

Module: Task Analysis

Overview of Task Analysis

Franzone, E. (2009). *Overview of task analysis*. Madison, WI: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin.

Task analysis is the process of breaking a skill into smaller, more manageable steps in order to teach the skill. Other practices, such as reinforcement, video modeling, or time delay, should be used to facilitate learning of the smaller steps. As the smaller steps are mastered, the learner becomes more and more independent in his/her ability to perform the larger skill.

Evidence

Task analysis meets the evidence-based practice criteria with five single-subject design studies, demonstrating its effectiveness for promoting appropriate behavior and communication skills for children at the preschool, elementary, and middle school levels.

With what ages is task analysis effective?

Task analysis can be used effectively with children with ASD, regardless of cognitive level and/or expressive communicative abilities. The evidence base shows that task analysis is an effective intervention for learners at the preschool (1 study), elementary and middle school levels (6 studies), and high school (1 study). It is reasonable to assume that it would be an effective practice for older learners as well. Task analysis can also be used to train professionals on how to interact with and/or teach their students with ASD.

What skills or intervention goals can be addressed by task analysis?

The research that constitutes the evidence base demonstrates that task analysis can be used to address issues in the academic, behavior, communication, and social domain. Any skill that can be broken down into smaller steps for teaching is an appropriate target for task analysis.

In what settings can task analysis be effectively used?

Task analysis can be used in school, home, or community settings. Generalization of skills is most likely when teaching occurs in multiple settings.

Evidence Base

The studies cited in this section provide the basis upon which this practice was determined to meet the NPDC on ASD's criteria as an evidence-based practice. This list is not exhaustive; other quality studies may exist that were not included.

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Preschool

Matson, J., Taras, M., Seven, J., Love, S., & Fridley, D. (1990). Teaching self-help skills to autistic and mentally retarded children. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 11*, 361-378.

Elementary and Middle School Age

Alcantara, P. R. (1994). Effects of videotape instructional package on purchasing skills of children with autism. *Exceptional Children, 61*(1), 40-55.

Browder, D., Trela, K., & Jimenez, B. (2007). Training teachers to follow a task analysis to engage middle school students with moderate and severe developmental disabilities in grade appropriate literacy. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 22*(4), 206-219.

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Luscre, D., & Center, D. (1996). Procedures for reducing dental fear in children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 26*(5), 547-556.

Matson, J., Taras, M., Seven, J., Love, S., & Fridley, D. (1990). Teaching self-help skills to autistic and mentally retarded children. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 11*, 361-378.

High School

Haring, T. G., Kennedy, C. H., Adams, M. J., & Pitts-Conway, V. (1987). Teaching generalization of purchasing skills across community settings to autistic youth using videotape modeling. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 20*(1), 89-96.

Selected Additional References

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Cameron, M. J., Shapiro, R. L., & Ainsleigh, S. A. (2005). Bicycle riding: Pedaling made possible through positive behavioral interventions. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 7*(3), 153-158.

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- Goodson, J., Sigafos, J., O'Reilly, M, Cannella, H., & Lancioni, G.E. (2006). Evaluation of a video-based error correction procedure for teaching a domestic skill to individuals with developmental disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 28, 458-467.
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