



Summary Sheet

Module 5

ATSI: Developing more skills in your child

Developing more skills in your child

The secret to managing difficult behaviour in the long term is for your child to continue to learn new skills. Children who are slower to learn need more careful teaching. Children learn some skills just by being involved in general daily activities, but other skills need to be taught in the setting in which your child needs to use them. This module is about teaching new and important skills to your child.

Teaching your child new skills

When choosing skills to teach your child think about:

- building on your child's existing skills (remember Module 2, where you looked at your child's skill strengths)
- skills your child needs for their daily activities
- skills your child will use often
- skills that show other people your child is able to do useful things
- skills your child wants to learn
- skills that help them communicate better or do more things independently.

Writing objectives for the skills you will teach

You need to be very clear about what you want to teach your child so you know how they are progressing and when they have learnt the skill.

You need to complete the statements like in the example below, starting with "Does what".

Given what (equipment or help)	A spoon with a built-up handle and food cut up into bite-sized pieces
Does what (remember the telephone test)	Suresh will feed himself
How well (accuracy, quality, time or speed)	Without spilling any food

Breaking a skill into parts

All skills are made up of a number of parts. The number of steps you should break a skill into depends on a number of things, but the two most important are:

- what skills your child already has
- how quickly your child learns new things.

Ways of teaching your child

Teaching by showing

The most efficient way to teach someone a new skill is to show them. It is really a matter of saying, “Watch me, this is how you do it” (as you show the child) and “OK, now you have a go”. You can also tell your child to pay attention to the important parts of the task, e.g. “See how I push this button now?” and follow up their attempts at the task with lots of praise.

Step-by-step teaching

Some skills might be too hard for your child to learn quickly, so you will need to use step-by-step teaching.

1. Break the skill into parts.
2. Teach each part of the skill in the right order.

Give your child whatever help they need. You can help by:

- what you say
- what you do (like pointing at the next thing they need to pick up)
- giving physical assistance (like helping them hold on to something).

Only give the help your child really needs. You should give less help as they get better at the skill.

Talking to others about teaching your child

Within your family or household, other people are likely to be helping your child learn new skills. It is very important that you all understand what is being taught and how. This does not mean that everyone has to take a direct part in helping the child learn, but everyone must be clear about their own role and support others to carry out their roles. You might find it helpful to read “Your family as a team”.

Your child at school

Teamwork between parents and teachers

Parents and teachers are essential parts of the team that supports your child to learn. Teachers know your child well and they also know what skills your child needs to learn to do well at school. Children who are slower to learn need more practice at a skill, so it is very important that what children learn at school is practised at home and what they learn at home is practised at school. Problems such as arguments with other children, illness or other unpleasant experiences can affect how your child learns, so you need to communicate well with school staff if your child is not able to tell you much about what happens at school.

Selecting a school for your child

Make sure you find out as much as possible about what choices you have. Visit more than one school and ask the same questions wherever you visit about what the school has to offer your child. Take a friend or advocate for extra support who could do the talking if you don't feel able to. The most important questions to ask are:

- Will the school be able to teach your child the things they need to learn?
- Will your child be happy there?

Communicating with your child's teachers

- Communicate with your child's teacher regularly, whether there are any problems or not; a quick chat, or using a communication book, or just saying "hello" when you see them in the schoolyard.
- Go to all the meetings about your child's progress as well as information sessions about what is happening at school.
- Take an active part in meetings. Think about what you want to say or ask before you go. Get someone to come with you if you want support, or to speak for you.

Resolving issues if there is a problem

The best way to sort out any problems is in a calm conversation. This is best done by making an appointment so everyone has time to think about the issues before the meeting. When you make the appointment, tell the teacher what you want to talk about.

When you get to the meeting, be specific about what you are worried about. Do not criticise the teacher or the school. Tell them what you are worried about. Read *Your family as a team* to learn about the best ways to talk to people.