

ASSESSING INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS AND JOB-RELATED ATTRIBUTES FOR LOW-INCIDENCE STUDENTS



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Assessing Independent Living Skills and Job-Related Attributes for Low-Incidence Students

In today's world, a person needs to learn every skill possible. Men and women need to be wage earners, managers and homemakers. Good parents help their children master every skill they can to help them cope with the challenges of living.

When a child with special needs is born into a home, parents must make a special effort. Often a special child has sisters and brothers who develop and learn quickly and easily. But because he is special, his physical abilities require more time and effort to develop. If he is to develop as fully as possible, he needs special attention from his family and his school.

The schools are prepared to help your child. While he is in school, he studies academic subjects and is helped with personal-social skills, daily living skills and vocational skills. Mastering skills is the key to your child learning to provide for himself.

Because your child spends only one-fifth of his waking hours in school, all his learning cannot happen there. Parents have more influence on their child's development than a school can hope for, and parents are their child's

most important teachers. Skills needed in adult years to hold a job are based on skills learned in the home. This is because the home is a stress-free and accepting environment where a child can perform easily and well.

As a parent of a special child, you are an essential member of your child's team. How far he is able to go depends a lot on the experiences shared in your home. If you encourage him to live as normally as possible, to accept himself as a valuable person who makes a contribution to the home, and to develop every possible physical skill, then his chances for getting and keeping a job are much better.

Know Your Child's Needs

First of all, you need to understand exactly which of your child's physical skills needs developing. School and medical tests and physical therapist reports tell you this. But you may not understand the words in these reports. Use these definitions to understand their meanings.

Aptitudes required for many jobs

Fine Motor Coordination

Finger Dexterity--

moving small objects rapidly and accurately with the fingers.

Manual Dexterity--

moving large objects rapidly and accurately with arm and hand movements, not finger movements.

Gross Motor Coordination--

using the larger muscles of the body, such as shoulders, trunk and legs.

Eye-Foot Coordination--

using the eyes and feet together as a team to do a job; for example, using a foot pedal on a machine.

Eye-Hand Coordination--

using the eyes and hands together as a team to do a job; for example, threading a needle.

To get and keep a job, speed and accuracy are very important. Developing speed and accuracy takes time and practice. For the special child with a handicap to overcome, extra time and practice are critical. They will influence the level of work available to your child.

The daily tasks of living offer the opportunities for repetition and speed. Parents need to provide their child with practice sessions.



How to Develop Your Child's Skills

Letting your child do things for himself and others around the house will take more time than if you did things yourself. But the more you encourage him to develop his skills, the more independent and fulfilling his life will be. You will be investing time now for future rewards for all of you.

Begin by looking over the assessment evaluation form from your child's school or physical therapist. Identify skills that your child needs to improve and develop a plan that will help him gain speed and accuracy. For example, if your child needs to improve finger dexterity, your plan may look like this.

1. Choose an activity under finger dexterity from the charts starting on page 4. Choose the tasks that your child would most enjoy doing.
2. Teach your child how to do the activity if he does not already know how.
3. Observe and note the quality of the task and the amount of time it takes your child to do a measurable amount, for instance, one row of needlepoint.
4. Provide a regular time every day for practicing this activity.
5. After few days or a few weeks, again observe and note the quality of work and amount of time it takes your child to do the same amount of work done earlier. Whether or not your child has improved, show your appreciation and encourage his effort. If there is no improvement, try to find out the reason why. Ask yourself:

- Did the child understand what he was to do?
- Was the task too hard for him?
- Was some of the equipment broken?
- Did he have what he needed to do the job?
- Was he given enough practice time?
- Did you encourage him during his practice?
- Did his practice time interfere with a hobby?
- Was he nervous?
- Did he sense that he was being tested?

After you answer these questions perhaps you will find a problem you can correct as you plan his next project. Remember, too, that necessary everyday activities—like shelling peas when peas are in season—provide ongoing practice. Include your special child in all the family activities, even if it takes extra time.

6. When your child succeeds in his planned practice, enjoy his success with him. Slowly increase the difficulty of the task until he is able to perform quickly and well.

The following charts show that some activities provide practice in several skill areas. For instance, folding clothes helps develop finger dexterity, manual dexterity, gross motor coordination and eye-hand coordination. If your child needs improvement in more than one area, find activities that will be most helpful.

