

Programming for Secondary Students with Autism: Employment and Life Skills Considerations



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Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network

Employment Training is Critical

35 percent of young adults (ages 19-23) with autism have not had a job or received postgraduate education after leaving high school. (Shattuck et al., 2012)

In 2014, less than 17 percent of the population with disabilities was employed. By contrast, 69 percent of people without disabilities were in the labor force, and 65 percent of the population without disabilities was employed. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014)

Employment Training is Critical

Underemployment is also common among people with autism. Often, people on the spectrum are poorly paid and/or are scheduled for very few working hours. (Howlin et al., 2004)

These trends effect people with autism regardless of the severity of their disability. (Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004)

Employment Training is Critical

Of those who completed college, many people with autism reported being unable to find work in their field following graduation.

What Works for Employment Training?

Using the principals of Applied Behavior Analysis can improve functioning and quality of life for adolescents and adults with autism. (Robinson & Smith 2010)

With teaching and support, adults with autism can be successful in employment settings. (McClannahan et al., 2002; Hagner & Cooney, 2005)

What Works for Employment Training?

Place and train or train and place?

Social Skills Training – Job interviews, maneuvering social conventions in the work place, fading supports.

Job Modifications – Modifying tasks or the way a job is performed to make the job a better match for an employee.

Examples of Job Modifications

Consistent schedule

Regularly assigned to a particular job or jobs that have been taught to fluency rather than rotating through different positions.

Examples of Job Modifications

Identify Primary Individuals to Interact With

These key interaction partners can assist with job related suggestions, instructions for new tasks, and help regarding social conventions.

Examples of Job Modifications

Down-Time Alternatives

Reduce or eliminate unstructured time. Teach more than one task/software on computers used for data entry, other employees monitoring bins so that they don't run empty.

Teach the student to ask for what they need to avoid unnecessary downtime.

Video (mand for missing item)

Down-Time Alternatives continued

Incorporate tasks to complete during downtime. (e.g. When going for a walk, monitor trash cans, refill condiments, etc.)

What to teach first?

Build basic language skills

Target language related to employment

Expand language to novel and generalized responding

Teach skills that apply to many situations

Build Basic Language Skills

Mand – Wanting something and asking for it. (e.g. I cannot find my keys and I ask my wife, “Where are my keys?”)

Tact – A response is evoked based on an object, event, or property. (e.g. I see a key and I say “key.” I see someone writing and I say “writing.” I smell cookies and say “cookies.”)

Echoic – Repeating what someone else has said (e.g. I am told, “fork, spoon, knife.” and I repeat “fork, spoon, knife.”)

Intraverbal – Hearing someone say something and saying something different (e.g. answering questions, discussion, word association, fill-ins)

Build Basic Language Skills(continued)

Imitation – Doing what you saw someone do. (e.g. I blow a raspberry and my daughter blows a raspberry. I watch my father gap a sparkplug and I gap the next one.)

Listener Response – Following directions (e.g. Told, “Line up.” and the student lines up. Told, “Get your hat, coat, gloves, and boots on.” and the person does so.)

Match to Sample – Selecting something due to shared properties. (e.g. Sorting silverware, given a hexagonal flange and getting the bolt that fits)

Target Language Related to Employment

Can the student tact all of the relevant objects (including parts and features) at their work station?

Can the student engage in appropriate intraverbals?
“Welcome to the Tomato Pie Café.”

Can the student mand appropriately?
“How do I save this as a PDF?”
“I need sanitizer fluid.”

Target Language Related to Employment

Can the student respond as a listener?

Retrieving items when asked to do so

Match to sample

Sorting, putting together prepackaged arrangements, etc.

Motor Imitation

Generalized motor imitation will make teaching new tasks much easier.

Target Language Related to Employment

Echoic behavior can aid in multistep tasks, help to remember an order, or be used to check that the employee heard all the steps they were asked to do.

Parts/Features of Items

Being able to talk about all aspects of a work environment is a critical skill!

The student tacts parts or features of objects. Also can be described as Parts/Whole Tacting

When presented with an object or picture of an object can the learner label its parts?

