U-Play Mat, and all future **Play This Way Every Day** products. We have begun translation of our manual into different languages and are forming exciting partnerships with companies around the world to create access for children of all cultures.

We are listening to the feedback from parents, teachers, therapists and other professionals as we develop supplements for the U-Play Mat to meet the requirements of children with various special needs. As we developed our educational toy for the general market, many people commented on how wonderful the “U” shape would be for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. We immediately turned to renowned Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy experts, **Dr. David Kuhn** and **Dr. Stephanie Contrucci Kuhn** to write this manual using their collective clinical, research and academic experience and knowledge.

It is a great honor to have **Dr. Kuhn** and **Dr. Contrucci Kuhn**, two well-respected, creative and inspiring professionals, create our first supplement to the U-Play Mat. I hope this guide will be a helpful avenue for children with special needs, in particular children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, to benefit from our product.



Dr Jennifer Canter

Pediatrician, Inventor of the U-Play Mat
CEO, Play This Way Every Day LLC

The U-Play Mat and Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Individuals diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder often have difficulty expressing wants and needs. Some children may be able to point to or guide a caregiver to the desired item or activity, while others may display challenging behaviors which have previously resulted in the delivery of desired items or activities. For example, a child diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder may cry and scream for a desired object because they have learned that others, in the past, may have responded to this behavior.

Therefore, it is important to begin teaching a communication system that will allow an individual to make requests.

In addition to expressing wants and needs, individuals diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder often have general communication difficulties. One area of communication that is essential for initiating and maintaining social interactions is what we call **"tacting"** or naming. For example, a child may initiate an interaction with a peer or caregiver by pointing to a toy and saying, "I like cars." Thus, it becomes important to teach individuals to identify and name objects in their environment.

The layout of the U-Play Mat provides an ideal structure within which to teach these skills. In addition to being able to accommodate multiple pictures simultaneously, the unique layout of the U-Play Mat teaches the learner to use **"search skills"**.

While most picture communication systems place all of the pictures directly in front of the learner, the U-Play Mat places the pictures in a semicircle around the learner forcing him/her to look in multiple directions to find what he/she is looking for.

In addition to the structure of the U-Play Mat, the set comes with a wide variety of themed picture cards covering various domains (e.g., foods, toys, playthings, etc.). The pictures are colorful and easily recognized. For some learners it may be necessary to incorporate additional pictures (and their corresponding items) not currently available within the U-Play system. The pockets on the U-Play Mat were intentionally made in a standard 4 X 6 inch size to accommodate photographs or homemade cards created with 4 X 6 index cards.

Individuals diagnosed with an ASD or other developmental disabilities may exhibit challenging behaviors (e.g., physical aggression, tantrums, self-injurious behavior) when issued instructions, particularly when the activity is a new one.

Caregivers and professionals need to be cautious in how they respond to these behaviors. It is advised that these exercises **not be terminated** immediately following the occurrence of challenging behaviors. By terminating the exercises following a challenging behavior, the child may learn to avoid or delay instructions by using these behaviors (**reinforcement**). Rather, we suggest **continuing** to follow the instructional sequence even in the presence of challenging behavior. Instead, caregivers and professionals should:

- 1. Provide frequent breaks independent of appropriate or challenging behavior.**
- 2. Provide enthusiastic verbal praise accompanied by encouraging facial expressions for all correct responding and effort.**

Using picture exchange to teach **"tacting"** and **"manding"** (described below) starts with the presentation of one picture in isolation then progresses to multiple pictures presented simultaneously.

This manual is divided into two main categories of exercises:

- 1. GROUP A - REQUESTING/MANDING: *Works on request-making skills.***
- 2. GROUP B - NAMING/TACTING: *Works on skills for identification and naming of objects in the everyday environment.***

The original U-Play Mat instruction guide, **"How to Use Your U-Play Mat"**, written by Dr. Jennifer Canter and a speech pathologist, includes ten speech and language exercises presented in an easy-to-understand and adaptable format. This manual, available for free download at www.playthisway.com, may also serve as a useful resource for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders.

Every child is different, and we encourage users of the U-Play Mat to share this guide and our original manual with health care providers, educators and/or therapists to assure optimal coordination of care. This supplement is intended to serve as a guide for professionals, parents and other caregivers parenting or working with individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. This guide is not intended to be a substitute for any therapeutic service.

What is the U-Play Mat?

The U-Play Mat is a U-shaped mat with 15 clear pockets on its surface. The mat is 4 feet wide and 3 feet deep. The innovative “U” shape allows the child to sit inside the opening of the “U” providing an excellent setting for eye contact and face-to-face interaction. The child has full visual and tactile access to the whole surface, without having to crawl atop the mat. Child-safe see-through pockets allow fifteen theme-based cards to be secured to the mat surface.