Daily Activities That Help Develop Independent Living Skills, Foster Job Interests and Develop Work Aptitudes

Activity	Fine Motor Coordination		Gross Motor Coordination	Eye-Foot Coordination	Eye-Hand Coordination
	Finger Dexterity	Manual Dexterity			
HOUSEPLANT CARE					
Cutting and removing dead leaves	•	•			•
Watering			•		•
Making cuttings	•	•			•
Transplanting		•			•
Measuring fertilizer		•	•		•
Misting (plunger type)		•	•		•
HOUSE CLEANING					
Sweeping			•		•
Waxing			•	•	•
Dusting			•		•
Mopping			•	•	•
Washing woodwork			•		•
Washing walls			•		•
Removing cobwebs			•		•
Washing windows			•		•
Cleaning grout		•			•
Polishing aluminum storm doors		•	•		•
HOUSE & FURNITURE MAINTENANCE					
Removing nails, tacks or staples		•	•		•
Removing old paint			•		•
Sanding		•	•		•
Painting		•	•		•
Replacing light bulbs		•	•		•
Filling driveway cracks		•	•		•
Sorting sandpaper	•				•
Sorting screws, nuts, bolts, washers	•				•
LAUNDRY					
Sorting clothes	•	•	•		
Measuring soap, etc.		•	•		•
Operating equipment	•	•			•
Folding clothes	•	•	•		•
Ironing		•	•		•
SEWING					
Hand mending	•				•
Darning	•				•
Pinning	•				•
Winding thread	•	•			•
Knitting	•				•
Crocheting	•				•
Needlepoint	•				•
Machine sewing	•	•		•	•
Threading needles	•				•
Button sewing	•				•
Sorting buttons	•				•

Daily Activities That Help Develop Independent Living Skills, Foster Job Interests and Develop Work Aptitudes

Activity	Fine Motor Coordination		Gross Motor Coordination	Eye-Foot Coordination	Eye-Hand Coordination
	Finger Dexterity	Manual Dexterity			
AUTO CARE					
Washing			•		•
Waxing			•		•
Cleaning interior			•		•
Cleaning windows			•		•
PREPARING FOOD					
Stemming berries	•				•
Stringing peas	•				•
Shelling peas	•				•
Snapping beans	•				•
Peeling vegetables		•			•
Cutting vegetables		•			•
Measuring		•			•
Pouring		•			•
Hand-beating batters		•			•
Greasing pans		•			•
Shaping cookies	•				•
Spacing cookies		•			•
KITCHEN CHORES					
Polishing silver	•	•			•
Sorting silverware	•				•
Setting tables	•				•
Scraping dishes		•			•
Washing dishes			•		•
Cleaning counter tops, etc.		•			•
Scouring pans		•			•
Cleaning ovens, burners		•			•
Putting groceries away		•	•		•
Clipping store coupons	•				•
GARDENING & LAWN CARE					
Spading			•		•
Planting	•	•	•		•
Hoeing			•	•	•
Raking			•	•	•
Bagging cuttings, leaves			•		•
Mulching			•		•
Cultivating			•		•
Harvesting vegetables		•			•
Picking small fruit	•				•
Picking large fruit		•			•
Pruning	•				•
Pulling weeds	•	•			•
Hand-digging weeds	•	•			•
Trimming lawns	•		•		•
Edging lawns			•	•	•

Daily Activities That Help Develop Independent Living Skills, Foster Job Interests and Develop Work Aptitudes

Activity	Fine Motor Coordination		Gross Motor Coordination	Eye-Foot Coordination	Eye-Hand Coordination
	Finger Dexterity	Manual Dexterity			
GROOMING					
Bathing or showering		•	•		
Brushing teeth		•			
Combing hair		•			•
Dressing		•	•		
Lacing and tying shoes	•	•			•
Buttoning	•				•
Zippers	•	•			•
Removing toothpaste caps	•				
PET CARE					
Grooming a pet	•	•			•
Feeding a pet		•			•
Exercising a pet			•		
Cleaning up after a pet		•	•		•
FUN TIME					
Stamp collecting (picking up stamps, etc.)	•				•
Spinning a top		•			•
Model building	•	•			•
Tinker® Toys, Leggo® building logs, etc.	•	•			•
Puzzles	•				•
Swedish labyrinth	•				•
Video games	•				•
Pinball games	•	•	•		•
Horseshoes		•	•		•
Jacks	•	•			•
Badminton		•	•	•	•
Bicycle riding			•	•	•
Darts	•	•	•		•
Tiddlywinks	•				•
Cards, board games	•	•			•
Swimming			•		
Dancing			•	•	
Jogging			•	•	
Throwing baskets			•	•	•
Croquet			•		•
GENERAL ACTIVITIES					
Picking up small objects	•				•
Picking up large objects		•			•
Putting small objects into a container, varying the size of the opening	•				•
Disassembling and assembling a bicycle brake	•	•			•
Feeding an infant		•			•