



Student Resource Guide

6. Strategies for Successful Teaching, Part 1



Student Resource Guide: SESSION 6

Strategies for Successful Teaching, Part 1

O U T C O M E S

When you finish this session, you will be able to:

- Explain the goal of teaching the individual new skills.
- Define the following terms: *functional skills*, *meaningful skills*, and *age-appropriate skills*.
- Describe what you can learn by having a relationship with the individual.
- Identify natural times for teaching functional skills.
- Identify opportunities for teaching new skills.
- Define and complete a task analysis.
- Identify and use a variety of instructional prompts.

K E Y W O R D S

| Key Word | Meaning | In My Own Words |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Acquisition | Development of a new skill or way of doing something. | |
| Adaptation | Objects or devices that are made or changed specifically to help an individual learn or do a skill. | |
| Functional Skills | Skills that are necessary for the individual's own self-care. Skills that someone will have to perform for the individual if the individual doesn't learn to perform them. | |
| Generalization | Performing a newly learned skill in whatever situation the individual needs or wants. | |
| Partial Participation | Teaching or supporting an individual to perform or to participate, at least partially, in an activity even though he or she may not be able to function independently in the activity. | |

KEY WORDS (CONT.)

| Key Word | Meaning | In My Own Words |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|
| Prompting | Providing additional information to ensure success. | |
| Reinforcement | Rewards given after successfully performing a desired behavior. | |
| Shaping | Teaching a skill by reinforcing behaviors that are closer and closer to the desired skill. Reinforcement of small parts of a task as an individual is learning it. This is followed by reinforcing for larger parts until the individual can perform the entire task or has reached their greatest level of independence. | |
| Task Analysis | Listing the sequence of actions or steps involved in completing a skill. | |

A C T I V I T Y

What Do You Want to Know?

Directions: *Think about the topic of this training session. Answer the first two questions in the space provided below. You will come back to this page at the end of the session to answer the last question.*

.....
What do you **already know** about successful teaching strategies?

.....
What do you **want to know** about successful teaching strategies?

.....
To be answered at the end of the session, during review:
What **have you learned** about successful teaching strategies?

Opening Scenario

Rachel is a young girl who lives in a small group home. She is 8 years old and has had a difficult life. Because she was physically abused, she was removed from her parent's home and moved to April's Place, which is located in a small town just outside of Bakersfield. Rachel appears to be non-verbal and shows some evidence of autism.

Rachel has many things to learn. She is not able to care for her personal needs, such as dressing herself, basic hygiene, or getting herself something to eat. It appears that she is used to having someone do these things for her, or she has little, if any, experience in taking care of herself.

Cindy is a DSP working at April's Place. She has worked in an adult home for two years, but this is the first time she's worked with children. She wants to help Rachel, but she's overwhelmed with the task. Where does she start?

The Goal of Teaching

The goal of teaching is to support individuals with disabilities to live independently and with as much enjoyment as possible.

Why is it so important for DSPs to know how to teach?

Did you know you are a teacher? Every individual is capable of growth and change throughout his or her entire life. We are all lifelong learners and the more we learn, the more opportunities we have for self-expression and self-determination. Because someone did not learn to wash their own hair as a child, does not mean they might not be able to learn this skill as an adult.

It shouldn't surprise us to find out that the more control we have over our own life the more likely we are to be happy and content. Clearly, the most effective strategy for people with challenging behaviors is to help them replace those challenging behaviors with new skills. For example, many problem behaviors are related to communicating problems.

Teaching an individual how to get help or to express their needs when something is bothering them will lessen problem behaviors because the individual will have appropriate ways of getting the message across.

In Year 1, Session 1, we discussed the multiple roles of the Direct Support Professional, including how to assist people with disabilities to be as independent as possible. Helping people become more skilled in all areas of their lives is one of the most important types of support offered by human service agencies.

In your role as a DSP, you are in the perfect situation to assist individuals in learning new skills because you are directly involved in so many aspects of their lives—from self-care through participation in consumer and vocational skills. You can support individuals in learning how to have more meaningful and effective relationships, how to manage their resources, and even how to advocate for themselves.

The Goal of Teaching (cont.)

Even if we aren't trying to teach, we actually do. Knowing how to teach helps ensure that individuals are learning what we intend to teach! Helping an individual by preparing his or her breakfast every morning is simply teaching that person to wait. It teaches that they are incapable of doing such a task. This is not our goal as DSPs. It can also be very frustrating when, despite our best efforts, our "student" does not seem to be learning. We all need to see our efforts pay off, and one of our most rewarding experiences is to

see someone learn because of our work. Teaching is an art, one we can all become better at when we take the time to learn teaching strategies. While we can't teach every minute of the day, you should be continually looking for opportunities to support learning and independence.

There is one other reason it is important for you to know how to teach. When someone we support continues to learn and grow, our respect for that individual grows.

