



FACT SHEET NUMBER 38

projectaccess.missouristate.edu
projectaccess@missouristate.edu
866-481-3841



TASK ANALYSIS

Sometimes our students struggle with learning certain skills. One way to make this a little easier is to create a task analysis of the skill and teach each smaller part one at a time. This is an antecedent strategy and, according to the Missouri Autism Guidelines Initiative (MAGI) is supported by research for ages 3 through 21 years.

Let's look at an example. Maybe parents and teachers of a young child with autism would like for her to learn to wash her hands. There are several steps to this process, and it is often helpful to break this big task into smaller pieces. For example,

- Child turns on the faucet
- Child wets hands
- Child applies soap
- Child scrubs hands
- Child rinses hands
- Child turns off faucet
- Child dries hands

Breaking this task down into small steps demonstrates complexity many of the skills we expect children to learn.

Parents and teachers might start with having the child turn on the faucet, then assist through the remaining steps. Once the child is able to turn on the faucet without assistance, the next step can be taught and so on through all the steps. Even more supportive, would be a picture display of each step for the child's reference. Pointing to the pictures of each step serves as a prompt.

Here's another example of a task analysis. Let's focus on a high school student who is required to write a research paper. This student struggles with organizational skills and will need assistance to finish this long term process. The following might be an example of his task analysis:

- Decide on a topic for the paper (if not assigned)
- Look up information in one resource and write down that information in your own words (may be listed as many times as necessary for each resource)
- Use the information from your resources to write a rough draft
- Proofread your rough draft
- Type your paper on the computer
- Use spelling and grammar check
- Print two copies of your paper: 1 to turn in and 1 to keep
- Turn the paper in on the due date

Maybe this student could write this task analysis on a calendar or, even more motivating, place this on an on-line calendar with reminders.

Some of our children with autism struggle with play activities. Lego, for example, has produced downloadable step-by-step pictures for building all kinds of things—a task analysis! With the ease of taking pictures these days, this idea can be readily duplicated for all kinds of tasks. Just use a smartphone or tablet!

What are some skills you could task analyze? Not a hard thing to do and so helpful to your students!

© Project ACCESS - April 2017 *Project ACCESS is a collaboration among the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri State University, and Missouri's public schools.