- For a computer the child tacts the keyboard, screen, mouse, power cord, etc.

Skills Needed Before Teaching Parts/Features

Mastered many tacts

- About 100 mastered tacts of objects/pictures
- Multiple exemplars of most tacts mastered
- Fluency of tact response should be considered

Teaching and Programming Considerations:

Begin to teach tacting features on items that are strongly acquired as tact

Intersperse trials for tacting the whole item during training

To prevent rote responding, don't tact parts of an item in the same order each time.

Teaching Considerations

Choose targets that are relevant for the learner from mastered tacts.

- Is the target commonly what the learner would come in contact with in his/her environment? (e.g., parts and features of items required for work)

Start teaching this skill with objects that have very discrete parts.

If not feasible to teach skill with object , use pictures to teach tact of parts and features

- Pictures must have distinct/discernable parts if they are to be used.

Tact parts and features of items: teaching trial example

Trial	Teacher's Response	Learner's Response
Tact Prompt for part	Presents object - car "What's this part called?" wheel (while pointing to wheel)	"Wheel"
Tact transfer	"What's this part called?"	"Wheel"
Tact distracter	"What's this called?" (picture of cup)	"cup"
Echoic distracter	"Say under the table"	"under the table"
Tact check	Presents object - car "What is this part called?"	"wheel"
Tact trial item	Presents object - car "Tell me what the whole thing is called"	" a car"

Teaching Part/Feature

Prompt trial with echoic for the feature

Transfer to tact of feature with no prompt

Distract trials including a tact of whole item

Check trial for feature

Parts & Features Video

	Target	Date Introduced	Date Mastered
1	Pencil: Eraser		
2	Point		
3	Car: Wheels		
4	Wipers		
5	Headlights		
6	Door		
7	Seatbelt		
8	Seat		
9	Window		
10	Trunk		
11	Steering wheel		
12	Bus: Yellow		
13	Wheels		
14	Door		
15	Windows		
16	Stop sign		
17	Headlights		
18	Wipers		
19	Seat		
20	Steps		
21	Steering wheel		
22	Shirt: Sleeves		
23	Collar		
24	Buttons		
25	Tag		
26	Pants: Legs		
27	Zipper		
28	Snap		
29	Button		
30	Pockets		
31	Tag		

Integration with Other Teaching Targets

Teaching tacts of Parts and Features is one aspect of teaching a full verbal repertoire

The process of teaching features is often integrated into a process of teaching Features, Functions and Class across Tacts, Listener Responding and Intraverbals

Integration with Other Teaching Targets

Remember you are teaching a discrimination
(What is it? vs. What part?)

If errors of discrimination occur make sure that the
discrimination is strong!
(Error correction should address the discrimination)

Building on Basic Language Skills

Pure verbal operants rarely occur

My wife might tact the condition of our kitchen sink but it is
also a mand.

Building on Basic Language Skills

Most of the things we say and do, we have never said or done before

Most spoken language is the result of having acquired atomic verbal skills

Building on Basic Language Skills

Atomic repertoires are critical for maneuvering social situations and imperative for successful employment.

Teaching atomic repertoires allows students to learn to behave flexibly and appropriately by recombining skills to make novel responses

Example One

Follow this instruction (read it silently first):

Put your right thumb on the back of your neck and say “fall de rall dee dum” after I clap my hands

Example two

Follow this direction (read it silently first):

Begin in first position turned out, piqué, step stage left, hitchkick, and land on the walk after I clap my hands.

How Do We Build From Basic to Complex?

Discrete trial instruction of verbal operants

Mand training

Teaching in the natural environment

All of these require well structured teaching; high rates of active student responding; good instructional control; effective progress monitoring; and proficient error correction

Video (Derek group instruction)

Critical Skills for Employment

Establishing prerequisite skills allow the student to have a strong foundation to build upon.

‘Established’ is not a set number (e.g. the student has 200 tacts is not a good reason to end a tact program).

Critical Skills for Employment

Joint control is when several verbal responses come together to control some other response. Flexible recombination of previously taught skills.