The Teaching Process

The teaching process presented here is one that you can implement in any setting. Distinct steps in this process lead to skill acquisition, fluency, generalization, and maintenance. We will describe and practice how to:

- Teach during natural times.
Establish a good relationship with the learner.
- Focus on teaching functional, age-appropriate, and meaningful skills
- Identify natural times for instruction for typical functional skills.
- Complete a task analysis for selected skills.
- Determine the most appropriate instructional prompts.
- Use least-to-most prompting.
- Allow for partial participation.
- Use several types of adaptations.
- Use reinforcement strategies.
- Use shaping as an instructional strategy when appropriate.
- Teach to ensure that skills generalize.
- Evaluate teaching success and identify when it is appropriate to modify teaching strategies.
- Use strategies for ensuring that skills are maintained.

Establishing a Relationship with a Learner

Think about something important you've learned in life through the efforts of someone else. It could be your parents, friends, a teacher, or anyone. Many people around us attempt to teach us one thing or another. Why did we learn some things more easily than others? What was it about those people that made learning easier for us? Certainly, there is something about the relationship between the teacher and the learner that either supports or hinders learning. Those who know this try to create the best learning environment by establishing a good relationship. This takes time. If you attempt to get to know someone five minutes before trying to teach, then teaching is not likely to be very effective.

Spend Time Together

How do we establish an effective relationship with a learner? The answer lies in getting to know the individual. The first and most important rule is simple: Spend time together. A relationship develops over time. This time should be outside an instructional situation; doing something together, not as teacher/learner, but as two people sharing an activity.

The Teaching Process (cont.)

Several things can be learned just by interacting including:

- What motivates this individual.
- What this individual wants to learn.
- What this individual likes and dislikes.
- What things this individual likes to do.
- How this individual learns best.
- How the individual communicates.

Look at the Individualized Program Plan (IPP)

In addition, each individual has an IPP that provides useful information about important skill needs. That plan should be developed with the active involvement of the individual so that it reflects his or her hopes, dreams, and choices. To provide the best possible support, you should first take the time to learn about the individual by reviewing the IPP.

A C T I V I T Y

Establishing Relationships with Individuals

Directions: *Think about an individual you support. Using what you know about this person fill in the worksheet. Share your answers with another student.*

The Individual I Support:

How I know:

Is motivated by:

Wants to learn:

Likes and dislikes:



Likes to:

Learns best by:

Communicates:

Functional, Age-Appropriate, and Meaningful Skills

An individual needs to learn many things. How do we know what skills to teach? No matter what skills we select for teaching, it is important for us to remember the DSP's main goal of teaching:

 *The goal of teaching is to support individuals with disabilities to live as independently and with as much enjoyment as possible.* 

To reach this goal, you must make sure that what you teach is truly meaningful and functional for each individual. **Functional skills** are skills that are necessary for the individual's own self-care. They are skills that someone will have to perform for the individual if the individual doesn't learn to perform them. One problem observed in many teaching programs, in both school and adult programs, is that individuals with disabilities often spend time doing things that don't really help them to live more independently or enjoyably. That is, individuals spend time doing things that do not help them function in natural settings in which people of the same age live, work, or participate in recreational activities.

For example, have you observed adults with disabilities sorting colored pieces of plastic or other tasks that seemed meaningless? When they completed the work, a staff member then re-combines the materials for another individual to re-sort. How useful is this type of activity for teaching someone how to function in a natural community, work, or living setting where people like you and I spend our time?

Besides spending time on meaningless activities, sometimes we find adults or teenagers with disabilities using coloring books or putting together children's cartoon puzzles. Do these activities help an individual to do useful things with peers or are they simply something to do when nothing else is going on?

To make sure that we support individuals in learning skills that will help them live more independently and enjoyably, and to make the best use of our time, here are **some general guiding questions** to ask:

1. Is the skill functional?

If the individual does not learn the skill I am attempting to teach, will someone else have to perform that skill? Would someone be paid to do this skill for the individual?

For example, if Sarah could not select her own clothing, would someone else have to make the selection? If Jim could not make himself a snack, would someone else need to make it for him? A general guideline is that individuals need to learn skills that have immediate functional value to them.

2. Is the skill relevant?

Is the skill I am attempting to teach one that this individual will use often in his or her life?

Is it more important for Jill to learn to name the months of the year or how to greet someone appropriately?

It is important to teach skills that are used frequently.

3. Is the skill age-appropriate?

Is the skill I am attempting to teach one that other people of the same chronological age use?

Should Mark spend a portion of each day learning to cut pictures out of magazines or would it be more appropriate for him to learn how to call a friend on the phone? Staff involved in supporting learning should ensure that individuals learn skills that are chronologically age-appropriate.

Functional, Age-Appropriate, and Meaningful Skills (cont.)

Sometimes individuals choose to use materials and engage in activities that you might not consider age-appropriate. For example, because 15-year-old Michael chooses to listen to children's music during his leisure time, should you tell him that it is not age-appropriate and restrict his access to such music? If someone chooses to do things that are not age-appropriate during their leisure time, then that is their choice. However, staff can ensure that Michael has frequent exposure to music that is age-appropriate and that he has opportunities to interact with other 15-year-old people to experience what they listen to. If Michael simply enjoys that particular style of children's music, we might also be able to help him find teenage music of a similar style.

4. Does the skill support independence?

Is the skill I am attempting to teach one that can help this individual get what he wants or get him out of something he does not want?

Challenging behavior often serves as a way for an individual to get a message across about preferences. You can teach an individual how to communicate what he or she wants and does not want in a way that is effective and efficient and similar to the way we all express desires.

