

UTILIZING INCIDENTAL TEACHING TO IMPROVE SKILL DEFICITS



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GOALS OF TRAINING

- Define / incidental teaching
- Review what makes incidental teaching successful
- Steps for implementing incidental teaching
- Examples of incidental teaching across environments and activities

INTRODUCTION

Individuals with developmental disabilities are often thought of as difficult to motivate, and as a result, emphasis has been placed on identifying their interests as potential reinforcers. One Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) intervention, **incidental teaching**, incorporates individual's interests into instruction.

WHAT IS INCIDENTAL TEACHING?

INCIDENTAL TEACHING...

- Involves providing instruction within ongoing typical activities based on the individual's interest and motivation (McGee, Daly, & Jacobs, 1994).
- Uses strategies based on ABA to present learning objectives within typical activities rather than in a clinical setting.
- Was first developed to increase language and social responses by maximizing the power of reinforcement and encouraging generalization.
- Incidental teaching is unique in its focus on following the child's lead regarding interests within naturally occurring daily activities.
- It emphasizes intentionally organizing the learning environment around preplanned learning objectives that incorporate students' preferences and educational plan using "teachable moments" that are initiated by the individual.

WHAT IS INCIDENTAL TEACHING?

- A systematic protocol of instruction that is delivered in the context of natural stimulus conditions of everyday environments.
- A procedure where new behaviors are taught within the context of natural environments during the course of typical events.
- Any learning opportunity you can get out of the environment and objects within the environment.

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN INCIDENTAL TEACHING & DISCRETE TRIAL TEACHING

Incidental Teaching	Discrete Trial Teaching
Natural setting	Distraction free setting
Child initiated	Teacher directed
Correlation of the response and the reinforcer (internal reinforcer)	No correlation between the response and the reinforcer (external reinforcer)
Slower to master the skill	Faster to master the skill
Overcome generalization and initiation problems	Less generalization and initiation

ADVANTAGES OF INCIDENTAL TEACHING

- Teaching within the context of typical activities has been found to promote generalization
- Social initiations are an integral part of incidental teaching
- Child-directed approach and natural reinforcement make learning meaningful and enjoyable
- Can be easily incorporated into typical daily routines by teachers and parents
- Provides data reflective of actual daily functioning, which is essential for data-based decision making

INCIDENTAL TEACHING STEPS

- Typically, teachers, therapists and/or parents/caregivers first arrange the environment (i.e. place preferred toys and activities within sight, but not within reach, to encourage individual *initiation*).
- After the individual demonstrates an interest in items or activities (*initiation* of teaching moment), prompt desired response (i.e. verbal request, picture exchange, appropriate social question / request, etc.)
- The individual obtains the desired response upon engaging in appropriate behavior.

WAIT-ASK-SAY-SHOW-DO

- **WAIT** for the child to self-initiate
- **ASK** a generic question (i.e. “What do you need to do?” or “What do you want?”)
- **SAY** what is expected (i.e. “Tell me what you want.”)
- **SHOW** (gesture/model) expectation
- **PROMPT** to complete interaction

- Use least to most intrusive level of prompting.
- If child respond correctly after SAYING what is expected, do not SHOW what is expected.