This patent pending design allows for the caregiver to sit across and engage the child in a variety of exercises using the adorable theme-based card decks. The pockets are designed to be slightly larger than the cards, allowing the cards to be placed and removed easily.



The U-Play Mat comes with an accompanying tote bag. There are eight pockets allowing for all available card decks to be easily carried with the U-Play Mat in the tote bag. The tote is lightweight and surface washable.

Each deck of U-Play Mat cards has 30 cards, containing 15 pairs of theme-based images. The cards are 4 inches x 6 inches and of a thick and durable card stock. There are a total of eight theme-based card decks available for use with the U-Play Mat. Two decks (**U-Animals** and **U-Foods**) come with the U-Play Mat Starter Pack.

The additional six decks are sold separately in packages of three. All eight decks come with the **DELUXE EDITION** of the U-Play Mat. All card images were carefully chosen to correspond to colorful multi-cultural themes that are applicable to the everyday life of a young child.

Although independent play is an important part of child development, this product is designed to be used for interactive play with a child. A parent, grandparent, caregiver or even an older sibling can easily learn the various exercises and enjoy bonding, communicating and having fun.



The U-Play Mat was developed with careful thought into materials, size and structure. There are rounded card edges (no poking), and there are no small parts or strings. All Play This Way Every Day products are designed and tested according to applicable rules and regulations. Play This Way Every Day tests post-production samples of all regulated products, using certified third-party labs. All products are labeled with tracking information to identify the manufacturing date and location of each product.

THE EXERCISES

GROUP A - Requesting (**Manding**) Exercises

These exercises are intended to facilitate a communication system that will allow a child to make requests.

Phase 1: Identifying Preferred Items to Use

1. Look through all of the U-Play Mat cards (**U-Play, U-Go, U-Food, U-Fruits & Vegetables, U-Dress, U-Home, U-Animals and U-Outside**).
2. Identify approximately five foods and five non-foods that **(1)** you think your child likes, and **(2)** you have available (i.e., you have the actual item that matches the card).
3. Divide the items into two groups, **Group 1: Food**, and **Group 2: Non-Food**
4. Using only one group, place all five ACTUAL items (not the cards) in a row in front of the child, and instruct the child to **"Pick one"**.
5. Whichever item the child reaches for allow him/her to eat or play with it for approximately one minute or until the piece of food is swallowed. Immediately remove all of the other items and make a note about which item was chosen first.
6. After the child has eaten the food or a minute has passed, remove the item. Next place the remaining four items in a row in front of the child, and instruct the child to **"Pick one"**.
7. Whichever item the child reaches for allow him/her to eat or play with it for approximately one minute or until the piece of food is swallowed. Immediately remove all of the other items and make a note about which item was chosen second.
8. Repeat **Steps 6 & 7** until all items have been chosen.



When using food, only place a bite-sized piece of food in front of the child and always be conscious of the child's ability to chew and swallow this type of food item, as well as any allergies the child may have

Dr. Jen's Safety Tip

Phase 2: Teaching the Child to Request - Without a Distracter

1. Place only the U-Play Mat card of the item chosen first in **Phase 1** into the pocket of the U-Play Mat directly in front of the child.
2. Hold the actual item in front of the child (out of arms reach) and say, ***“Show me what you want.”***
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item along with verbal praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points somewhere else, proceed to **Step 3**.
3. Model the correct response by using your own finger to point to the card while saying, ***“I want (name of the item), now you try it.”***
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item along with verbal praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points somewhere else, proceed to **Step 4**.
4. Physically guide the child to complete the task using the least amount of physical contact necessary. For example, using hand-over-hand guidance, have the child touch or point to the picture while saying, ***“You want (name of the item).”***
 - Immediately after guiding the child to point to or touch the corresponding picture, provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item.
5. Repeat **Steps 2-4** with other items, until the child is consistently touching the picture without having to be physically guided.
6. Continue with **Steps 2-4**, **EXCEPT**, no longer provide access to the item if you need to physically guide him/her to the card.

Note: When changing to different items, there should still be only the corresponding card in the U-Play Mat when doing this exercise without a distracter.