Think about a situation when an individual is unhappy about having to shower before bed each night. Some evenings, Monica would much rather watch certain programs on TV and then get up earlier to shower before work.

On these evenings, when she is asked to get ready for bed, she becomes angry and slaps at her housemates and support staff. If Monica could learn to plan her evening schedule and let staff know her preferences, she would have less trouble with evening routines.

5. Is the skill going to be naturally reinforced?

Is the skill I am attempting to teach going to result in naturally occurring outcomes for the individual?

Many times we teach individuals to do things that do not result in any outcomes that reinforce the skill; they learn to do what we request of them. For example, you might help someone learn to identify his or her body parts; for example, "point to nose, point to knees" and then you might say "good job, pointing to nose and to knees." The outcomes are artificial for this type of exercise; that is, they do not naturally occur for the rest of us.

Naturally occurring outcomes result from engaging in meaningful activities. If an individual is learning how to make a phone call, the natural outcome is that he speaks to someone he's called. The natural outcome for learning to make pizza is that he can eat the pizza when it's done or even share it with friends. The natural outcome for taking a shower and using deodorant is that someone might smell good for their girlfriend.

Since the goal of teaching is to support individuals in living as independently and enjoyably as possible, understanding their interests, preferences, and needs is critical. These general guidelines will also be helpful in choosing skills to teach so that the time and efforts of the individual and the DSP are not wasted.

ACTIVITY

Functional, Age-Appropriate, and Meaningful Skills

Directions: *Raymond is a 17-year-old young man with cognitive and motor challenges. Place a check inside the box when the stated activity meets the guidelines for functional, age-appropriate, and meaningful skills on pages S-7 and S-8. For each activity that does not meet the guidelines, identify a different activity that does.*

| Activity | Functional? | Relevant | Age-appropriate? | Supports independence? | Naturally reinforced? | If not, alternate activity? |
|---|-------------|----------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Listen to county music CD | | | | | | |
| Shopping at the Mall | | | | | | |
| Putting together a 6 piece Disney puzzle | | | | | | |
| Making a toaster waffle | | | | | | |
| Washing clothes | | | | | | |
| Stringing beads | | | | | | |
| Sorting colored chips | | | | | | |
| Setting the table | | | | | | |
| Matching pictures of farm animals | | | | | | |
| Conversing with a friend using a picture book | | | | | | |
| Purchasing coffee | | | | | | |
| Swinging on a playground swing | | | | | | |

Functional, Age-Appropriate, and Meaningful Skills (cont.)

What About Activities Just For Fun? Does Everything Have To Be Functional?

What an individual chooses to do during leisure time is different from skills that he or she is learning to become more independent. During leisure time, we all have the right to choose what makes us happy, even if it isn't considered functional. You are not a guardian; your role is to support individuals with disabilities, not to control what they do. If you are concerned that what an individual chooses to do is resulting in negative behavior toward the individual by others, you might encourage other interests and make efforts to expand the individual's range of leisure interests.

Teaching During Daily Routines

Sometimes it makes sense to arrange formal teaching sessions, particularly when staffing patterns permit. There may be times during the day or evening when staff have the opportunity to provide one-on-one time, assisting an individual to learn a skill. For example, because Lucinda returns from her school program at 3:30 p.m. and her roommates don't get home from their jobs until 5:00 p.m., staff members have time to work with her on some of her self-care skills such as washing and ironing her clothes. Such scheduled teaching sessions may assist Lucinda in learning because you will have her undivided attention in the early stages of learning these tasks. However, one-on-one time is often difficult to arrange and staff may find that individuals are not getting the chance to practice these skills to learn them fully.

One of the best ways to support an individual's ability to learn new skills is to provide the instructional support they need during the times he or she would naturally use those skills. The more an

individual has the opportunity to practice a skill, the more likely he or she will gain independence in using it. If the skill is important in the life of that individual, it is more likely the skill will be learned and maintained. DSPs constantly seek opportunities to teach throughout the day and in all environments. Opportunities can be signaled by:

- An individual attempting unsuccessfully to do something on his own
- An individual asking for help to do something
- A staff member completing a task the individual could have done

Countless opportunities for learning are available throughout the day. Assisting an individual to attain an enjoyable life means active participation in that life. One of the guiding questions we discussed earlier addresses how to assist individuals in living more independently and enjoyably:

If the individual does not learn the skill I am attempting to teach, will someone else have to perform that skill?

We do many things each day that fit this guideline. We get ready for school or work, prepare something to eat, choose our clothing, turn on the radio, clean up the house, travel to and from our destination, call friends, plan activities, and many other typical routines. The more we can do these routines independently or participate at least partially in them, the more control we have over our lives.

One of the first things you can do as a DSP is to identify the many opportunities for learning that exist in the individual's daily schedule. These are the best times to provide instruction because these skills allow frequent practice, are relevant to the individual, and learning such skills means more independence and control.

Functional, Age-Appropriate, and Meaningful Skills (cont.)