Students who are taught to utilize joint control will be able to follow multi-step directions.

Frequently involves rehearsal (echoic) and either tact or intraverbal responding.

Practical Considerations

“Talking to oneself” (emitting a “self-echoic” or “tacting” to oneself)

Responding that is controlled by talking out loud (overtly) or to yourself (covertly).

This allows students to engage in novel tasks without directly teaching each step, a pragmatic tool for teaching life and employment related skills!

Multiple Step Tasks

Usually works by:

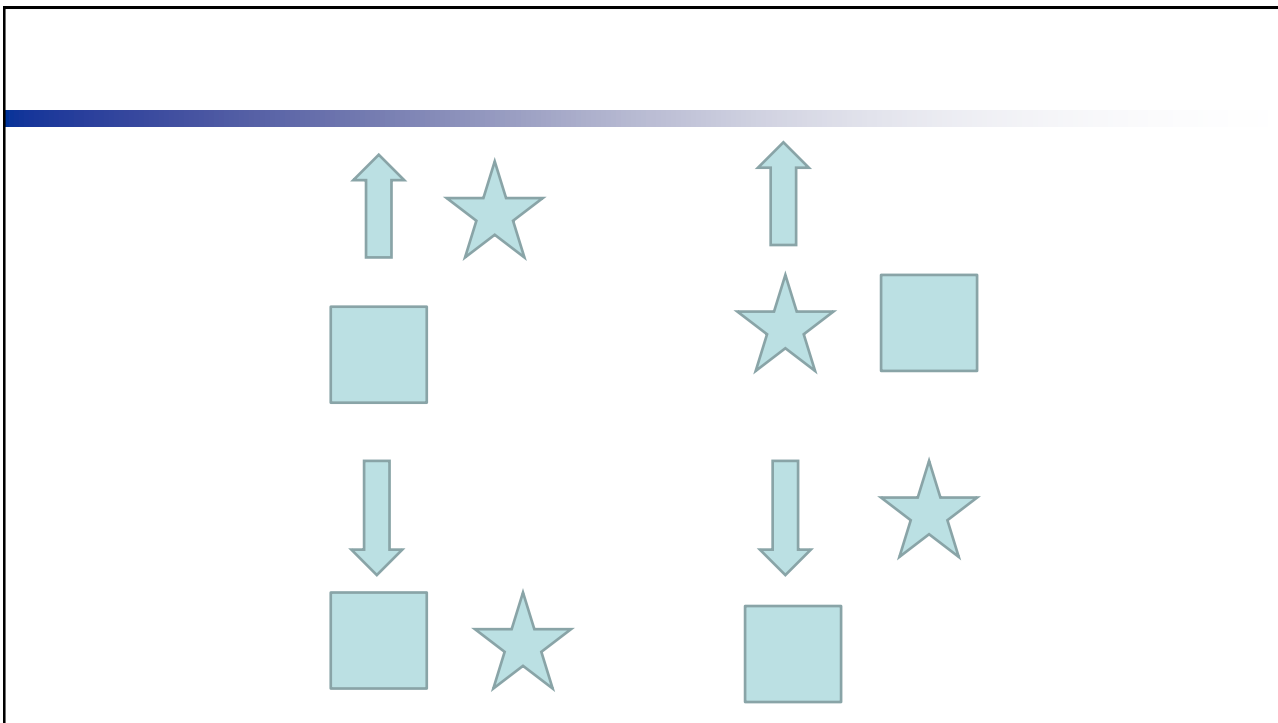
First echoing something that was said, *“ctrl-p to print, select ok, go to printer 6”*

Then using the echoic while tacting as part of a selection response, *“printer 6, printer 6”*

As the selection is made an “aha” moment occurs, *“printer 6!”* or *“There it is!”*

One response (whatever is said to self) is emitted for several reasons such as rehearsal, labeling, and selection





How to Use Joint Control

- Example One:
 - Teach multiple LR discriminations (pick items in order)
 - Rehearse sequence before making selection
 - Remembering a grocery list
- Example Two:
 - Teach following multiple step directions
 - Rehearse sequence before following steps
 - Assembling an office chair
- Example Three
 - Counting to a specific number of objects
 - Rehearse the number(s) before counting out the objects
 - Making change

Video Joint Control

Considerations for Teaching Life and Employment Skills

When would a person engage in the behavior? (*Variables related to motivation*)

What in the environment normally guides the behavior? (*Variables related to context*)

Is there an adequate amount of practice/teaching trials? (*Variables related to generalization*)

Teach Under the Right Motivation

You don't get an m&m for making eye contact, you get the other person's attention.

