



Coaching approach to learning new skills

Importance of attention and concentration:

The following approach may help your child in developing functional skills. Supporting children to think about how they do things and giving them extra time to practice can be very useful. The global strategy of *Goal- Plan (think) – Do – Check* supports the coaching approach by providing a framework to follow when learning a new skill or getting better at an old one.

- **Goal** – what do I want to do/achieve, or what do I need to do/achieve?
- **Plan/Think** – how am I going to do it, what is the sequence of small steps, how do I organise myself? E.g., showering: how often, what time of day, for how long, do I wash my hair each time. A useful thing to do is name the plan e.g., jelly fish plan - this helps to talk about the plan and not go through all the details over and over again.
- **Do** – carry out the task/goal.
- **Check** – how well did my plan work? This involves the child asking themselves how they did, and did they stick to the plan. Make another plan if and have fun in the process.

Sometimes you may need to write things down and also make visual prompts to help your child. This can be done at the Check stage and when a plan needs revising, for example if the child forgot to do something and you work out how best to remind them. Some parents find that embedding new practice session or task into daily routines is difficult, so be realistic and think about what can be done/achieved. Also, parents can find it hard to 'become' a coach. Again, be realistic and think about who best can become your child's coach. Is there another family member that can help?

Key things to consider with the coaching approach:

- The child chooses at least one or some of the things they need to get better at.
- Don't choose more than 3 things (goals) to work on at a time. Choosing 3 goals is useful because if a child gets fed up working on one goal, you can move onto another
- There is no right or wrong way of completing tasks, allow children to be creative in their solutions.
- They have fun while they are practicing.
- Parents encourage children to become motivated to problem solve.
- Direct teaching, modelling and prompting can be used alongside a coaching approach e.g., asking, not telling and coaching, not adjusting.
- As skills develop, verbal and physical prompts should fade.
- Making a realistic and do-able plan is a key to success.

NB: The coaching approach described above is sometimes called the Cognitive Orientation to Occupational Performance (COOP) and if interested further information can be found on the CanChild website or at ICANCOOP.