It is important to remember that teaching must be balanced with opportunities for individuals to enjoy their lives and engage in preferred activities

in which they are already independent. If our entire day was one teaching routine, life might be more of a chore and less enjoyable.

| A C T I V I T Y | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--|--|
| <u>Naturally Occurring Skills</u> | | | |
| <i>Directions: Think about one individual with whom you work. In the first column identify the time you work with him or her. In the second column, list the typical schedule of activities he or she follows in the morning and evening at home. In the third column, note if this activity requires instruction and in column four, note how this would benefit the individual.</i> | | | |
| <i>Time</i> | <i>Activity</i> | <i>Requires Instruction?</i> | <i>Benefit to Individual</i> |
| <i>Example:</i> 6:45 am | <i>Shaves, showers</i> | <i>Needs help shaving</i> | <i>Allows for choice in appearance.</i> |
| 7:15 am | <i>Selects clothing, dresses</i> | <i>No</i> | |
| 7:20 am | <i>Eats breakfast</i> | <i>Needs help making own breakfast</i> | <i>Can lead to living more independently</i> |
| | | | |

Teaching Tools: Developing a Task Analysis

When Individuals Don't Seem to Be Learning

Think about a time when you could not learn to do something despite your best efforts. It might have been a school task or something you wanted to do in your leisure time; for example, snowboarding or playing the piano. Despite all the advice and teaching you received, learning was still difficult. Sometimes you finally got it and sometimes you just gave up. What did your teacher do that actually helped you in those situations? Sometimes they just stuck with you until you got it, or they tried a new approach, or they asked what would help and then followed your lead.

When the individuals you support have a difficult time learning something, you sometimes question their ability or their motivation to learn. You may find yourself becoming angry with them, blaming them for not trying, or even giving up on the lesson. The most successful teachers adapt their approach when their students have difficulties; they remember that they only have control over what they do. Rather than wasting time questioning whether an individual is capable of learning, they look for a more powerful teaching strategy. It might be helpful to experience teaching from the learner's perspective.

A C T I V I T Y

Teaching from the Learner's Perspective

Directions: *Count off by twos. Group 1 will be teachers and Group 2 will be learners. Teachers will be taken to another room to discuss a new skill that they will teach the learners. The teachers need to pair with a learner when they return without telling their learner what they are making. When you have completed the activity, be prepared to answer the following questions:*

Questions for teachers:

1. *Did your student learn? How do you know?*
2. *What made it difficult for you to teach?*
3. *What worked for you?*

Questions for students:

1. *Can you complete the task independently?*
2. *What did the teacher do that helped you learn?*
3. *What did not help?*

A number of strategies support learning. Sometimes just the opportunity to participate in interesting, functional activities with a bit of coaching results in an individual's learning, especially when the activity is motivating to the individual. Many of the things we've learned were not formally taught to us; we just learned by trial and error. For example, how did we learn to make toast? It's likely that we learned by watching someone else do it and then learned through trial and error about the toaster setting. However, many other things took a more formal approach such as playing scales on the piano.

Many of the individuals we support have a difficult time learning, and for that reason, teaching a new skill often takes a planned and systematic approach that includes:

- Individualized teaching strategies
- Regularly scheduled instruction
- Instruction modified based on the learner's success
- Instruction in natural settings
- Focused instruction

Systematic Instruction

What is systematic instruction? A number of practices characterize this type of organized, planned teaching.

First, teaching strategies are individualized based on how an individual learns best. All of us learn in different ways and if our teachers know this, they can tailor their strategies to our style. For example, some of us have a tough time listening to directions, but if someone draws us a map, we've got it. Some of us can listen to a song and remember the words and others need to read the words to learn the song. Explaining to me how to build something may not help, but letting me actually get my hands on the materials makes learning much easier for me.

Think about some of the things you've learned. Do you tend to learn best through seeing, hearing, or touching? Becoming familiar with the way an individual learns is a good way to start the teaching process. For example, Amanda may learn best by seeing an example of what is expected of her, so staff always provides a model to help her learn.

Second, instruction must occur on a regular basis, particularly when someone is first learning a new skill. Long periods between practicing a skill will likely mean the learner will be starting over each time. Teaching community consumer skills once a week may not allow an individual to remember new skills. If he or she practiced purchasing in a store two to three times a week, learning might be quicker and also might be more easily maintained. When selecting skills to teach, consider how often the skill will be used.

Third, teachers modify their teaching plan based on how successful the instruction is. If the teaching plan is not working, it's time to change the plan. Instruction should result in continual student progress. It is also important, however, to give the plan a chance. If staff members have been teaching Amanda to make her bed for a long time using the same strategies and she seems to be at the same place in her learning as when she started, it is obvious that the teaching plan should have been changed earlier.

Fourth, systematic instruction is provided in the natural settings where the skills are used. Individuals tend to learn better when skills are relevant, functional, and result in natural consequences. If you want Jim to recognize the "Men" sign on a bathroom door, it makes more sense to teach it in a real location where "Men" is on the door, rather than to have him practice reading a sign at home.

Teaching Tools: Teaching New Skills (cont.)

Finally, systematic instruction is focused. If you are engaged in teaching, you need to give your full attention to that. It is very difficult to provide the support a person needs if you are distracted by things going on around you. If you can't focus, it might be better to leave the instruction until a time when you can provide undivided attention. In the home, you have so many things competing for your attention, that trying to provide systematic instruction to one individual while managing other situations is counterproductive. If providing the instruction is important, you might need to advocate for more support during certain times of the day.