P is for **PRAISE!** Children thrive on caregiver praise! Provide your child with encouragement while using your U-Play Mat to keep them motivated and excited. Example- ***“Good Work!”***, ***“I like the way you are trying!”***

Phase 3: Teaching the Child to Request - With a Distracter

1. Place the U-Play Mat card of the item chosen first in **Phase 1** into one of the pockets of the U-Play Mat directly in front of the child **AND** place a U-Play Mat card (*i.e., distracter card*) randomly chosen from another themed deck in one of the pockets next to the other card.
2. Again, hold the actual item in front of the child (out of arms reach) and say, **"Show me what you want."**
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item along with verbal praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter card, proceed to **Step 3**.
3. Model the correct response by using your own finger to point to the card while saying, **"I want (name of the item), now you try it."**
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item along with verbal praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter card, proceed to **Step 4**.
4. Physically guide the child to complete the task using the least amount of physical contact necessary. For example, using hand-over-hand guidance have the child touch or point to the picture while saying, **"You want (name of the item)."**
 - Immediately after guiding the child to point to or touch the corresponding picture, provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item.
5. Repeat **Steps 2-4** with other items until the child is consistently touching the picture without having to be physically guided to the card.
6. Continue with **Steps 2-4, EXCEPT**, no longer provide access to the item if you need to physically guide him/her to the card.



L is for **LOOK AROUND!** The shape of the U-Play Mat and the ability to rotate the cards will naturally encourage a heightened awareness of surroundings. By having the card holders in front and on both sides, your child will automatically begin to search around.

Phase 4: Teaching the Child to Request - One Distracter and With Increased Effort

1. Place the U-Play Mat card of the item chosen first in Phase 1 into one of the pockets of the U-Play Mat on one side of the child and place a U-Play Mat card (*i.e., distracter card*) in one of the pockets on the other side of the child.
2. Again, hold the actual item in front of the child (**out of arms reach**) and say, ***“Show me what you want.”***
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item along with verbal praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter card, proceed to **Step 3**.
3. Model the correct response by using your own finger to point to the card while saying, ***“I want (name of the item), now you try it.”***
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item along with verbal praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter card, proceed to **Step 4**.
4. Physically guide the child to complete the task using the least amount of physical contact necessary (For example, using hand-over-hand guidance have the child touch or point to the picture while saying, ***“You want (name of the item).”***)
 - Immediately after guiding the child to point to or touch the corresponding picture, provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item.
5. Repeat **Steps 2-4** with the other items until the child is consistently touching the picture without having to be physically guided to the card.
6. Continue with **Steps 2-4, EXCEPT**, no longer provide access to the item if you need to physically guide him/her to the card.
7. Continue to rotate the location of the target and distracter cards until the child is consistently scanning the U-Play Mat to find the correct card.

Phase 5: Teaching the Child to Request - With 2+ Additional Distracters and Increased Effort

1. Place the U-Play Mat card of the item chosen first in **Phase 1** into one of the pockets of the U-Play Mat to one side of the child and place 1-3 U-Play Mat cards (i.e., **distracter cards**) in pockets around the mat.
2. Again, hold the actual item in front of the child (out of arms reach) and say, ***"Show me what you want."***
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item along with verbal praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter cards, proceed to **Step 3**.
3. Model the correct response by using your own finger to point to the card while saying, ***"I want (name of the item), now you try it."***
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item along with verbal praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter cards, proceed to **Step 4**.
4. Physically guide the child to complete the task using the least amount of physical contact necessary (For example, using hand-over-hand guidance have the child touch or point to the picture while saying, ***"You want (name of the item)."***)
 - Immediately after guiding the child to point to or touch the corresponding picture, provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item.
5. Repeat **Steps 2-4** with other items until the child is consistently touching the picture without having to be physically guided to the card.
6. Continue with **Steps 2-4, EXCEPT**, no longer provide access to the item if you need to physically guide him/her to the card.
7. Continue to rotate the location of the target and distracter cards until the child is consistently scanning the U-Play Mat to find the correct card.

GROUP B - Naming (Tacting**) Exercises**

These exercises foster skills to help teach individuals to identify and name items in their environment.

Phase 1: Identifying Items

1. Look through the U-Play cards (**U-Play, U-Go, U-Food, U-Fruits & Vegetables, U-Dress, U-Home, U-Animals and U-Outside**).
2. Identify approximately ten objects/foods that **(1)** your child is familiar with, and **(2)** you have available (i.e., you have the actual item that matches the card).

Phase 2: Teaching the Child to Name - Without a Distracter

1. Place only one of the U-Play Mat cards identified in **Phase 1** into the pocket of the U-Play Mat directly in front of the child.
2. Hold the actual item in front of the child (out of arms reach) and say, ***"What is this?"***
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with 3-5 seconds of enthusiastic praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points somewhere else, proceed to **Step 3**.
3. Model the correct response by using your own finger to point to the card while saying, ***"This is (name of the item), now you try it."***
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with 3-5 seconds of enthusiastic praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points somewhere else, proceed to **Step 4**.
4. Physically guide the child to complete the task using the least amount of physical contact necessary (For example, using hand-over-hand guidance have the child touch or point to the picture while saying, ***"That is (name of the item)."***
 - Immediately after guiding the child to point or touch the corresponding picture, provide him/her with one minute access to (or one bite of) the selected item.
5. Repeat **Steps 2-4** with other items until the child is consistently touching the picture without having to be physically guided to the card.
6. Continue with **Steps 2-4, EXCEPT**, no longer provide access to the item if you need to physically guide him/her to the card.

