

Setting Expectations: How to Support Skill Development while Promoting Independence



Task Completion – Challenges our Children May Face



- Tired from school or other activities
- May not understand directions or expectations
- Difficulty processing content
- Difficulty producing work product
- Motivation – may take a lot of effort
- Difficulty getting started & planning
- Lose focus while working
- Dyslexia-specific challenges: decoding/encoding, sequencing, processing what's being asked and in what order

Task Completion – Challenges Parents May Face



- You want your child to be independent, but things aren't getting done
- You want home to be a respite from the difficult school day and don't want to cause additional stress
- May not be clear what the assignment/task is
- May see your child struggling to understand task or lose focus while working on something
- Not sure what your child can and cannot do independently

And as a Result...

- Our children may engage in task refusal or escape-maintained behaviors including...
 - Crying, yelling, protesting, ignoring, hiding, ripping up homework, claiming they can't remember their login ID, repeatedly asking for help, not engaging in the task until we help them, making negative self-worth statements, etc.
- The Dilemma –
 - We are afraid to over-help; this may lead to learned-helplessness, prompt-dependence and lack of independence
 - We are afraid to under-help; this may lead to refusal, frustration, and low self-esteem

How much help should I give my child?

...The Goal:

To enjoy learning

To be happy

To limit frustrations
at home

To finish things without
so many reminders

To be independent

To enjoy school

Where do I start?



-
1. Determine skills to target
 2. Identify barriers and motivational factors
 3. Teach the skill(s) through prompting, shaping, and reinforcement

I. Determine skills to target

- Which skills are most important for my child to learn in order to be independent and be successful in school? At home? In the community?
- Which skills can my child perform? Not yet able to perform?
- Which skills require help to perform? Which tasks often result in refusal, withdrawal, or incorrect completion?

What are the high-priority skills for your child and family?

- Examples may include:
 - Homework completion
 - Minimizing refusal or protest behaviors
 - Completing work independently/asking for help when needed
 - Expanding exposure to activities, foods, places
 - Increasing independence around the house
- If you're not sure about your child's skill set, take a look at Present Levels in IEP, outside testing reports, etc.

2. Determine barriers and motivational factors: *Barriers*

Barriers which may impact your child's response to tasks presented:

- Difficulty of task, length of task, time of day, a history of adult assistance, etc.
- Dyslexia-specific barriers may include difficulty and length of reading/writing tasks, difficulty sequencing and following steps/sequences, the need for repetition and rehearsal

2. Determine barriers and motivational factors: *Motivational Factors*

- Motivational factors which will impact your child's response to tasks presented:
 - Reinforcement
Reinforcement is something that happens immediately after a response which increases the likelihood of that response occurring again in the future.
 - Reinforcers (the things, people, activities, etc., which reinforce responses) are unique to each person. Reinforcers may include:
 - praise, high-fives, help provided, etc.
 - access to preferred items or activities, etc.
 - being left alone, not having to do additional work, etc.
 - In order for a learned behavior/response to increase, reinforcement must be happening!

How Reinforcement Affects Task Completion

People engage in the response that most efficiently gets them what they need/want.

- what is my child getting out of having completed....(task)?
 - Praise, satisfaction from having completed something, gets to leave and go engage in a more preferred activity, etc.
- Is the task too hard or is he/she getting too little upon completing it to make it worth-while in the here-and-now?
- Is there an incentive to complete things more independently?