Mands for missing items

Mands for information

Interrupted Chain Procedures

-Videos (mand for information)

Teach Under the Right Conditions

You don't only ask for something when your teacher is directly across from you at a table saying "What do you want?" you ask for things throughout the day under myriad circumstances.

Instruction will often start with discrete trial and basic mand training but must not end there.

Teach the Skill to Generalization

Teach the skill often and across environments, people, and situations (*You complete your work when your boss asks, or when a colleague asks. You might complete the work in your office, in a hotel room, or at home.*)

When a quarterback throws an interception we don't say he can't throw a ball, we say he needs more practice.

Video's – parts and features NET

Data Collection for Skill Generalization

Anecdotal data is not sufficient.

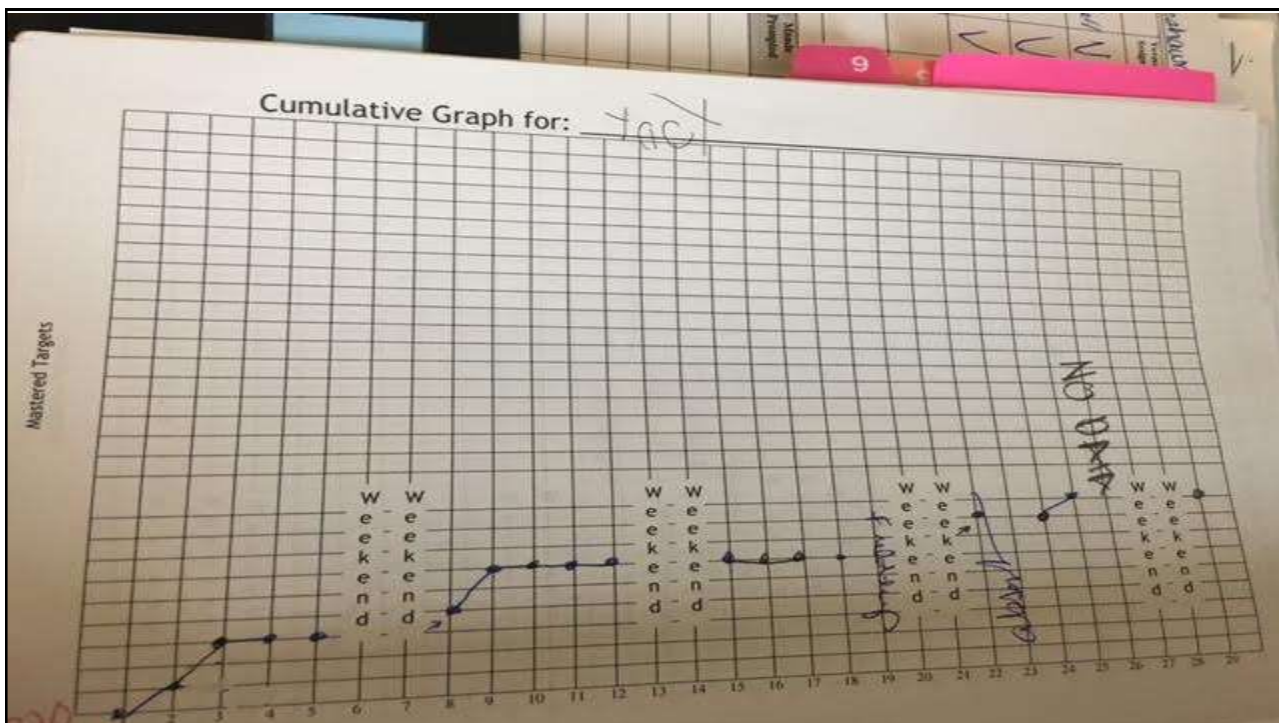
Data should be easy for all staff to collect.

