

## Chaining

### What is Chaining?

- Chaining is a procedure used to break down each step of a more complex skill into individual teaching steps
- Chaining is often used to teach multi-step independent living skills, however, many sets of behaviors can be considered chains
- For example, when we teach a child to sing his or her “ABCs,” each step of the chain serves as a cue for the next step (i.e., when you say “A” this signals to say “B” next)

### When do we use Chaining?

- Chains are used to teach complex skills and adaptive and daily living skills
- Often times, things such as brushing teeth or getting dressed for school, must be taught in steps until a child can independently complete the entire activity
- For example, if we want a child to learn to brush his or her teeth,
  - We may start with the first step – turn on the water
  - Turning on the water signals the next step – get your toothbrush
  - This then signals getting the toothpaste, squeezing the toothpaste on the toothbrush, wetting the toothbrush, and so on until the entire skill has been completed

### Examples of Chaining Procedures

- Three types of chaining procedures can be used:
  1. **Forward Chaining:** this involves starting with the first step of the chain and teaching this step to mastery before moving on to the next step with the first two responses now being taught to mastery and so on
  2. **Total Task Chaining:** this involves a variation of forward chaining where the first step is taught to mastery; however, the remaining steps are prompted by the caregiver or teacher until completion of the activity
  3. **Backward Chaining:** this involves having the caregiver or teacher perform all steps in the chain, except the last step, teaching the last step to mastery before moving on to the second to last step and last step being taught to mastery and so on

### Tips

- Chaining can be a very effective way to teach complex skills
- Different types of chains can be more effective for individual learners and the type of task being taught
- Often times, we teach using total task chaining for activities the child must complete such as brushing his or her teeth or drying off after a shower
- Visuals are a great addition when teaching a chain to use pictures to show each step and the order they are followed