Task Analysis

Task analysis is the process of breaking down a task into smaller, more manageable chunks. It can be used to teach any children or adult a skill that is too challenging to teach all at once. It is frequently used to teach self-help skills, e.g. dressing and home skills, e.g. making toast.

Teaching a skill using **chaining** is commonly recommended if the child can only perform some of the steps, consistently misses/skips steps, or is completing steps incorrectly.

How to start:

1. Identify the problem
2. Identify the intended outcome/goal
3. Break the task down
4. Teach first part of the task
5. Use chaining to build on the skills to teach the next section/part of the task.

Breaking a task down.
A task analysis is typically created by completing the skill yourself or watching someone else complete the skill. It is very important not to just write up a task analysis based on your memory. Even simple tasks, like making a sandwich, can have small important steps that you may inadvertently skip. If you do not teach each step, then the child will not master the skill.

After you create a task analysis, complete the chain yourself to make sure you have not skipped any steps or placed steps out of order. It happens more often than you might think.

Chaining
This is where you teach the pupil to join the different steps together.

There are three different approaches to this:

- Total Chaining
- Forward Chaining
- Backwards Chaining

Total Chaining
Total chaining is what most teachers or parents naturally use to teach a skill. E.g. "Okay turn the water on...now soap up your hands....good, now scrub your hands together", etc. The adult 'walks/talks' the child through each step, prompting as necessary. For a child with SEN, this may still be too complex a teaching style. For that reason, backward or forward chaining is usually more commonly used for pupils with SEN.

Forward Chaining

Usually used when student can complete more steps at the start of the process, eg turning the tap to fill the kettle, writing first letter of name.

- You might teach the behaviours from the beginning of the chain, requiring the student to display increasing amounts of simple behaviours at the front of the chain.
- As often as the student is able, s/he adds a new simple skill onto the tail end of the skills already mastered.
- As the learner links more and more of the chain, you have to complete fewer of the steps at the end of that chain of behaviours.

Backwards Chaining

Usually used for when the student can successfully complete more steps at the end of the process, e.g. zipping up the coat, fastening the Velcro on the shoes, cutting the toast in two.

- YOU perform all of the chain of simple skills...EXCEPT for the last one, which the student performs.
- Then you do all of the steps for him/her except for the last two skills.
- Then all except the final three, and so on.