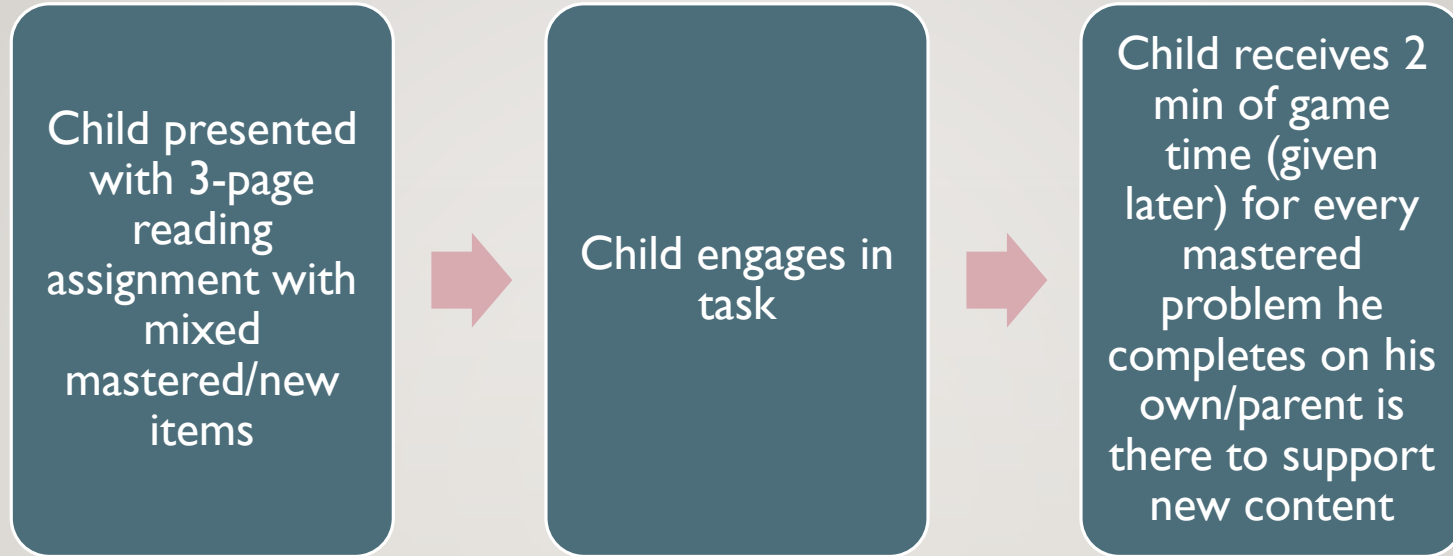
Homework refusal response



Why?

- May be too long of a task – may not understand or have mastered they task
- May be easier to complete with parent's help
- May not be an incentive to complete it independently

Homework refusal response




Why?

- Shortened task; new stuff intermixed with easier/mastered content
- Additional reinforcement added for independent completion

3. Teach the skill through prompting, shaping, and reinforcement:

Prompting

- **Before-task prompts:** shortening length of task, limiting answer choice field, highlighting important words, making a visual list of steps, etc.
 - **Within-task prompts:** pointing to correct answer, giving a verbal choice or clue, repeating information, modeling correct response, etc.
 - In general, if your child cannot yet perform the skill on his/her own, start with heavier prompting (like modeling, talking/walking through, etc.) and fade out once he's better-performing the skill. If he/she can perform the steps of the skill, use less-direct prompting (pointing to a page to reference, pointing to next task step, giving a clue or reminder of a strategy to use, etc.).
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Unloading the Dishwasher

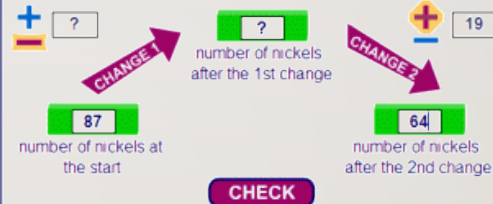
- Open dishwasher door.
- Take cups out.
- Put cups away.
- Take bowls out.
- Put bowls away.
- Take plates out.
- Put plates away.
- Get silverware.
- Put silverware away.
- Close dishwasher door.

Examples of Before-task Prompts

Read The Problem

Tracy had 87 nickels. She used some of her nickels to buy a cookie. Tracy later found 19 nickels in her backpack. Now Tracy has 64 nickels. How many nickels did Tracy use to buy the cookie?

Build Your Model



essay checklist

INTRODUCTION

- Did you clearly state your **THESIS**?
- Have you effectively introduced the reader to your topic?
- Does your **THESIS** answer the research question?

BODY

- Is the main idea clearly and effectively stated?
- Is the main concept clearly discussed?
- Did you cite all borrowed information?
- Does the evidence support your argument?
- Do all body paragraphs follow a similar structure?

CONCLUSION

- Did you summarize your argument?
- Did you restate your thesis?
- Did you make larger connections?
- Does the conclusion flow from the body?

STYLE / EDITING

- Is your language formal?
- Are sentences concise and free from unnecessary words and content?
- Do sentences flow properly?
- Is grammar and spelling correct?
- Is the paper free from contractions? (Don't, it's etc.)
- Did you **REREAD** your paper? Once? Twice?

REFERENCES

- Does everything have a cite?
- Are references and citations properly formatted?
- Have you used enough **CREDIBLE** sources?
- Did you include a reference page?