How can we organize teaching time so that we are successful?

An individual may not be learning a particular skill for a number of reasons. For the purposes of this session, we'll consider the three most important:

- The skill is too complex in its present form.
- There is insufficient practice.
- There is insufficient reinforcement.

Task Analysis

Take a moment to consider all the things you do between the time you get out of bed in the morning and leave for work. You've done these things so often, you don't even have to think about them. Even though some tasks involve several steps, (brushing your teeth, shaving, showering, dressing, making breakfast, gathering up your things), they've become such a familiar habit that you can glide through them without really thinking about what you're doing. However, if you looked closely at each of these morning activities, you would find that they are made up of a number of steps, linked together to complete a task. When you first learned

to complete these tasks independently, it took a little more thought and probably some help. How did you learn to dress? Most of us learned parts of the dressing routine at different times. For example, we learned to pull our pants up and get our shirt over our heads before we learned to button and zip. We learned to pull our shoes on before we learned that complex task of tying the laces.

Each task is made up of several small steps and if we break down complex tasks into small steps, an individual may be more able to learn to perform the task. Listing the sequence of actions or steps involved in completing a task is called **task analysis**.

The following is an example of a task analysis for making toast:

Task Analysis for Making Toast

1. *Get bread from cabinet*
2. *Open bread package*
3. *Remove two slices*
4. *Place bread in toaster*
5. *Push down toaster lever*
6. *Wait until toast pops up*
7. *Remove toast*
8. *Place toast on plate*
9. *Butter toast*
10. *Serve or eat*

You might decide that some steps are not really needed because the individual you support already knows how to get the bread or how to wait. Or you might need to include even more steps. For example, you may find you need to add a step between 5 and 6 and have the individual get the butter and jam out of the refrigerator. That's the nice thing about a task analysis. You can make the analysis as detailed and as long as necessary.

Teaching Tools: Teaching New Skills (cont.)

A task analysis for the same task might look different for two individuals based on their abilities and learning needs. A task such as making a phone call might have

eight steps or 25. It's important for staff to build a task analysis based on how the individual might complete the task, not necessarily how you would do it.

A C T I V I T Y

Observing the Steps Involved in an Activity

Directions: Watch the video scenario. Write down each step in the activity as you observe it. Then, pair up with another student to share your task analysis. Discuss any differences. Be prepared to share your observations with the group.

Setting the Table—Steps

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Should we prepare a task analysis for everything we teach?

Not every skill needs to be taught using a task analysis. Teaching a skill that the individual already knows does not require a task analysis. Another type of teaching objective that does not require a task analysis is when you teach an individual to perform a skill more quickly or for a longer period of time. Task analysis is useful when teaching an individual a new skill.

Not everyone does things the same way. For example, do you wet your toothbrush before putting on the toothpaste or after? One key reason for listing the steps in a task analysis is to define exactly what the individual is learning to do so that the skill can be taught the same way every time. This helps the individual learn more quickly. It also avoids confusion for the individual because everyone who is helping him learn will teach him in the same way.

Teaching Tools: Teaching New Skills (cont.)

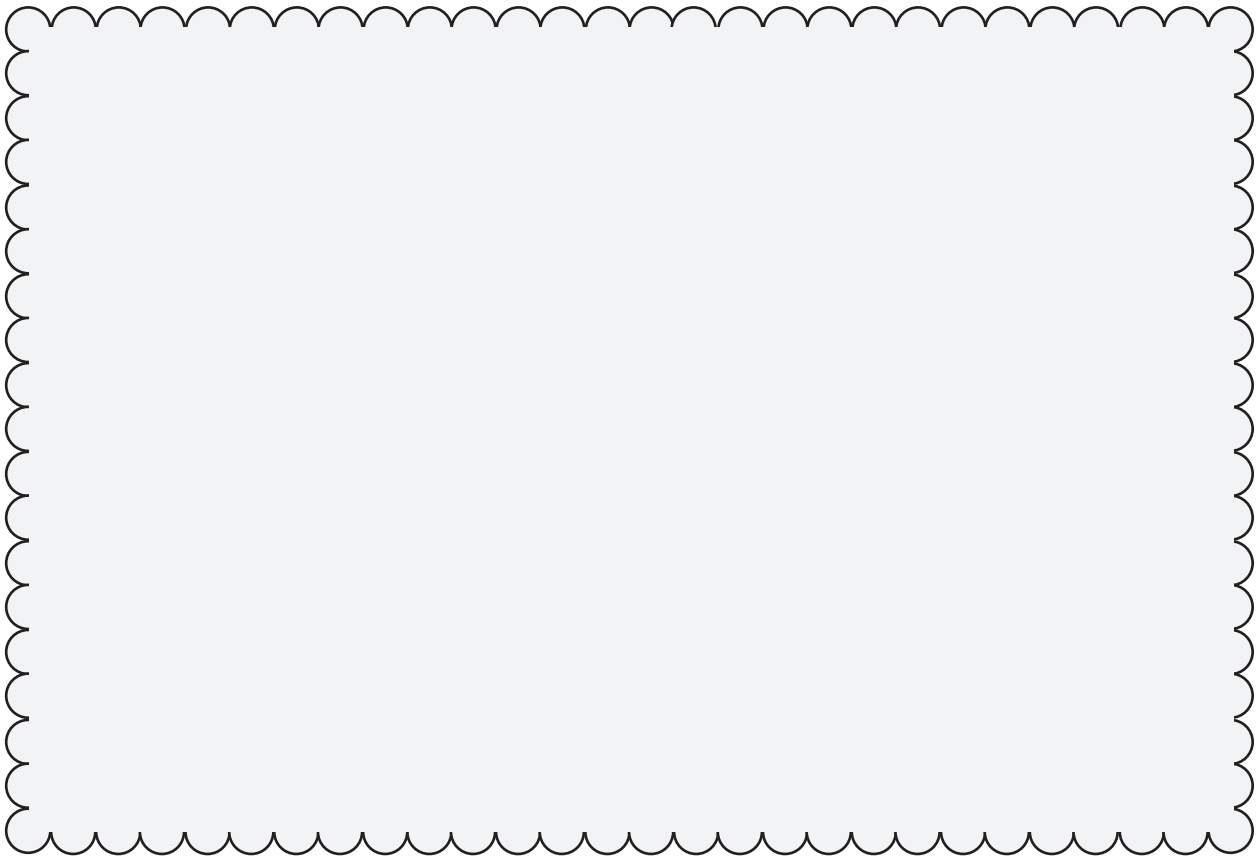
When creating a task analysis for teaching a skill, it is important that you and the staff practice the steps in the task analysis prior to attempting to teach the

