

These strategies are used to prevent challenging behavior from occurring. These strategies can and should be used throughout the day with your learner. Descriptions and examples of the strategies are listed below.

Strategies to prevent and minimize daily challenges or challenging behavior:

Antecedent Strategy	Description	Example
Gaining Motivation	Asking the learner to complete instructions they have a history of completing reliably before asking them to complete a task they do not reliably comply with. The goal is to apply them in a quicker manner where the learner is complying with the easier items being asked first, building momentum, that by the time you ask the harder instruction, the learner is more likely to comply. This strategy should not be implemented unless it is known that the learner knows how to complete the instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking “What do you want to do today?”, “That sounds like fun, who will do it with us?” “Let’s set up the game board.” and then asking the harder instruction following compliance with the other three. “Let’s put our dishes away too.” • “Sit at the table,” “High- five,” “Write your name,” followed by the difficult task: “Read the sentence.” • When transitioning to the bathroom, prompt the learner to put the work task away, push in the chair, put the calculator away, and then say “Let’s go to the bathroom.”
Breaking Down Difficult Tasks	Large and effortful tasks can often look daunting and may create anxiety and avoidance for the learner presented with the task. Breaking down large and effortful tasks into smaller and more manageable chunks can reduce any anxiety around completing the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the task is to read a chapter, break it up into multiple 1-2 page tasks. • If wanting the learner to clean their room, break this down into 3 smaller tasks such as picking up toys, putting clothes away, and making the bed.
First-Then Statements	A statement delivered with explicit “first-then” language to increase motivation to complete a non-preferred activity because it will be followed by a preferred activity. The statement should be clear, concise and free from content outside the preferred and non-preferred activities. Visual boards can also depict first-then statements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “First finish this worksheet, then you can go play outside.” • “First we are going to eat lunch, then we can watch a movie.”
Motivation	Finding the learner’s motivation can be done in several different ways. Talking about or bringing preferred items into view so the learner knows what is available following completion of the instruction keeps the rewards relevant to the current task.. Asking the learner what they want ensures that the learner is actually motivated to learn. Tell the learner when or how they can have it to increase predictability for the learner. Introduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring the iPad into view and put on a preferred game while prompting the direction. • “What are you working for? Candy, great two more problems, then candy!” • Show the learner the day’s schedule, letting them know when it’s time for math and what’s happening later, art.

	new or similar items frequently so the learner does not become bored with the current items.	
Offering Choices	Allow the learner to make reasonable choices throughout their day. Giving choices can increase the motivation to complete a less preferred activity presented. Options of choices that can be given; the way the activity is completed, in what order it's completed, how much of the activity is completed in one sitting, and where the activity is completed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do you want to use colored pencils or markers?” • “Would you rather fold your clothes first or stack the dishes?” • “Do you want to play math games on the iPad or on the computer?”
Planned breaks	Plan breaks throughout the day to prevent the learner from engaging in challenging behaviors due to sitting for extended periods of time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motor breaks (e.g., walks, swinging, etc.) • Short game (e.g., Simon Says, Card Game, etc.)
Reminder Statements	Statements delivered prior to difficult or less preferred events that remind the learner of what their options are. If possible, tell the learner when they are not engaged in another activity. Ensure the learner is attending (e.g., eye contact, body orientation, etc.) to the primed statement. Deliver the statement in a neutral but supportive tone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the learner has cleaned up from free time and is seated at the table say, “Remember, if you get frustrated you can ask for a break from work.” • Before the learner begins putting away their laundry, “If you have trouble folding your clothes you can ask for help.”
Saying “No” without Saying “No”	Hearing “No” may further escalate a learner. Instead tell the learner WHEN or HOW they can have what they want or WHAT they can have instead.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a learner is requesting access to television and it is not available at that time you can say, “Yes, you can watch the television in 10 minutes” or you could be specific and say “you can watch the television at 1:00”. (WHEN) • If your learner asked to go outside and you want them to complete their work before they do, you could say: “Yes, you can go outside, but FIRST work, THEN play outside”. (HOW) • If you have a learner who is asking for candy for a snack and you do not want them to have it, you could say: “You cannot have candy, BUT you can have jello INSTEAD”. (WHAT)
Scheduled Attention	Providing brief amounts of positive attention to the learner on a timed schedule. This strategy is useful for learners who engage in challenging behavior during times where there is less access to your or other’s attention; providing regular attention decreases the need to seek it out in less desirable ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every 10 minutes, check in and ask the learner, “How is your work going?” or “Looks like you’re working hard!” • Providing physical attention (pat on back, high-five, etc.) every 5 minutes.

Structuring the Day	Sometimes lengthy amounts of unstructured downtime can lead to mischief making! Providing a structure to the learner's day that is made up of opportunities to engage in activities with others, activities on their own, learning activities, chores, and fun or preferred activities can minimize the chance of challenging behavior occurring due to too much unstructured time. Also structuring the day and providing the learner with choices on how to structure their day can help make the day more predictable for the learner.	<p>Breakfast. Complete math lesson. Choose (Go noodle or playing outside) 15-30m Choose to put clothes in the hamper or put dishes in the dishwasher. Complete reading one chapter with a sibling. Free time.</p>
Visuals	Visuals include anything the learner can see that can signal upcoming preferred activities/events, upcoming changes, transitions, expectations, etc. Visuals should be specific to the learner and should always be within the learner's sight.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Token board (e.g. star chart) ● Point system ● First/then boards ● Written rules ● Timer ● Written schedule ● Calendar
Warnings	Delivering a statement or visual prompt about an upcoming change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Showing the learner a visual countdown timer 2 minutes before the end of iPad time. ● Stating: "Five minutes until we start lunch."
Work Area	Establish a work area that is helpful for learning: quiet, away from distractions, close to any needed materials. This area should be the same each day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designating the kitchen table as the work area instead of having the learner work in different locations. ● Having the learner work in a parent's bedroom instead of their own, away from free access to toys and preferred activities.

For more information and support contact Behavioral Health Services at www.swwc.org/BHSparent.