TASK CHECKLIST

1. Does the task address the student’s educational goals?

2. Is the task multi-modal?

3. Does the task incorporate your student’s interests and strengths?

4. Have you built visual cues into the task?

5. Did you organize the pieces of the task in a systematic fashion?

6. Is the task designed so that the student can manage it independently?

7. Has the student mastered the task?
Addressing Goals

We use formal and informal assessments to determine our students’ present level of performance. We identify their emerging abilities and develop goals and objectives to teach independence with those skills. We base our tasks on their goals and objectives. Look at your students’ individual educational plans and think about how to design meaningful tasks that will address their goals.

One of this students’ annual goals is to develop strategies and skills to comprehend text that is read, heard and viewed. A short term objective to address that goal is to match photos/pictures to words. This task, designed to address the goal and objective, has the student matching color + clothing words to pictures. Packing the clothing into cases makes working on the goal much more interesting.
This task requires putting one piece of cookie dough on one chocolate chip. This task addresses the student’s annual goal: develop domestic skills to assist with chores in the school, home or job site and its short term objective: demonstrate 1:1 correspondence to complete a domestic activity.

This student matches coins to written words and places them in pockets to work on his long term goal of understanding the concept of money and short term objective of identifying coins.

This task addresses the annual goal of reading with comprehension and the short term objective of making inferences. Using pictures from **Just Grandma and Me** by Mercer Mayer with some text deleted, students are asked to determine what a character might say.
Multi-modal

Utilizing students’ multiple senses makes a task more appealing, captures students’ attention, and enables them to remain focused until the task is complete. Think of ways you can include movement and visual, auditory, and tactile sensations into your task designs.

This student’s short term objective is to sort two different objects. We often begin teaching an objective in an error-free manner – the car cannot go around the tube and the heart bracelet cannot go into the tube. Hearing the noises, moving the objects, and watching them go in or around the tube make working on the objective appealing.

We often take worksheets and turn them into more interesting multi-modal tasks. These math worksheets were put into a loose leaf binder. Children see the colors and shapes, feel the textured toy spiders, and move the materials about as they work on their counting skills.
Many of our students enjoy tasks that can do away from a desk. This multi-modal one has students matching cut-out pictures to color + clothing words. To work on this goal, they get to stand up, move about, and manipulate the clip.

This student is learning to spell words. The multi-modal task engages her senses. She chooses the container with the matching picture. Inside, she finds the letters that will spell that word. She, then, velcroes the letters in the correct order on the card.
Many of our students have difficulty engaging with a task and sustaining attention once engaged. We find, if we incorporate their interests into our task designs, they are able to pay attention quite well. Assess how easy or difficult it is to capture your students’ attention. If they need help with this ability, determine both their interests and their strengths and how these could be used when working on their educational goals.

To encourage a student’s participation for a turn-taking game with a peer, we added pictures of his favorite toys, Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends™. He and his playmate stand on the pictures while throwing balls into the basket. His interest in the characters increases the likelihood that he will join the game. Once engaged, however, he learns playing the game with a friend can also be interesting and fun.
This student had a special interest in cats and knew the names of most breeds. We used this interest when creating a task to work on her filing skills. She had to identify the first letter of the breed and then place the cat card behind that alphabet letter.

Many of our students have both interests and strengths in letters and numbers. This student did not like touching squishy textures. By placing the texture (pudding) into a plastic bag and asking him to touch it for the purpose of writing letters, he was willing to give it a try.
Visual Cues

We want our students to look at a task and immediately see that it is meaningful. An important way of conveying this message is by using visual cues to highlight important information or give instructions. Instructions tell the student how to put the separate parts of a task together in the correct sequence. Instructions may be given through the use of objects, pictures, or written words. Think about yours students and what types of visual information will make sense to them and then design their tasks using these.

These red dots both highlight and instruct students where to spray the cleaner before wiping the window.

The cut-out, colored outlines of the wooden pegs instruct students which pegs to put together.
The flip book with its pictures, numbers, and words gives visual directions about the sequence to follow when making a sandwich.

The written list gives instructions about packing lunch.
Systematic and Organized

It is so helpful to the students if they can look at a task and know where to begin and when they will be finished. Many need pieces stabilized or segmented so they are easy to manipulate and will not fall apart. Determine how you can make your tasks organized with pieces separated for easy pick-up and parts affixed so they will not drop or disassemble when the students handle them. With systematic organization, you can incorporate left-to-right and top-to-bottom routines to define the order.

To help a student sustain his attention throughout the little piggy rhyme, he removes a cut-out pig following a left-to-right pattern. A picture, representing each verse of the rhyme, is placed in front of each piggy. The student enjoys the game because he knows he will be done when all the pigs are out of the box and in the blue container. The order is predictable and, thus, understandable.
Students choose one paper from each tray, following a top-to-bottom routine, to complete a collating assignment. They pick one paper from the top tray, another from the middle tray, and a third one from the bottom tray before stapling the three pages together.

This student knows to water each plant that has a hoop around it. She removes each hoop after watering and knows the watering task is all done when all the hoops have been removed.
Independence

We spend time preplanning because we want our students to complete assignments independently. They feel proud when they can do something all by themselves. After designing tasks, watch your students and see whether they can complete them without help. If not, think about new skills to teach or ways to restructure the task so they can become independent.

One of this student’s goals was to learn to measure. Here, he matches the measuring cup to the appropriately labeled container, fills the cup with the proper amount, and pours into the container. After observing his progress, his teacher realized he did not know, for proper measurement, he needed to level the amount in the cup. Her physical assistance and verbal cues were not helping him learn this step. She, therefore, decided to design a task to teach this skill. He looked at pictures of measuring cups and decided whether the amounts were leveled off or rounded. This teaching step helped him return to the measuring job and do it all by himself.
During writing assignments, another student needed continual reminders about putting spaces between his words. His teacher used a tongue depressor and a favorite character sticker to make a spacer. The student then independently used this visual tool as a way to monitor his word spacing in writing assignments.

This is a clever way to ensure your students are doing their work correctly without having to watch them as they complete it. After students finish their independent work, their teacher can see if the colored spiders they sorted fell into the correct cups mounted under each slot.
Mastery

It is imperative to assess when our students master a task. When your students have successfully learned a skill, think about ways to generalize that skill across people or settings and teach a next step based on that skill. It is time to make new tasks.

A student competently sorts shapes and objects when the colors are also different. A next step is for him to sort among objects that are all the same color and differ only by their shape.
Another student has mastered the goal of putting away his belongings. He puts away completed tasks when at his desk and lunch materials after eating. We, next, design a task so he can generalize this skill in a new setting. A finish bin similar to the one uses at his work desk is placed in the library. He places books left on library tables into this container. His doing this job helps the librarian who does not need to collect the books when she is ready to reshel them.

After learning to match words to pictures and read some words, a next step is to read words embedded in text. While reading Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown, this student uses her picture dictionary to help her recognize and read these words in the story.
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Asking and re-asking these questions will enhance your students’ progress.

Happy task-making!

If you find these ideas about structured tasks helpful, please visit our website www.tasksgalore.com for more information.