

Task Analysis

Task analysis is commonly used by teachers at our school, especially in the early phase, with students with complex problem-solving issues, and in practical and vocational courses. It is a process by which a task is broken down into its component parts. Everyone uses task analysis at some point, even if it is unconsciously. How else would anyone learn to complete processes? As the adage goes, you have to walk before you can run. It is easy to forget that some tasks need to be broken down into chunks, because after a time, they become like second nature to us. We often expect students to be able to figure out the steps involved in completing a task. With special needs students, where you might have students with processing disorders or difficulty with organization, it's necessary to take the time to express the different parts of a task until the student has mastered each one.

This example from <https://www.brighthubeducation.com/special-ed-learning-disorders/25800-how-task-analysis-works-for-students-with-special-needs/> assists to explain task analysis for teachers not sure about it.

“Consider telling a student to put his coat on to go home at the end of the day. It seems self-explanatory. Yet when you think about it, there are several steps involved. Where is the coat? If the student isn't already holding it, he has to go to a location to retrieve it. Once that is accomplished, how does he put on the coat? He could just stick his arms in, but then it would be backwards. He could lay it on the floor, stick both arms in upside down and then flip it overhead, but that in itself is three steps. He could put one arm in and then send the coat around his back until he finds the other sleeve to put his arm into – three more steps. Finally, should he just leave the coat hanging open? Is there a zipper, snaps or buttons? Working any of those fasteners requires several operations. So, the simple instruction of putting on a coat to go home is not as simple as it may have initially seemed”.

In summary, Task Analysis can also be deconstructed into steps:

- determine what task you want the student to perform
- figure out what steps will be required to complete the task.
- teach the student one step until the student displays mastery of it.

Decide what order to teach the steps in. You might have the student master the last step, then second to last and so on until the entire task can be done independently. Or vice versa, you can work from the first step to the last. This is known as chaining. As each part of the process is learned, add it to the chain until the task can be completed independently.

Task Analysis can be an invaluable tool for a special educator trying to help students gain independence. Whether the students have cognitive, physical or communication impairments, they can benefit from this process.

For teachers not sure about task analysis, templates to assist are available at <https://www.xzoomy.com/task-analysis-template-for-special-education-free-download/>