Skill sequencing is easier with data to guide you.

GROUP NET DATA

	Student:	Student:	Student:	Student:	Student:
Listener Responding					
Imitation					
Mands					
Tacts					
Intraverbal					
Social Interaction					
Choral/Unison Responding					

SKILL	TACTS	Date Introduced	Date Mastered
	Target	4-29-16	
	SUGAR PACKET	1-6-16	2-2-16
	COFFEE CUP SLEEVE		
	TOASTER	TO	—
	BOWL		
	TIMER		
	TONGS		
	CHARCOAL GRILL		
	FRYING PAN		
	MEASURING CUP		
	FOOD PROCESSOR		
	TEA KETTLE		
	LIGHT SWITCH		
	WET FLOOR SIGN	3/16/16	4-29-16
	EXIT SIGN	TO	—
	WALK SIGN	TO	—
	ENTRANCE SIGN		
	COFFEE STIRRER	2-3-16	2-9-16
	DOMINO SUGAR PACKET	2-29-16	2-22-16
	COFFEE SPOON		
	CART	1-6-16	2-23-16
	DONUT SHOP REGULAR COFFEE & CUP	2-22-16	3-3-16
	BIGELOW EARL GREY BLACK TEA & CUP	2-22-16	3-3-16
	green mountain breakfast blend DECAF COFFEE & cups	3-3-16	4-29-16
	green mountain HAZELNUT COFFEE & cups	2-25-16	3/16/16
	SWISS MISS HOT CHOCOLATE & CUP	2-8-16	2-25-16



Task Completion

When teaching task completion remember that each step is the reinforcement for the previous step, as well as the stimuli that controls the next step.

Seeing the pancake batter begin to bubble is the reinforcement for pouring the batter onto the hot griddle as well as the signal that I should flip the pancake.

Task Completion

To teach task completion this sequence must be what controls each step.

Task Completion Video

Task Completion

Before teaching the task it is critical to identify what steps the person can, and cannot, complete without prompting.

Analyze the task to break it down to component steps that can be taught errorlessly.

Example of a Task Analysis

1. Get soup from pantry
2. Get bowl from cabinet
3. Get spoon from drawer
4. Open soup
5. Pour soup into bowl
6. Microwave soup for 2 minutes
7. Remove soup from microwave
8. Place spoon in bowl
9. Place bowl of soup on table

Student:		Task Analysis: Stimulus-Response Data Sheet	Chain: Total Task
Skill: Wiping Tables		Criteria: Complete wiping tables chain at 100% independence across 5 consecutive sessions with teacher 2 feet away	
Instructions: Fill in date at top and check corresponding box if a step was incorrect or required prompting.			
Step#	Stimulus/Consequence	Response	
1	SP: Wipe your tables C: knows assigned table numbers	Walks table, finds list with name	
2	SP: Picks up wet dish towel C: picks up wet dish towel	Goes to water bin	
3	SP: Standing at water bin C: Has wet dish towel	Pick up towel	
4	SP: Has wet dish towel C: has damp dish towel	Wrings out dish towel 3-5 times	
5	SP: Has damp dish towel C: Places dish towel on table	Goes to first assigned table	
6	SP: Dish towel on table C: whole table wet	Wipes whole table (1): corner to corner, end to end and middle	
7	SP: Table is wet C: Holding dish towel	Pick up dish towel	
8	SP: Holding dish towel C: Left bench seat wet	Wipe bench seat (left)	
9	SP: Left bench seat wet C: Holding dish towel	Pick up towel	
10	SP: Holding Dish towel C: Standing in front of right bench seat	Move to right bench seat	
11	SP: Standing in front of right bench seat C: right bench seat wet	Wipe right bench seat	
12	SP: Right bench seat wet C: table number marked finished	Mark off table number on assignment sheet	
13	SP: table number marked off C: standing at water bin	Walk to water bin	
14	SP: Standing in front of water bin C: Dish towel in water bin	Put dish towel in water bin	
15	SP: Dish towel in water bin C: Dish towel cleaned for use on next table	Swish dish towel around in water	
16	SP: Standing in front of water bin C: Holding dish towel	Pick up towel	
17	SP: Has wet dish towel C: has damp dish towel	Wrings out dish towel 3-5 times	
18	SP: Has damp dish towel C: Places dish towel on table	Goes to next assigned table	
19	SP: Dish towel on table C: whole table wet	Wipes whole table (2): corner to corner, end to end and middle	
20	SP: Table is wet C: Holding dish towel	Pick up dish towel	
21	SP: Holding dish towel C: Left bench seat wet	Wipe bench seat (left)	
22	SP: Left bench seat wet C: Holding dish towel	Pick up towel	

