

Parenting

18

Series

Happy Learning II



Online Version



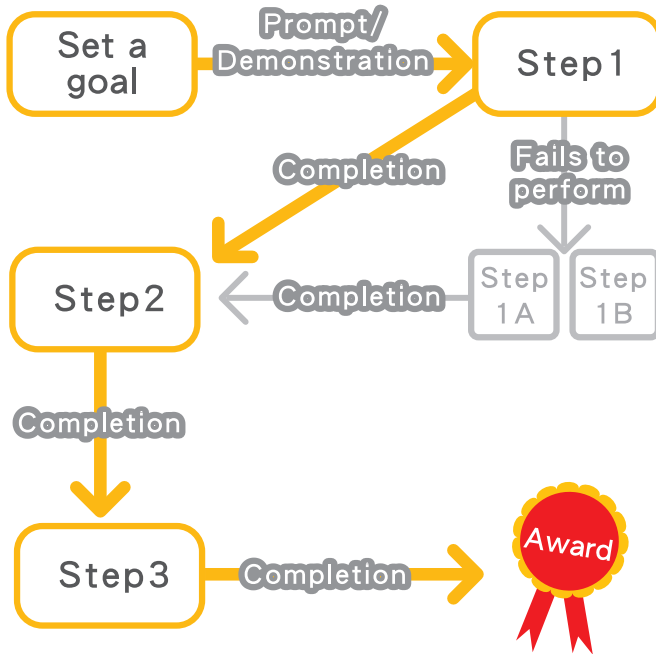
Department of Health

In Happy Learning I, we talk about children needing to experience difficulties, learn how to cope with failures, try to solve problems by themselves and learn from mistakes. However, if the tasks turn out to be too difficult for a child, he may encounter frequent setbacks which affect his learning motivation and self-confidence. Parents and child workers must **identify the child's level of development** and choose **learning activities appropriate to his level**.*

To help your child accomplish a task according to her pace and develop a sense of achievement, a systematic approach is suggested below:

1. Each task can be broken down into a series of small steps.
2. Set a clear teaching goal. Divide the task into a number of small steps. Each step should involve an action and leads to the next. How many and how small the steps are depend on the child's capabilities.
3. Guide the child along step by step.
- 4. Give the child clear and concise instructions. Give demonstration if necessary.**
- 5. Observe and allow time for the child to try on her own first.**
- 6. If the child fails to perform the step, give her verbal or physical guidance to complete. Where necessary, break down the step further.**
- 7. On completion of every step, show your recognition by praising her or gestures like putting up your thumb or patting her. Then go to the next step.**
8. For each step, repeat points 4 to 7 until the final step is completed.
9. Reward the child with a small treat after she has completed the whole task at the initial stage of implementation of the plan. A behaviour chart can be used as an aid to increase the child's positive learning behaviour (please refer to "Parenting Series 15 – Managing the Behaviour of Your Preschooler I").

10. Gradually give less guidance and instructions when the child learns the skills.



* The Child Development series 8A & 8B published by the Department of Health describe the developmental characteristics and give suggestions on promoting the development of the 3 to 6 year olds. The Education Bureau has issued "Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide" as reference for pre-primary institutions and parents at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/preprimary/curr-doc.html>

Examples of Application

Situation 1: Teaching a child to make sandwiches

- Goal: To make 2 pieces of ham sandwiches and pack them in a box.

- Break down the task into small steps:
 - i. Check with her what she needs for making the sandwiches – knife, spread, slices of bread, ham, slices of tomatoes, box.
 - ii. Help her take the things out one by one.
 - iii. Take out some spread with a knife.
 - iv. Spread it lightly on a slice of bread.
 - v. Put a piece of ham on top of the slice of bread.
 - vi. Put two slices of tomatoes on the ham.
 - vii. Take another slice of bread.
 - viii. Spread the slice of bread with a knife.
 - ix. Put it on top of the first slice, the spread sides facing each other.
 - x. Use a knife to cut up the slices of bread along the middle.
 - xi. Put the two pieces of sandwiches in the box.



- Ask the child to do the first step and give guidance where necessary.
- Praise her when she completes the step.
- Ask her what the second step is. Give guidance where necessary. Repeat points 4 to 7 mentioned above, and so on.

Situation 2: Your son can usually settle for no more than 5 minutes for reading. If you want to read together and talk about the story with him, he will leave the seat after 5 minutes and the discussion part is often made impossible.

- Before setting the goal, consider whether the book is too difficult for the developmental level of the child. Also check the physical environment. It should be comfortable and with minimal disturbance. If possible, improve these factors.
- Consider the teaching goal. As the child is more able to understand and talk about the story rather than reading a lot of words at this age, discussing the story after reading will be a more appropriate goal. **Work towards one goal first and then another** so as to make it easier for the child and thus increasing the chance of success.
- Observe how well the child can read with you a familiar book for 5 minutes (e.g. able to follow the story and read out some familiar words when you read with him).



- Goal: Ask the child to stay in seat for 5 minutes to read and talk about the story with you.
- Steps you can take:
 - i. Ask the child to choose his favourite book.
 - ii. Sit down with the child. Open the book and start reading for him (after checking his reading level as described above).
 - iii. Stop at places to let him fill in the familiar words. Praise him every time for being able to do so.
 - iv. When 5 minutes is up, let him leave the seat and take a two-minute break.
 - v. After one minute, remind him that he should return to his seat in one minute's time.
 - vi. When the time is over, ask the child to go back to his seat. Take him back if necessary.
 - vii. Praise the child for following the rule.



- viii. Finish reading the book with him and praise him. Then talk about the story with him. If he can remember some of the details or use the words in the book, praise him for being able to do so.
- This method sounds time-consuming. Nonetheless, both you and the child can work towards a clear goal, thus avoiding any unnecessary conflicts and frustrations. It also helps the child lengthen his attention span.
 - When the child becomes familiar with the procedure, you may make gradual adjustments to the steps for better results. For instance, you can use phonic cues such as saying ‘ted’ for ‘teddy’ to help him work out unfamiliar words; or let the child take a break after six minutes of reading instead of five. When the child gets used to the changes, introduce further adjustments on a gradual basis, and so on.

These are only two of the many examples. Parents and child workers should apply this systematic approach and the Positive Parenting strategies (refer to Parenting series 15 & 16) in different situations with flexibility. The more you try out the strategies, the more skilful you will become.



Family Health Service

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