

# Practice Making Your Case

## Helping Students Practice Turning a “No” into a “Yes”

Talking about dreams and goals takes practice. Students may worry that people will laugh, question their ideas, or refuse to listen. Role-play gives them a place to practice explaining what they want and responding to concerns.

**What students practice:** explaining their goals, listening to concerns, answering questions, thinking of solutions, and showing confidence.

The goal is to help students feel more prepared to speak up. Practice does not guarantee a “yes.”

### 1. Pick Something to Practice

Ask the student to choose something they want to do, try, or work toward. Use pictures of different work, hobby, sport or social activities. They can use a goal they already have.

**Ideas:** get a job, go to college, learn to drive, take the bus, move into an apartment, travel, go on a date, or try a new activity.

Ask: **“What do you want to try? Why is it important to you?”**

### 2. Make Sure They Know It Is a Role-Play

**Always explain that you are pretending.** Demonstrate first, then check that the student understands.

**You might say:** “Let’s practice what you could say if someone had concerns or told you no. This is pretend. I will ask questions to help you practice making your case. I am not really telling you no.”

Agree on a way to pause or stop. The student can ask for help, take a break, or try a different situation.

# Practice the Conversation

## 3. Practice Making Your Case

Two trainers can demonstrate before students try. Start with the student's goal and raise one concern at a time.

**Student:** "My dream is to move to California."

**Supporter:** "California is far away. I'm worried about how you would get the help you need."

**Student:** "Living there is important to me. I could visit first and find out what support is available."

**Supporter:** "How would you find a place to live?"

**Student:** "I could get help looking at apartments and finding out how much they cost."

**Supporter:** "What if you need help when you get there?"

**Student:** "I could make a plan for who to contact if I need help."

**Keep the challenge respectful.** Give the student time to respond. Your role is to help them practice thinking, solving problems, and speaking up.

## 4. Help Them Think

If the student gets stuck, pause the role-play. Ask a question that helps them develop their own response.

- "Why is this important to you?"
- "What could you say about that concern?"
- "What could make this safer?"
- "What information could you find out?"
- "Who could help you?"
- "Is there a smaller first step you could try?"

Offer to model a response if they need help. Let them choose their own words or way to communicate. Then practice again.

# Build Confidence and Reflect

## 5. Practice Showing Confidence

Ask: **“What did you notice about how the person showed confidence?”**

Students can practice:

- Explaining what they want and why it matters.
- Taking their time and using their own words.
- Giving an example or suggesting a first step.
- Asking questions and asking for support.
- Responding to one concern at a time.

**Confidence can look different for each person.** Students can use speech, AAC, writing, pictures, or gestures. Allow enough time to communicate. Eye contact, a loud voice, and a particular posture are not required.

**Try again:** “You explained why this matters to you. Let’s practice once more. What would you like to try this time?”

## 6. Talk About How It Went

After the role-play, clearly say: **“The role-play is over. We are no longer pretending.”**

Ask:

- “How did that feel?”
- “What did you do well?”
- “What was hard?”
- “What helped you feel confident?”
- “What could you try next time?”
- “If someone really told you no, what could you do next?”

Name a specific strength you noticed. Invite the student to choose whether to practice again.

**Keep the student’s goal at the center.** Help them practice: “I know what I want. I can explain why it matters. I can listen to concerns, think about solutions, and make my case.”

Use this activity for goals and opportunities. Respect another person’s boundaries and consent, including a “no” to dating or touching.