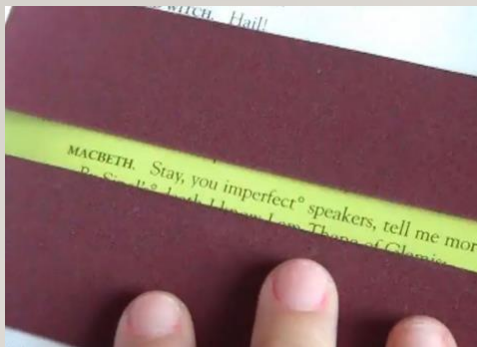
For Section 1 strategies, see p. 200 of Teacher's Manual.

1 The Postwar Years Are Marked by Political and Economic Unrest

Within a few months after the armistice ended the First World War, over three million Americans were discharged from the armed forces. In the same period, hundreds of thousands of **wartime workers were cut from the payrolls of government and industry.** **Unemployment suddenly became a** peace, **working people had become increasingly discontented.** The **cost of living had almost doubled since 1916** while in many industries wages lagged behind. Also, **factory workers were no longer willing to endure wartime working conditions** — which, in the steel industry, consisted of a 69-hour, 7-day work week. **They were ready to fight for improvements in their standard of living and in their working conditions.** In 1919 there were almost 4,000 strikes, many of them violent.

Unrest 1919	Summary
The Postwar Years Are Marked by Political and Economic Unrest	wartime workers were cut from the payrolls of government and industry.
Labor troubles break out.	Farmers, meanwhile, were confronted with sharply falling crop prices. - The nation was entering a period of economic and political unrest.
	working people had become increasingly discontented.
	cost of living had almost doubled since 1916.

138 words were checked, 1 not in spelling dictionary. Page 3 of 6



Types of Within-task Prompts

Verbal	Full Physical	Partial Physical	Model	Gesture	Visual
A step-by-step narration is given to the student in order for the task / direction to be completed	An adult offers hand-over-hand manipulation of the student to control / direct motor movements	An adult moves a student's body in the direction he needs to go or towards the targeted object	An adult or another student demonstrates the task / direction that is requested of the student	An adult points or makes an action to indicate the next step of a task / direction	An adult points to a visual or an object that is the next step of the task / direction

3. Teach the skill through prompting, shaping, and reinforcement:

Shaping

Shaping just means increasing the level of the skill over time:

- Start with what your child is currently able to do. Reinforce any attempts to complete a task at that level.
- Once the skill improves, increase your expectation and start to fade out any prompting your providing – gradually.
- Over time, provide reinforcement for difficult/independent task completion only (for things you know your child has mastered).



3. Teach the skill through prompting, shaping, and reinforcement: *Reinforcement*

- what will *increase the likelihood that the desired response will happen again in the future?*
- Remember, reinforcers are person-specific and can change, even throughout the day.
- For things that are difficult for your child, start heavy and fade out over time. At first, this may mean providing reinforcement for just trying something.





Dyslexia-specific strategies

- Try providing visual lists, checklists, steps, etc., in conjunction with verbal information. This may allow you to ‘cue’ your child back to the information/list rather than having to repeat information.
- Allow some extra response-time before jumping in to prompt.
- If you need to prompt your child through a task, try and go back and/or present a similar task shortly after to allow for skill practice.
- When providing verbal prompting, try and use clues or direct your child where to find the information/which strategy to use, etc., rather than just stating the answer.
- Remember that reading and writing-based activities are taxing for your child.

General Strategies for Promoting Independent Task Completion

- Use lists, directions, samples, visuals, notebooks/binders with steps-words-equations, etc. for your child to reference when 'stuck'.
- Try and keep things structured/routine (such as expectations for completion, set times for working on homework, etc.).
- If your child gets distracted during tasks, try timers, removing music/TV/computer apps which may increase distraction. If possible, try and have multiple segments of time to work on homework, etc., rather than one large chunk of time.
- Practice being in the background & helping when asked (for mastered tasks).
- If you're going to lessen or remove a task, try & do that before any refusal.
- Increase incentives for doing things on own. Our instinct is to jump in & help/finish something if it's taking too long, not up to standard, etc.
- Provide choice when possible.
- Encourage home-school organization systems which are facilitated. Binders, calendars, Google docs. Make a fail-safe homework turn in system.

In Conclusion...

To help your child through tasks while promoting independence:

- ✓ Determine skills to target
- ✓ Identify barriers and motivational factors
- ✓ Teach the skill(s) through prompting, shaping, and reinforcement

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's school program and ways to promote skill development and Independence at school, set up a free consultation with Educational Advocacy and Consulting at 773-230-8320 or admin@educationaladvocacyandconsulting.com

If you have questions about in-home behavioral skill support and therapy options, contact Deb at deb@educationaladvocacyandconsulting.com

