

Backward Chaining

Backward Chaining can have different definitions for different fields, but when teaching independence skills to children with SEN it refers to breaking down the steps of a task and teaching them in reverse order.

This gives the child the opportunity to learn new skills and tasks in small steps giving them a sense of achievement and of course praise!

The aim is for you, the adult to do less and less while the child does more and more, always ending with your child performing the final step until all the stages are mastered and the skill can be done independently.

Backward chaining is a successful way to teach a child independence through self-help skills.

However it can be used to teach a wide variety of skills.

The first step is for to identify a skill e.g. you child to feed themselves using a spoon or taking off their trousers etc. Then identify the different stages your child needs to achieve to acquire the skill.

Stages for teaching feeding using a spoon.

It's important to remember that learning to feed yourself is a messy process which gets better with practice!

1. Your child should be sat in a comfortable, stable position.
Hold a loaded spoon approximately 10cm away from your child and wait to see if they will reach for the spoon (if they don't reach, put the spoon in their hand).
2. Give hand over hand guidance enabling your child to hold and guide the spoon to their mouth.
Hand over hand guidance should be reduced so your child is reaching for and taking the spoon to their mouth independently. Remember we are starting from 10cm away.
You should then move the spoon further away increasing the distance your child takes the spoon to their mouth on their own.
3. The next stage is to lay a loaded spoon on the side of the bowl/plate and wait to see if your child picks it up.
Initially some hand over hand guidance maybe needed to encourage them to pick up the spoon but **not** to guide it to their mouth as they have already established this skill.
It is important as with all stages that you give your child the opportunity to attempt this unaided.
4. The final stage is to teach the child to scoop. Again hand over hand guidance will be needed
But you should release their hand once they have scooped food.
Remember they have already mastered the other skills!

Practising scooping activities using water, sand, rice etc. will help develop the co-ordination skills needed. As when acquiring all skills Practise and consistency and praise are key to success!

Stages for teaching taking off trousers.

Use loose legged trousers for this as skinny jeans or legging maybe more difficult for your child to manage to begin with.

1. Sit your child on the floor and pull their trousers down and over their feet so just their toes are visible. Help your child with hand over hand guidance to pull or push their trousers off.
Give praise, smile, clap etc.
Practise this until your child can do this without help.
2. The next stage is to take your child's trousers down to their ankles and again help them to push their trousers to their toes (they can already complete this stage).
Remember to let them try for themselves and to give lots of praise and encouragement!
3. The next stage is to take their trousers down to their shins and repeat the above process.
4. Continue to increasing the stages your child can do unaided e.g. from knee, from thighs etc.
5. Once your child can take their trousers off from just under their bottom then you are on the last stage which is to take their trousers over their bottom. This may take a little longer to master.

Keep practising. Be patient you are almost there!!