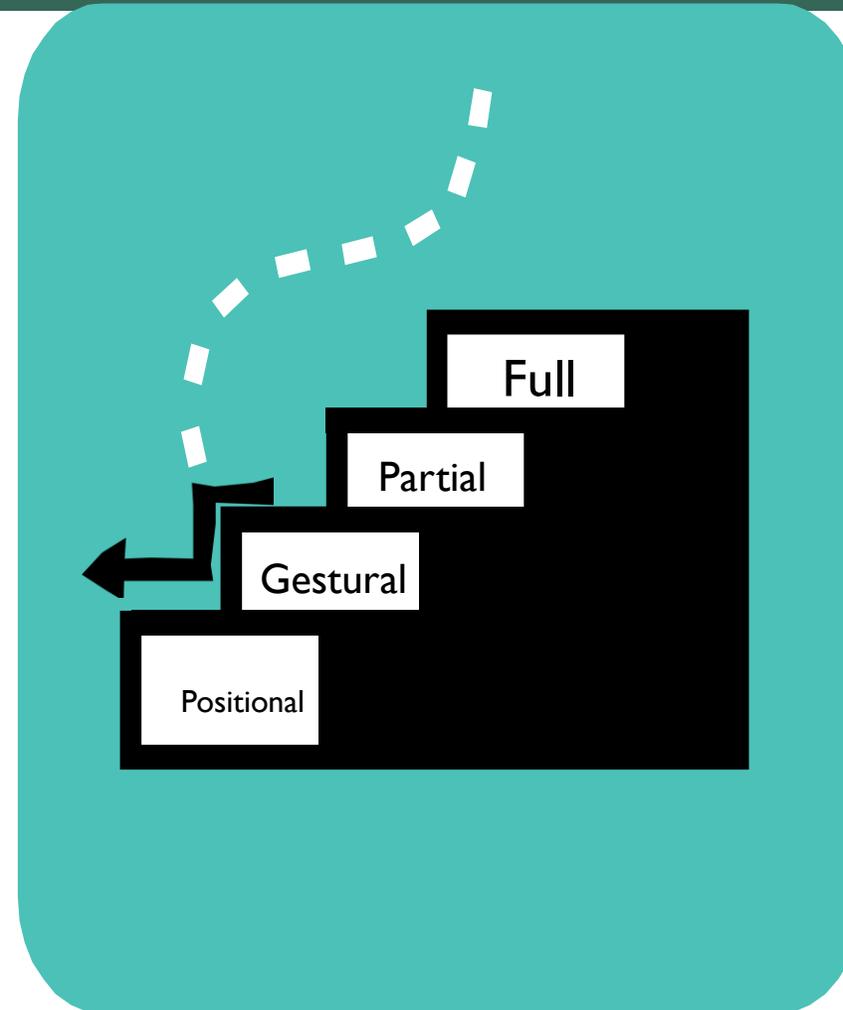
PROMPTING HIERARCHY

Prompting Hierarchy

- **Full Physical Prompt (FP)** Manipulating the student's body to perform the targeted response.
- **Partial or Faded Physical Prompt (PP)** Use of a lesser amount of physical contact.
- **Gestural Prompt (G)** Cueing the student with a body movement that indicates the correct response.
- **Proximal Prompt (a.k.a. Positional Prompt) (PP)** Placing a target item in such a way that the individual is more likely to respond correctly.
- **Visual Prompt (VS)** A written or picture presented in such a way as to elicit the correct response.
- **Verbal Prompt (V)** Telling the student the correct response.
 - Verbal prompts are used only when a verbal response is required

PROMPT FADING

- Fading: It is important to reduce the level of prompting as the individual begins to respond correctly.
- Needed for a child to perform a task independently.
- Prompt fading is used to transfer stimulus control from the extra stimulus to the appropriate SD.
- If we fail to systematically reduce our level of prompting the student may become prompt-dependent.



INCIDENTAL TEACHING DURING PLAY

- Set out a variety of child's favorite toys. See which toy child gravitates toward. Place toy a certain distance away from child under your control. Prompt child to use words, PECS, or signs to request toy by gesturing toward PECS book, showing appropriate sign, or saying, "You can say 'Teddy bear'" or "You can say 'car'". Give child toy and engage after communication is used. [*Language skills*]
- While reading, ask social questions about the story: "How does this character feel?" "Is this a big problem or a little problem?" "What should the character do?" "What does the character feel happy/upset?" [Language Skills, Play/Social Skills]
- Encourage coloring. [Academic skills, Fine motor skills] While coloring ask child, "What color is this?" or "Which one is the blue crayon?" [*Visual/Spatial skills, Language skills*]
- Model appropriate toy play and prompt child to imitate. [*Imitation skills, Play/Social skills*]

INCIDENTAL TEACHING DURING MEALS

- While presenting desired food or drink, ask child, “What do you want?” or “What is this?” If prompt is required tell child desired response: “You can say, ‘Cookie.’” “You can say, ‘Juice’”. Depending on child’s level the word can be expanded to a phrase instead: “You can say, ‘I want juice.’” Give desired food or drink after response (prompted or unprompted). [*Language skills, Imitation skills*]
- If child is working on use of utensils and usually requires help, use opportunity to encourage independence. Refrain from help initially, encouraging child to attempt on own, and prompt as necessary. [*Adaptive and self-help skills, Language skills*]
- Hand child napkin or cloth after eating and ask child to clean up face/hands. Prompt only as necessary. [*Adaptive and self-help skills*]
- Involve children in cooking and baking. [*Adaptive and self-help skills*] Ask child to help measure ingredients, place ingredients where they should go, stir mixes, use utensils, place batter on cookie sheet, etc. [*Fine and gross motor skills*] Practice figuring out times for cooking and baking and setting timers. [*Adaptive and self-help skills, Math skills*]