skill. By practicing the task analysis, staff can make sure it is complete and that the steps are arranged in a logical order.

A C T I V I T Y

Drawing a Place Setting

Directions: *On the place mat below, draw a picture of a dinner place setting including a plate, knife, fork, spoon, napkin, and cup. Compare differences in the drawings among the group.*



ACTIVITY

Setting the Table: Task Steps

List the steps for setting the table as you drew it on the placemat on page S-16.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Instructional Prompts

When learning to do something new, we go through common stages of the learning process regardless of who we are or what the skill is. We begin with the difficult stage of **acquisition**. During this stage we require a lot of support. Think about a time when you were learning something difficult and the type of help you needed until you became more familiar with the task. When learning to make French toast, Rhonda will need to first learn the sequence of steps involved and she'll need a lot of assistance until she can remember the steps.

A second stage of learning, **maintenance**, is the period of learning when we practice a skill we've just learned so that we can complete it independently. Now each Saturday morning, Rhonda practices making French toast with the help of the DSP in case she forgets something.

The more we practice the skill, the more we demonstrate **fluency** with the skill. Now, Rhonda is comfortable with making French toast and is finding ways to complete the task more quickly. For example, she is able to cook two pieces of French toast at the same time she is dipping the next two pieces in the egg.

The real test of our competency with a skill is our **generalization** of that skill. Now Rhonda is able to cook french toast when she visits her mother.

Simply learning how to do something during teaching situations is not sufficient. This is why we teach skills that are functional, relevant, and likely to be performed frequently. Following these guidelines allows for sufficient practice and for the individual to become fluent and able to perform a skill across environments, people, and activities.

When an individual is first learning a new skill, it is usually necessary to provide additional support. This support or assistance is called prompting and the goal is to provide just enough assistance so that the individual is able to correctly perform the skill. If you think of prompts as additional information, you are simply providing extra information about what the individual should do.

Prompt = Providing additional information to ensure success.

For example, Matthew is learning to load the dishwasher at home. The task analysis identifies several steps for Matthew to complete in sequence. One step he continues to have difficulty with is remembering to add the dishwashing detergent. Matt typically misses this step and closes the door. How can you prompt him to remember?

Different Types of Prompts

There are many different ways to prompt. You've used many prompts throughout your life, sometimes without being aware of it. You might have said, "What are you forgetting?" to someone as they left the house. This example provides additional information about what the other person is supposed to do.

ACTIVITY

Brainstorm

Directions: *Break into small groups. Each group will be given a flipchart and markers. Take five minutes to brainstorm as many examples of prompts as you can. Remember, during brainstorming, ideas are not evaluated. Every idea is accepted and written on the flipchart. Evaluation comes after brainstorming. If you get stuck, ask yourself: “What might we do to help someone learn something new?” After the five minutes of brainstorming, take another five minutes to categorize the ideas. Select a reporter and share results with the large group.*

Instructional Prompts (cont.)

Prompting Strategies

It’s obvious that you can use many different types of prompts to help an individual complete a new skill. Here are some common categories of prompts:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Gestures
- Modeling
- Contextual

Verbal Prompts

Verbal prompts involve talking to the learner to provide assistance. You simply describe what to do, or you give verbal information that helps the person know what to do. These types of prompts should contain only the information necessary to correctly perform the skill. Long complex explanations of what to do are not helpful and are at times counterproductive. There are two subsets of verbal prompts—direct verbal prompts and indirect verbal prompts. The direct verbal prompt describes what the individual is to do. For example, when Marsha is getting ready to leave for the store and is gathering up her things to go, she often forgets to take the shopping list. Just prior to leaving a staff member prompts, “Don’t forget the shopping list.”

