



3 Helpful Strategies for Effective Instruction with Learners with ASD

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Delivering effective instruction is key in producing desired outcomes for our learners. Providing clear messages help ensure that learners understand what is expected, which in turn can lower anxiety. This is a fundamental skill for front line staff supporting learners with ASD. Once attention and motivation have been established, the 3 following strategies can help make our instructions more efficient.

1. Adapting word count and vocabulary to the learner's needs

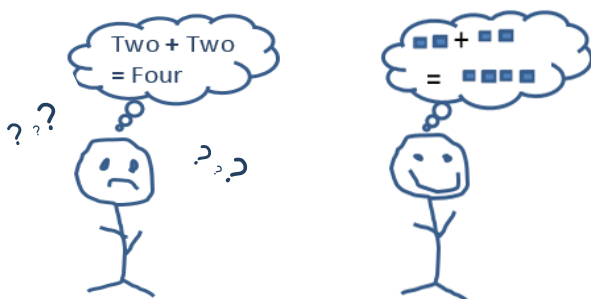
Let's say Max speaks in 2-3-word utterances (e.g. "want ball" or "play with truck."). When communicating, it will be important to adapt our language to optimize comprehension. Ideally, we should be using up to 4-word statements with Max, given his current language level. If this learner is asked to join his peers, it will be far more effective to say, "Hey Max, come sit", which is a 4-word statement, than to say, "Hey Max, it's circle time, why don't you come over and sit with us", which is a 16-word instruction. Shortening instructions to better align with the learners' current abilities will help to facilitate comprehension and increase the likelihood of a correct response. Work with your team to determine how many words your learner typically uses to communicate, and practice matching the approximate length of your learner's utterances.

Because learners with ASD often take things literally, it can also be helpful to use concrete and simple language, avoiding sarcasm and idioms such as "This assignment is a piece of cake", or "This cost an arm and a leg". Asking a learner to repeat what he or she has understood can also be helpful in verifying their level of comprehension.

2. Turning questions into statements

We've all done it, often unintentionally. When is the last time you heard something like "Everyone's cleaning, do you want to come and help?". In this example, we are giving the learner a choice to participate or not. Remember this golden rule: "Say what you mean and mean what you say". Questions imply choices. It's better to give a clear instruction and turn our questions into statements, such as "Time to clean up" or "Let's get in line".

3. Using visual supports



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Learners with ASD often benefit from visual supports. Using visuals to show students what is expected can promote better comprehension. Visual support can include visual schedules, visual timers, token boards, First and Then displays, agendas and many more.

While these strategies are straightforward, they can take time and practice to master. As you work to implement them, know that their benefits extend to other learners and positively impact all interactions.