Steps	SKILL:			mailboxes, wil	D
	Date 10/1	Date 10/2	Date 10/5	Date	
1 pick up papers	I	I	I		
2 locate mailboxes					
3. place 1 pg. in the top mailbox					
4 align paper horizontally					
5 place 1 pg. in the next box					
6. align paper horizontally					
7. place 1 pg. in the next box					
8 align paper horizontally					
9 place 1 pg. in the next box					
10 align paper horizontally					
11 place 1 pg. in the next box					
12 align paper horizontally					
13 place 1 pg. in the next box					
14 align paper horizontally					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					

Name: James PCA Café Job Description: **Delivering a drink using the cart**

Date	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.9	3.11	3.14	3.17	3.29
1. Place drink in holder on cart	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	I
2. Place 2 hands on handle of cart	GP	GP	GP	GP	I	I	I	I
3. Look forward before walking	GP	GP	GP	GP	I	I	I	I
4. Begin pushing cart towards door	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP
5. Open door	GP	GP	GP	I	I	I	I	I
6. Hold door open with one hand	GP	GP	GP	I	I	GP	GP	GP
7. Push cart through door with other hand	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	I	GP
8. Replace both hands back on handle of cart	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
9. Push cart through hallway	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP
10. Walk along right side of hallway	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP
11. If someone is in the way, say "excuse me"	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP
12. Push cart to door of classroom	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP
13. Knock on classroom door	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
13. Place one hand on cup holder and take out drink cup with the other hand	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP
14. Hand drink cup to teacher	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
15. Take additions out of cup holder and hand to teacher	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP
16. Look at teacher and thank him/her for service	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP
17. Turn cart around using 2 hands	GP	GP	GP	GP	I	I	I	I
18. Push cart back to classroom using 2 hands while looking forward	GP	GP	GP	I	I	I	I	I
19. Open door to classroom and push cart in	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
20. Put cart back into correct place in the room	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I

PP: Full Physical Prompt FP: Faded Physical Prompt GP: Gestural Prompt I: Independent
 3 days of 100% Independent is criteria for mastery 3S 5S 5S

Task Analysis

Have the student complete the steps they can do correctly then errorlessly teach the missing step. Or complete up to the target step and prompt the response.

Physical and gestural prompts will be easier to fade than vocal prompts.

Video from Keeli's classroom

Teaching a Behavior Chain

Backward chaining

- Create a task analysis of the chain of behaviors
- Assess how much of the chain the student can complete independently
- Begin teaching at the step the student cannot compete
(e.g. Setting a table: If the student cannot place the folded napkins next to the plate, start with the table set to that point and teach the step using prompt fading)

Procedural Considerations

Mastery criteria should be that the student can do the task independently 100% of the time across a set number of consecutive sessions.

When teaching, stand behind the student to prevent your presence becoming the stimulus that guides the next step.

Procedural Considerations

Use gestural prompts and physical prompts when possible.

If errors occur on mastered steps, start at the step previous to the error and prompt the step where the error occurred.

Forward Chaining

Forward chaining begins with the first step in the chain and progresses to the last step.

In forward chaining, you start with the first task in the chain. Once the child can perform that step to criteria you have them perform both the *first* **and** *second* step using a prompt to teach the second step.

