

Backward Chaining

Why Use Backward Chaining?

- Useful strategy for teaching skills which have multiple steps that are linked together (in a chain) to complete a task
- The child achieves success by doing one small step to complete an activity/task/ skill
- Prompts can be effectively used and reduced to support development of the skill
- Success can be quickly, verbally and socially rewarded or reinforced
- It is simple to build steps up to support child to eventually complete whole task

How to Support a Child through Backward Chaining

1. Identify the steps needed to complete the task (It can be useful to write them down)
2. Identify the step/ steps the child will undertake (the last/ last couple)
3. Identify how the child will be introduced to the task e.g., say the first adult put a puzzle piece in the child put a piece in or the adult model puts a puzzle piece in
4. Support the child to engage in their part of the task (using any prompting strategies)
5. Verbally reward and reinforce
6. Gradually fade out support or prompts
7. Introduce the next steps...
8. ...until the child can complete tasks without support
9. Generalise skill to different situations e.g., toileting, dressing.
10. Revisit this strategy when introducing a new skill

Backward Chaining with Inset Puzzle

Start by asking the child to put one piece into the board and celebrate the success. Build up one piece at a time to keep the child engaged with continued success



Forward Chaining

- The final steps of the task sequence are harder than the first steps
- There is a strong link between the steps of a task and each one initiates the next
- When the child has the skills to do the task but needs help to put them in sequence
- Follow the same pattern as described above but start with the first step and build up to last

Prompting strategies

- Hand-over-hand
- Gentle physical guidance or touch
- Modelling (for the child to imitate)
- Pointing and gesture
- Verbal instruction (keep it simple)
- Visual prompts e.g., first then board

Useful References and Links

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/cambridgeshire-children's-occupational-therapy/looking-after-yourself/getting-dressed>