INCIDENTAL TEACHING DURING SELF CARE ROUTINES

- Practice independent washing and self-care in bath. If child normally requires assistant to wash, hand him or her washcloth and have one of your own. Say, “Do this” and demonstrate washing face and body. Prompt as necessary.
- Encourage independent dressing whenever possible: taking off pajamas, putting on clothes for the day, taking off clothes, putting on pajamas.
- For parents: When you are getting ready for the day or getting ready for bed and are washing your face and brushing your teeth, hand child a cloth/toothbrush and encourage independent imitation of what you are doing. [*Adaptive and self-help skills, imitation skills*]
- Practice desensitization of sleeping with lights off (if this is something child struggles with) by staying in room with lights off for increasing periods of time around bedtime.
- After waking up, when getting ready for school/day care/work/other events of the day, probe child through morning routine. “We are breakfast, what do we do next? That’s right, we brush our teeth!” “What do we do now that we have showered? You can say, ‘We get dressed!’”. Follow a similar routine when getting ready for bed. [*Language Skills, Adaptive/Self-Help Skills*]

INCIDENTAL TEACHING DURING OUTINGS: STORES

- Ask child to label items while in store or request an item they would like. [Language skills]
- For older children, you can use grocery store trips as an opportunity to encourage children to pick out foods independently, plan and stick to a budget while shopping, and count out and use money to purchase items. [Adaptive and Self-Help Skills, Vocational Skills]
- Ask child what he/she wants to eat for dinner. Give multiple choices. Pick something different and prompt a conversation that will lead to a compromise. [Behavior and Emotional Regulation, Play/Social Skills]

INCIDENTAL TEACHING DURING OUTINGS: RESTAURANT

- Encourage and reward appropriate sitting at dinner. [Attending skills]
- Ask child to read items on menu. [Language skills, Reading skills]
- Give child opportunity to make choices about what to eat [Language skills, Reading skills] and point to item he or she wants. [Fine motor skills]
- Allow child to attempt to use utensils independently if he or she does not usually. Prompt as necessary. [Adaptive and self-help skills]
- Public settings are a great time to practice behavioral and emotional regulation skills. Perhaps child does not like riding in car, crowded stores, sitting in cart, sitting still at meals, etc. Make sure to be prepared with repertoire of coping mechanisms and encourage child to use these when he/she becomes upset, wants to run away, or engages in other problematic behaviors. This could be saying, “You can use your words and say, ‘I’m mad’” or “You can say, ‘I want to play’” followed by a verbal solution for calming down. It could be prompting child to appropriately request items or actions. It could be using a visual schedule to remind child of schedule: for example, “First store, then park” or “First sit nicely at dinner, then we can go home and watch movies”. [Behavioral and Emotional Regulation]

INCIDENTAL TEACHING DURING OUTINGS: PARK

- Swings, slides, and monkey bars are all great and fun equipment to practice gross motor skills on. These activities can help strengthen muscles and improve gross motor skills. These skills can also be practiced by running, walking, chasing, playing tag. [Gross motor skills]
- Consistently positively reinforce child for safe play, in order to encourage safe behaviors. [Behavior and Emotional Regulation]
- Greeting and initiating play with peers, joining a group of peers playing. [Play/Social Skills]

INCIDENTAL TEACHING DURING AT SCHOOL

- Facilitate interaction with peers during appropriate times. Prompt with suggestions for starting or responding to conversation: “You can say, ‘Hi!’” “You can ask, ‘Can I play?’” Encourage child to expand on conversations. [Play/Social Skills, Language Skills]
- Encourage sharing with peers and practice turn-taking. [Play/Social Skills]
- Practice cleaning up after self and putting things away appropriately in cubby, locker, bins, etc. [Adaptive and Self-Help Skills]
- If child needs help with an assignment, before helping, allow child opportunity to request the help appropriately with words, signs, PECS, or communicative device. Prompt as necessary and help after it has been requested. [Language skills]
- When child needs help from teacher, prompt appropriate attention-getting strategies. This could mean prompting child to raise hand, telling child “You can ask for help”, encouraging use of “inside voice”.
- Consistently positively reinforce child for waiting his/her turn, sitting nicely, raising hand, appropriately asking for assistance, and other appropriate classroom behaviors to encourage child to continue using these behaviors.

HOW CAN YOU IMPLEMENT INCIDENTAL TEACHING WITH YOUR CHILD?

These are just a few examples of how to use incidental teaching in ABA therapy. Always be on the lookout to present opportunities for a child to practice necessary skills both in and out of session and this will lead to effective incidental teaching!

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