

# Interpersonal Skills Teaching Plan

to accompany

## *Taking “No” for an Answer*

by Laurie Simons, M.A.

### Introduction

How do you teach kids to make requests in an appropriate manner? How do you communicate that none of us—teachers, parents or even kids—can say “yes” all the time? How do you teach kids to cope with disappointment and frustration when they don’t get what they want?

Designed for primary and preschool teachers, child care providers, youth group leaders and families, this teaching plan uses simple games to teach children how to make requests and how to accept disappointment. It’s also intended to reduce such protests as:

- “You never let me have anything” or
- “It’s not fair.”

The games are intended as a means of *practicing* making requests in an appropriate manner and accepting disappointment. They create an opportunity to discuss feelings and how to deal with them.

### Game #1: “May I Have Your Seat, Please?”

This game teaches children to take “No” for an answer when they make requests. The game can be played with a group of children or with people of all ages. The game teaches participants to:

- Give clear answers instead of “Maybe” or “We’ll see.”
- Say “No” even when afraid of someone’s negative reaction.
- Learn to cope when disappointed or frustrated.

### Getting started:

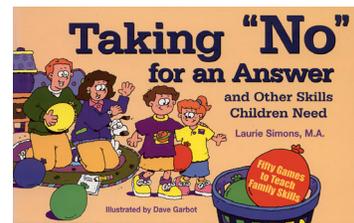
Set up a special time and place to play these games. Have children sit in a circle, each in a separate seat. The seat can be a chair, a mat or a spot on the floor marked with an X of masking tape. Tell the group: “We are going to play [insert name of game]. I need a volunteer to start.” Explain the game to the volunteer or demonstrate the game to the volunteer before you begin.

### Directions:

1. Ask for a volunteer to go first. Give this person the beanbag (or the other item). Set the timer for five minutes.
2. The player stands in front of another participant, and offers the beanbag, saying, “May I have your seat, please?” The concept: to trade the beanbag for the seat. The participant may answer “Yes” or “No.”
3. If the answer is “No,” the person making the request asks someone else.
4. If the answer is “Yes,” then the person making the request hands the beanbag to the person who said “Yes,” and sits down in that person’s seat. Now it is the new person’s turn to ask the same question of other players.
5. Continue until the bell rings. If you like, set the timer for three more minutes so that participants have time to weary of being polite and pleasant. This will force them to work at accepting “No” for an answer.



Laurie Simons, M.A. the author of *Taking “No” for an Answer and Other Skills Children Need: 50 Games to Teach Family Skills*. For information about her and her book, see [ParentingPress.com/b\\_takeno.html](http://ParentingPress.com/b_takeno.html).



### Materials for Game #1

- A beanbag (or other small item)
- A timer
- Pillows, floor cushions or chairs for each person or a roll of masking tape.

## Game #2: Invisible Leader

### What you say:

Today we're going to play "Invisible Leader." This game is about not always being the center of attention.

When people are not paying attention to you, that does not mean they don't like you. Each time we play this game, we are going to have a different leader. When the timer starts, it is our job to ignore the leader. During that time, the leader must find something to do. He or she cannot talk to the rest of us or join whatever we are doing.

### What you do:

1. Select a leader.
2. Set the timer for one minute.
3. When the timer starts, all the other children should talk to each other, look at each other or play with each other. Remember, no one can look at, speak to or play with the leader.

### What you say:

When the timer sounds, ask for the group's attention. Tell the children that now, until the timer sounds again, they must all pay attention to the leader. They can talk to the leader, invite the leader to join their game or simply look at the leader with interest.

### What you do:

1. Set the timer for another minute.
2. When the timer sounds, ask the leader how it felt to be ignored—and how it felt to be the center of attention.
3. Select a new leader and start the game over.
4. After several children have had a turn as leader, ask: "What could you do to feel okay even when you are not the center of attention?" On an easel or whiteboard, write down at least three things the leader could do. Examples should include activities both with and without materials: for example, looking at a book, folding paper, and drawing as well as humming a song, making shadow puppets with your fingers, counting by threes, and simply sitting and waiting.
5. Now select a new leader and play the game again, so that children can try these suggestions. Continue as long as you can; if possible, each child should serve as the leader. If time does not permit you to have each child serve as leader, play the game again soon, starting with all the children who were not leaders this time.

## Materials for Game #2

Timer

Easel or whiteboard and markers



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