Forward Chaining

Do not teach step 1, then teach step 2 separately. Teach them together so that the chain of behaviors is reinforced.

Forward chaining is recommended if the student can successfully complete many steps at the beginning of the behavior chain. (e.g. the student makes their bed, but always leaves the pillow on the floor)

Reminders

Behavior chains can be as complex, or as simple, as necessary for the student to complete the task.

Do the task yourself and have someone write down each step as you do it.

Program Considerations for Teaching Behavior Chains

Need to teach how to do actual job related skills and skills of daily living for ADLs

Job Skills – Consider student's preference

Fluency – How much time is reasonable between steps in a task, how long does it take someone else to do the task?

Task Analysis – Is each step mastered accurately and fluently?

Skills Sequence – Has the student mastered prerequisite skills necessary?

Further Considerations

Can the student flexibly respond when something goes wrong in a behavior chain?

How do we teach the student to ask for more of something when they run out? Where something is when it has been moved?

Video (coffee missing cream)

Motivation for Missing Items

The value of the 'final product' is established. Each step establishes the next step as reinforcement and evokes behavior to get to the final product

(e.g. You engage in the behavior chain of making a bowl of soup because you haven't eaten and soup is valuable. If you cannot find a spoon you will do something to get one such as asking someone.)

Pre-Requisite Skills for Asking for Missing Items

Mands for 75 to 100 items present and actions

Mands are generalized across instructors, stimuli, and settings

A repertoire of tacting reinforcing and non-reinforcing items and actions

Interrupted Chain Procedure

Prior to delivering the direction for the initial step in the chain, contrive the motivation for the mand by making the relevant stimulus unavailable

For example, if the targeted mand is the vocal response “spoon,” put the spoon out of student’s sight, but within your reach

Teach the mand errorlessly

Considerations Prior to Teaching Mand for Missing Items

Start with highly reinforcing activities (vs. task completion as a reinforcer)

In response to an initial direction (e.g. “Go ahead and eat your jello” “make a your bed”), the student should have mastered each step of the behavior chain.

Prompt the mand and transfer from prompted to unprompted (Within trial and second trial transfers).

Mand for Missing Items

Teach in the natural environment

Look for opportunities to teach likely scenarios (Out of pens at work, used the last piece to assemble something, need the keys to the bathroom, etc.)

Teach to generalization! There is no magic number or criteria. Mands for missing items are generalized when the student consistently asks for missing items that have not been taught directly.

What about when the student needs information?

Asking for information occurs constantly in day to day life

In addition to an essential skill for vocation, asking for information is a critical social skill (Did you like the movie? Where is Chris? Etc.)

Mand for Information

Antecedent(s)	Behavior	Consequence
Need to use bathroom and its location is unknown	MAND: "Where is the bathroom?"	"Behind the cashier and to the right"
Can't find a necessary form and told that somebody else has it	MAND: "Who?"	"Molly"
Opened Chutes and Ladders for the first time and don't know how to play	MAND: "How do I play this game?"	"First, you have to pick a color..."

Why do we ask for information?

Information allows us to behave more efficiently.

Asking questions such as "Who, What, When, Where, and Why?" can be taught but require extensive planning.

The information must be valuable AND the reinforcement for the question. (You don't get to play an iPad for asking "Where?")

Pre-Requisite Skills for Manding for Information

Student can already spontaneously ask for 100s of different items/activities, actions, missing items, manding with yes/no, and the removal of aversives

Strong repertoire of related to people, places, adjectives, prepositions, and pronouns (atomic repertoires)

Self-echoic rehearsal should be strong so the student can use the information (e.g. “on Ms. Harned’s desk, behind the pencils....)

Examples of Teaching “What”

Interrupt a low-interest activity and say, “we are going to do something different” and then prompt “what?,” reinforce prompted response with the name of a highly-reinforcing activity that is available (e.g. “we’re going to watch Animaniacs!”)

