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## Task Analysis and Chaining

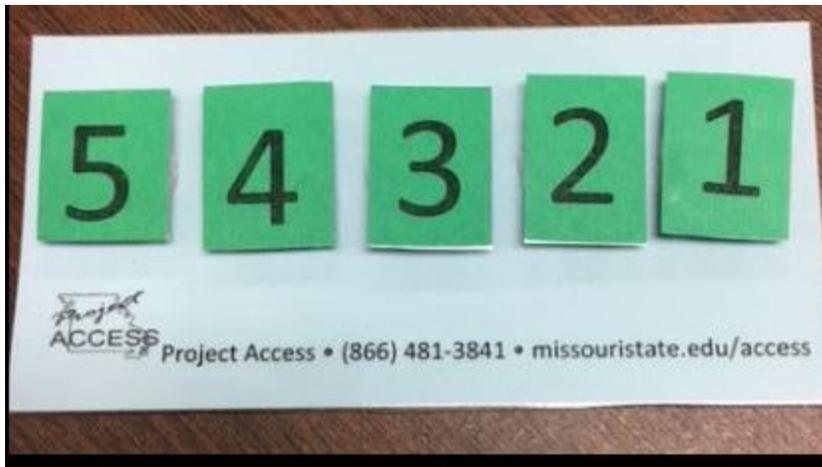
Task Analysis and Chaining are an evidence-based practice as listed in the Missouri Autism Guidelines Initiative (MAGI) publication Autism Spectrum Disorders: Guide to Evidence-Based Interventions.

Simply put, task analysis involves breaking a skill into smaller steps, and chaining is the process of sequencing those steps into the full skill.

Let's look at a scenario. Juan is not yet independently washing his hands. The teacher has identified steps specific to the bathroom at her school. She is teaching each step separately, such as stepping to the sink, turning on the water, operating the soap dispenser, washing hands, turning off the water, operating the paper towel dispenser, drying hands, and throwing the paper towel in the trash. The teacher reinforces Juan as he learns each step. Later the teacher will use visual supports to show the steps in a list taped next to the sink. She will use this list as she supports Juan in chaining the steps together to complete the process. Here's a link to a great resource we found for this particular strategy.

<https://www.autismclassroomresources.com/a-teaching-strategy-that-can-save-you-time-chaining/>

Here is another example. Charlotte is spending part of her day in a resource setting at her high school. The remainder of the day is spent in a supported work environment at the university close by. She is tasked with making a count-down strip to be used as a visual support for students with autism. First, she'll have to identify the equipment she needs: copier, master copy, scissors, laminator, and Velcro dots. This is a heavy-duty task that, depending on Charlotte's skill level, might have tasks analyses within task analyses. It could be that her teacher will have to break down copier use into smaller steps. Laminator use might be outside her skill level, too. So, even though Charlotte may have skills with scissors and doesn't have too much trouble with the Velcro dots, she may need to work through two task analyses and then chain all of it together. This is going to require lots of work and patience, both on the part of the staff and for Charlotte, but with careful step-by-step work and lots of reinforcement, it can be done. This is the kind of skill that could take Charlotte from not becoming employed to supported employment. It is worth the work!



Now, maybe there is a student (we'll call him John) who is a more academically able individual with ASD. He needs to write a short term paper. Rather than just make the assignment, the resource teacher has broken the task into small steps. John eventually gets the term paper done, and next time can do most of it without support.

When teachers and parents become frustrated with teaching a skill, thinking about breaking that skill down into its smaller parts may be the strategy that needs to be applied. Take a few minutes to think of a task (making a cake, making the bed, watering the garden) and write down all the steps involved. It might be these skills are a little more complicated than we expect! So, don't give up. Our students may greatly benefit from task analysis and chaining.

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