Phase 3: Teaching the Child to Name - With a Distracter

1. Place the U-Play Mat card used in **Phase 2** into one of the pockets of the U-Play Mat directly in front of the child **AND** place a U-Play Mat card (i.e., **distracter card**) randomly chosen from another themed deck in one of the pockets next to the other card.
2. Hold the actual item in front of the child (out of arms reach) and say, **"What is this?"**
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with 3-5 seconds of enthusiastic praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter card, proceed to **Step 3**.
3. Model the correct response by using your own finger to point to the card while saying, **"This is (name of the item), now you try it."**
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with 3-5 seconds of enthusiastic praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter card, proceed to **Step 4**.
4. Physically guide the child to complete the task using the least amount of physical contact necessary (For example, using hand-over-hand guidance have the child touch or point to the picture while saying, **"This is (name of the item)."**
 - Immediately after guiding the child to point or touch the corresponding picture, provide him/her with 1 minute access to (or 1 bite of) the selected item.
5. Repeat **Steps 2-4** with other items until the child is consistently touching the picture without having to be physically guided to the card.
6. Continue with **Steps 2-4, EXCEPT**, no longer provide access to the item if you need to physically guide him/her to the card.



A is for **ACTIVE EXPRESSIONS!** Use the U-Play Mat activities to model and reinforce appropriate eye contact, facial expressions and overall social interaction. While interacting with a child, encourage them to establish and maintain eye contact

Dr. Jen's Tips for P L A Y

Phase 4: Teaching the Child to Name - One Distracter and With Increased Effort

1. Place the U-Play Mat card used in **Phase 2** into one of the pockets of the U-Play Mat on one side of the child and place a card from another themed deck (i.e., **distracter card**) in one of the pockets on the other side of the child.
2. Again, hold the actual item in front of the child (out of arms reach) and say, **"What is this?"**
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with 3-5 seconds of enthusiastic praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter card, proceed to **Step 3**.
3. Model the correct response by using your own finger to point to the card while saying, **"This is (name of the item), now you try it."**
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with 3-5 seconds of enthusiastic praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter card, proceed to **Step 4**.
4. Physically guide the child to complete the task using the least amount of physical contact necessary (For example, using hand-over-hand guidance have the child touch or point to the picture while saying, **"This is (name of the item)."**
 - Immediately after guiding the child to point or touch the corresponding picture, provide him/her with 1 minute access to (or 1 bite of) the selected item.
5. Repeat **Steps 2-4** with other items until the child is consistently touching the picture without having to be physically guided to the card.
6. Continue with **Steps 2-4, EXCEPT**, no longer provide access to the item if you need to physically guide him/her to the card.
7. Continue to rotate the location of the target and distracter cards until the child is consistently scanning the U-Play Mat to find the correct card.



Y is for **YOUR TIME!** Try and set aside some time each day, no matter how long, to sit on the floor and play with your child. This should be a special time that you and your child look forward to with one-on-one interaction.

Dr. Jen's Tips for P L A Y

Phase 5: Teaching the Child to Name - With 2+ Additional Distracters and Increased Effort

1. Place the U-Play Mat card used in **Phase 2** into one of the pockets of the U-Play Mat to one side of the child and place 1-3 cards of another theme (i.e., **distracter cards**) in pockets around the mat.
2. Again, hold the actual item in front of the child (out of arms reach) and say, **"What is it?"**
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with 3-5 seconds of enthusiastic praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter cards, proceed to **Step 3**.
3. Model the correct response by using your own finger to point to the card while saying, **"This is (name of the item), now you try it."**
 - If the child points to or touches the corresponding picture, immediately provide him/her with 3-5 seconds of enthusiastic praise.
 - If the child does not point to or touch the picture or points to the distracter cards, proceed to **Step 4**.
4. Physically guide the child to complete the task using the least amount of physical contact necessary (For example, using hand-over-hand guidance have the child touch or point to the picture while saying, **"This is (name of the item)."**
 - Immediately after guiding the child to point or touch the corresponding picture, provide him/her with 1 minute access to (or 1 bite of) the selected item.
5. Repeat **Steps 2-4** with other items until the child is consistently touching the picture without having to be physically guided to the card.
6. Continue with **Steps 2-4, EXCEPT**, no longer provide access to the item if you need to physically guide him/her to the card.
7. Continue to rotate the location of the target and distracter cards until the child is consistently scanning the U-Play Mat to find the correct card.

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