Indirect verbal prompting informs the individual that he or she needs to do something, but it doesn’t explain what. As Marsha becomes more capable at going shopping, she sometimes forgets to take something she needs. Just prior to leaving a staff member prompts, “What are you forgetting, Marsha?” This strategy allows Marsha to think about what she needs and moves her a bit closer to independence.

Physical Prompts

Physical prompts, touching, or guiding an individual’s body through a movement can help an individual to perform a skill. These prompts may involve a part of the body, such as the arm, and range from a brief touch to complete guidance. Physical prompts are typically used when the difficult skill is a motor skill; for example, cutting a sandwich or turning on the shower control. Physical prompts allow motor patterns to become established by frequent practice; for example, you’ve learned to write your name without looking at it or thinking about it.

There are different levels of physical prompts. As noted previously, a physical prompt may simply be a light touch to the hand or it could be the full manipulation of someone’s arm to scoop and bring a spoon of pudding to his or her mouth.

Instructional Prompts (cont.)

It's important to consider; however, that some individuals do not like to be touched or physically manipulated. A physical prompt is never forcing someone to do something. The most helpful physical prompt is to lightly touch or shadow an individual's movement in the correct response.

Gestural Prompts

A very common type of prompt is one that involves simply pointing toward or touching something to draw the attention of the individual to the item. Gestures may consist of nodding one's head or looking in a certain direction. Gestural prompts are natural, non-stigmatizing prompts that are easily used individually and in group situations. For example, Raymond is preparing chicken for dinner. He's done a wonderful job of cleaning the chicken and laying it out in the pan, but he has forgotten to turn on the oven. His support staff member nods toward the oven, prompting Raymond to turn it on.

Allison is trying to tell staff about what happened at work today and is having difficulty communicating clearly. A staff member points toward her Dynavox reminding her to use it to get her message across.

Modeling

Modeling involves showing a learner how to do part or all of a skill. Examples include demonstrating what is to be expected of the learner, providing an example to copy, or describing the outcome through pictures or symbols. This type of prompt requires that an individual be able to imitate or copy what they see. Sometimes picture schedules are helpful for individuals to understand what is expected of them.

James is learning the steps in doing his weekend cleaning at his home. Staff has prepared a picture schedule of each task so that as he completes each one, he can flip the picture over to see the next task. For individuals with more needs, modeling might involve demonstrating the up and down brushing motion in tooth brushing as Sara learns to do this task more effectively.

Contextual Prompting

Additional information can be provided through the context of a situation. Materials, actions, communication, and other environmental cues can assist a learner to complete a step correctly. Contextual prompting is simply placing an individual in a situation in which he or she must demonstrate a skill. For example, Tim is learning to start a conversation with co-workers during his break time. Staff taught Tim that whenever he gets himself a cup of coffee, the polite thing to do is to ask co-workers in the break room if he can get them a cup. Being in the break room and having the opportunity to get coffee reminds Tim to interact with his friends.

Prompts can vary in strength depending on how much help the prompt is to the learner. Physical prompts might seem stronger or provide more support than gestures or indirect verbal prompts, but this is not always the case. We all learn differently and some prompts may not help us at all. It's clear that for a person with a visual impairment, providing a visual model is not going to be much help. Also, verbal prompts are not helpful for those with hearing impairments. Physical prompting is also not helpful if we are working on learning conversation skills on the phone. Some individuals may not like to be physically guided through a task.

Instructional Prompts (cont.)

The types of prompts used with each learner must be selected with the individual in mind. As suggested earlier, selecting prompts according to the individual learner will be easier if you have taken the time to get to know the individual.

While there is no clear sequence of prompts from most support to least support, as a general rule, verbal and gestural prompts usually provide only a little assistance while full physical guidance provides the most assistance.

| Levels of Assistance | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Least | | | | Most |
| verbal | gestural | modeling | partial physical guidance | full physical guidance |

ACTIVITY

Drinking from a Cup

Directions: *Pair with a partner, one taking the role of teacher and one of the student. Follow the task analysis and prompting plan provided.*

| Step | Present level | Prompt |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Grasp cup</i> | <i>Grasps top of cup, not handle</i> | <i>Light touch, then shadow</i> <i>Prompt over hands</i> |
| <i>Raise cup to mouth</i> | <i>Cup not level, spills</i> | <i>Shadow over hands to lift cup to mouth</i> |
| <i>Drink</i> | <i>O.K. (some spilling)</i> | <i>None</i> |
| <i>Place cup on table</i> | <i>Drops cup</i> | <i>Full physical prompt to put cup on table</i> |

PRACTICE AND SHARE

Take a few moments to consider an individual with whom you are working. Think about the type of help that seems to have been most successful in the past.

1. Did the individual seem to do better when shown how to do something or when told?
2. Did the individual learn best when actually working with materials or when told step-by-step instructions?
3. How will what you have learned in this session change the way you support that individual in learning new skills?

Be prepared to share your insights with the class at the beginning of the next session.