Examples of Teaching “What”

Present a bag or container with a reinforcer in it and say, “I have something for you in here,” then prompt, “What?” or “What is it?” and then deliver the verbal information, “it’s an X”

Video ELCO

Examples of Teaching “What”

Arrange a field of pictures, in which most of them are known tacts and two of them are unknown. Tell the student, “if you can name all of these pictures I will give you (high value reinforcer)”

When you point to the first unknown item and the child emits behaviors indicating motivation for the name, prompt, “What is it?” and reinforce with the answer

Having two unknowns in the field allow for a transfer trial within the same session

Video Harrisburg

Examples of Teaching “Who”

Give a highly preferred item to a known individual in the room.

Tell the child, “Someone in this room has your headphones,” and then prompt “who?” reinforce prompted response with the name of the known person

Video Headphones

Examples of Teaching “Who”

Arrange a field of pictures of people and/or characters, in which most of them are known facts and two of them are unknown. Tell the student, “if you can name all of these people I will give you (highly preferred activity)”

When you point to the first unknown person and the child indicates motivation for information, prompt, “who is it?” and reinforce with the answer

Examples of Teaching “Where”

Place a highly preferred toy or activity that is consistently in the same location and then when the child is looking for it, prompt “where is X?” then tell the child where the item is (e.g. “on Ms. Kathie’s desk” or “it’s in the kitchen”)

Hide the child’s toys in various locations and say, “your X is somewhere in this room” or “Your X isn’t here”

- Notice the importance of the child’s ability to respond to instructions involving prepositions and pronouns.
- Don’t move too quickly to multi-step response that will require extensive rehearsal for the student’s success

Example of Teaching “How”

Have a preferred activity delivered in a see-through, but difficult to access container (e.g. lock-and-key, child-proof container, coded lock, etc.) and after the child asks for the visible item deliver the container and say, “yes, you can have it” ...

When the child fails to open the container prompt “how do I open it?” and provide the instructions.

Example of Teaching “How”

Open up a board game that the student has never played (e.g. chutes and ladders) and tell the him/her, “if you can beat me at this game then you can have (high value item)”

When the student appears frustrated or curious about how to play prompt “how do I play?”

For more information on teaching Mands

The Basics of Mand Training by Miguel Ampuero and Willow Hozella National Autism Conference 2014 (This years session by Michael Miklos will be webcast)

Advanced Mand Procedures and Protocols by David Roth

<http://autism.outreach.psu.edu/agenda/conference-schedule/advanced-mand-procedures-and-protocols>

Mand Training Videos at www.pattan.net

Social Aspects of Employment

All of the previously discussed teaching procedures are critical elements for teaching social skills

It is very important to teach verbal behavior that is essential to social aspects of work and living with others (e.g. Mands, Tacts, Intraverbals as conversation, Listener Responses to reinforce others Mands, etc.).

Selecting a Job

Compatibility of potential employee's skills with the demands of the job

Compatibility with the interests of the applicant, how to find a job based on what a student already likes to do eg: job sampling, after teaching jobs in different areas offering a choice.

Job Coaches and Supervisors

Discuss job try outs for employers – give employers an opportunity to see that autism is not a barrier to employment

Explain to supervisors the need to be precise in communication with employees with autism

Employees with autism should be held accountable like anyone else, lowered expectations are not a modification.

Job Coach and Supervisors

Willingness to commit time until necessary supports are identified and in place.

Identify disability supporting organizations available to the employer and to the employee

(e.g. Department of Human Services, The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, PaTTAN Secondary Transition Initiative, etc.)

Collect and use data to determine how and when to fade or increase supports

Job Coach and Supervisors

Collaboration with job trainers/job providers is essential. This should include “template match” approach to determining instructional content in school.

Student’s motivation is critical consideration for choosing tasks during this collaboration. (What does the student like to do? What skills are needed?)

In Closing

The importance of teaching our students to be productive members of society cannot be overstated. To paraphrase B.F. Skinner’s *Walden Two*,

“People build society and society builds people.”

Recommended Reading

“I Do That for Everybody”: Supervising Employees With Autism
Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities Hagner, D., &
Cooney, B. F. (2005)

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