

These strategies can be used to help set up an optimal learning environment that promotes compliance, fun, and meaningful interaction with family/caregivers. These strategies will also help to increase the learner's opportunity for success within new learning experiences and environments. Descriptions and examples of the strategies are listed below.

Strategies to Set Up an Optimal Learning Environment:

Initial Strategy	Description	Example
Take Control of the Fun Stuff	Knowing your learner's most preferred items and activities (i.e. rewards) will help to create motivation to complete a task. Once you identify the rewards, limit access to these items outside of times where you are delivering them for the completion of certain tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your learner prefers to spend time playing Xbox but has three chores to complete. Keep the Xbox controller in a safe place and say, "When you put the dishes away, wipe the table and put your clothes in the hamper, you can have 30 minutes on Xbox."
Making Yourself a Reward	It is very important that the learner sees your relationship as fun and as the giver of rewards. To do this, interact with your learner while they are interacting with the reward. Don't present instructions while the learner and you are interacting with the reward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your learner loves eating fruit snacks, you sit with the learner and share fruit snacks with them. Make sure you are giving them to the learner without asking anything of them. Your learner loves playing Xbox. Sit with the learner while they are playing, make comments about the games, show interest, or even play the game with them. Avoid correcting what they are doing.
Be Consistent & Follow Through	Remaining consistent when communicating and delivering expectations will guide your learner in how to respond. If you are going to present an instruction or task avoid presenting the task as a choice or as a question. Once you have given the instruction, do not deliver the reward until the instruction has been completed. If the learner can get the reward without doing the instruction, avoid giving the instruction if possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the instruction was "Clean your room and then you can have candy" and the learner refuses, you then restate the instruction. Do not allow access to candy until the learner has completed the instruction. Make sure your direction is given as a statement - Clean your room. Avoid saying "Will you clean your room?" or "Can you clean your room" - best to avoid words like <i>can</i>, <i>will</i>, or <i>would</i> when giving a direction. Avoid presenting an instruction you can't follow through with. "You can't go outside till you finish your work." The learner can physically walk outside.
Make Following Instructions Easy	When giving directions, begin by giving easy directions so your learner learns to follow instructions before receiving a reward. Initial instructions can be related to things you know the learner is about to do, things you know the learner will consistently do, or when your learner is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you want to work on following directions, start small. If your learner is getting ready to put away a train toy, use that as an opportunity to reward following a direction. Say "Put away the train, please". Once the train is put away, provide praise and access to a

	already completing a task appropriately.	<p>preferred item.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask the learner to do skills you know they have. Example: “Put your plate in the sink.”, then provide a reward for completing the instruction.
Providing Rewards	<p>It is important that your learner contact rewards immediately following correct and appropriate completion of the instruction. Each time you present an instruction, provide specific praise and some form of reward (token, candy, hugs, high fives, etc.). Once your learner starts to consistently follow your instructions, you can deliver a reward after they follow every 2-3 instructions. Continue to follow this process until you have established a more normal schedule of accessing rewards for following directions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When you first begin, you high-five and praise the learner every time they fold 1 item from the laundry. After successfully earning high-fives multiple times per day, you slow it down to providing a high-five and praise only after 3 clothing items are folded. Once the learner is again earning high-fives and praise multiple times per day, you wait to give praise and high-fives until they’ve folded an entire load of laundry. Once that is mastered you wait to praise and high-five until the folded laundry is put away.
Handling Challenging Behavior	<p>Challenging behavior may occur when presenting instructions. Remind the learner that they can earn rewards for following instructions. You can acknowledge their feelings but be sure that the learner does not access the reward until the instruction is complete. Provide any prompts or redirections to get the learner back on task, and praise the learner when they do get back on task.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If your learner throws a tantrum because they want to play with toys, remind them they can play toys when they’re finished, and in the meantime keep toys out of reach. State, “It looks like you’re really upset. Ask calmly first and then you can have the toys.” Once the learner has calmed provide praise for the learner calming. For example, “Yeah! That’s calming and waiting for your toys!”

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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.

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These strategies can be used after a desired behavior occurs. These strategies will increase the chance that the desired behaviors will occur again in the future. Descriptions and examples of the strategies are listed below.

Strategies for responding to desired behavior:

Consequence Strategy	Description	Examples
Behavior-Specific Praise	Delivering a statement that positively acknowledges a learner after they engage in a desired behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saying “Great work on that math sheet!” after the learner completed a worksheet. • Saying “Thank you for letting me know,” after the learner tells you they need help.
Rewards	Any time you add or remove something and it results in the behavior occurring more often. Adding or removing something should be done immediately after a desired behavior to make that behavior occur more often. What you add or remove will depend on the learner’s preferences. Rewards take many forms including giving access to certain activities (e.g. iPad, movie, swing, etc.), food or drinks (e.g. soda, candy, etc.),, and social interaction, or removing something undesirable (work tasks, chores, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A token and a short break is delivered immediately after a learner appropriately asks for a break. • A board game is played with a chosen caregiver after completing 3 activities on the daily schedule. • A math worksheet is removed after the learner appropriately completes two academic tasks.
Token System	Tokens are delivered following a defined set of behaviors. Once a set amount of tokens are earned, the tokens can be exchanged for items or activities. Token systems will be individualized for each person. Bonus tokens can be delivered for exceptional skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving 1 token per worksheet completed. 5 tokens can be exchanged for 5 minutes of tech time. • Receiving 10 points for unloading the dishwasher, 20 points for folding laundry and 5 points for wiping the table. 50 points can be exchanged for 15 minutes of lego play.

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These strategies can be used at the first signs of a learner engaging in non-compliance or refusal (e.g. saying “I am not doing this”, crying, yelling, putting their head down, not responding or doing the opposite of what is asked). These strategies should not be used if the challenging behavior becomes dangerous or could cause harm to yourself, others, and/or the learner. Descriptions and examples of the strategies are listed below.

Strategies for responding to refusal and non-compliance:

Consequence Strategy	Description	Examples
Prompting	Providing assistance or cues to encourage a more desirable skill or behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gesturing to a letter in a word find. ● Reminding the learner they can ask for a break. ● Saying, “You could say, ‘I want the iPad.’” ● If you need help, you can say “can you help me?” ● If I am talking to someone and you need to ask me something, you can say “excuse me”.
Redirection	Anything used to guide the learner toward a more desirable response. Redirection should be used to create opportunities to give the learner positive feedback for a more desirable behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Saying, “How can I help you?” when the learner is off task. ● Opening a book to a certain page when the learner has not started the lesson yet. ● Bringing up a more appropriate topic (“What should we make for lunch today?”) when learner begins talking about inappropriate topics

***Once the learner starts to respond in a calmer voice volume/tone, begins following parts of the direction, and/or is showing any signs of compliance to the instruction, utilize the strategies found in “Strategies for Responding to Desired Behavior.”**

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