Session 6 Quiz

Strategies for Successful Teaching, Part 1

- 1. What is the primary goal of teaching the individual new skills?**
 - A) To help individuals live independently and with enjoyment
 - B) To learn how to a task analysis
 - C) To teach the individual job skills
 - D) To help the individual make new friends
- 2. Which of the following can a DSP learn by spending time with an individual?**
 - A) The individual's medical diagnosis
 - B) The individual's blood pressure
 - C) Things the individual likes to do
 - D) The time the individual must take medications
- 3. The DSP can create the best learning environment by:**
 - A) Providing adequate lighting
 - B) Establishing a good relationship with the learner
 - C) Establishing a firm leadership role
 - D) Providing the right books for class
- 4. A skill is functional when:**
 - A) The individual knows how to do the skill
 - B) It is necessary for the individual's self-care
 - C) The individual's parents want him or her to learn the skill
 - D) It is age-appropriate for the individual
- 5. A skill used frequently by an individual is:**
 - A) A new skill
 - B) An unnecessary skill
 - C) A beginning skill
 - D) A relevant skill
- 6. An age-appropriate skill for a fifteen-year-old is:**
 - A) Singing the ABC song
 - B) Stacking blocks
 - C) Using the telephone to call a friend
 - D) Coloring a picture with crayons
- 7. Which event signals a good opportunity to teach?**
 - A) An individual has successfully completed a task
 - B) An individual is feeling ill
 - C) An individual asks for help to do something
 - D) The director tells the DSP to help the individual
- 8. What is a task analysis?**
 - A) Finding functional skills
 - B) Breaking down a complex task into small steps
 - C) Learning necessary skills
 - D) Pointing toward something to draw attention to it
- 9. What is the benefit of providing a prompt?**
 - A) To provide additional information to ensure success
 - B) To reward individuals for doing a good job
 - C) To provide a list of things to do
 - D) To teach an individual to perform a task
- 10. When the DSP shows an individual how to do part or all of a skill, they are using a _____ prompt.**
 - A) Modeling
 - B) Easy
 - C) Contextual
 - D) Gestural

Appendices



Appendix 6-A Paper Airplane

Directions: Count off by twos. Group 1 will be teachers and Group 2 will be learners. Teachers will be taken to another room to discuss a new skill that they will teach the learners. The teachers need to pair with a learner when they return without telling their learner what they are making. When you have completed the activity, be prepared to answer the following questions:

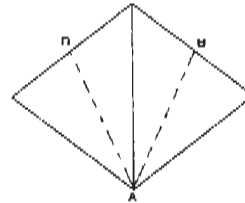
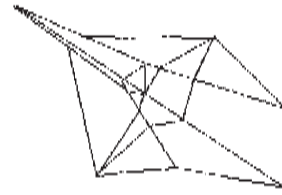
Questions for teachers:

1. Did your student learn? How do you know?
2. What made it difficult for you to teach?
3. What worked for you?

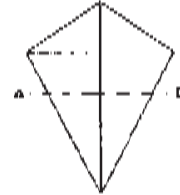
Questions for students:

1. Can you complete the task independently?
2. What did the teacher do that helped you learn?
3. What did not help?

Paper Airplane Directions

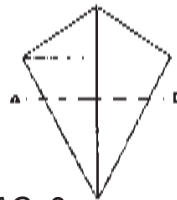


DIAG. 1

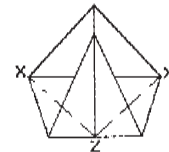


DIAG. 2

1. Take a square piece of paper and fold it down the middle then open it out and fold along the lines AB in DIAG. 1. Now you should have a shape like DIAG. 2.



DIAG. 2

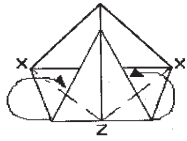


DIAG. 3

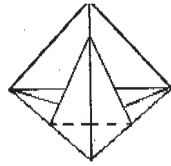
2. Now fold along the line AB in DIAG. 2 you should get DIAG. 3. It is important that the fold AB is midway up the flaps created in STEP 1.
3. Now fold along the lines XZ on DIAG. 3 and unfold having creased very well along these lines. Then fold them in the other direction creasing well and unfold.

Appendix 6-A Paper Airplane (cont.)

4. Tuck the flaps produced in the previous step inside as the arrows show on *DIAG. 4*. This should give you *DIAG. 5*.



DIAG. 4

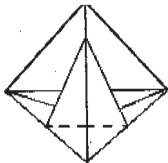


DIAG. 5

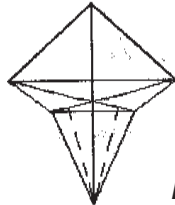
Origami Plane I Flying Lesson

This plane is basically a dart. Throw it as hard as you can straight in the direction you want it to go over arm. It flies equally well indoors and out and doesn't really have any lift or do stunts. It is just a challenge to make and a pleasure once you succeed.

5. Fold the tip down along the dotted line in *DIAG. 5* to give *DIAG. 6*.

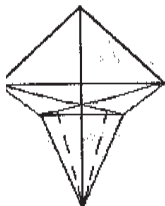


DIAG. 5

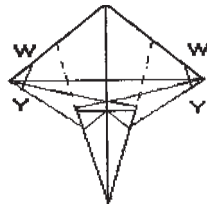


DIAG. 6

6. Now fold along the two dotted lines in *DIAG. 6* giving *DIAG. 7*.



DIAG. 6



DIAG. 7

7. To finish the model off fold along the dotted lines in *DIAG. 7* to give you the form at the beginning.