

What is structured TEACCHing?

Why do we need to use structured teaching?

To understand individuals and meet their needs, requires us to see the world through the lens of autism. Individuals with autism are visual learners who learn through explicit teaching. We want them to be independent at thinking and doing in a way that make sense to them. The TEACCH framework can be adapted for any environment and can also be transferred to the workplace in adulthood.

How is it delivered?

The activities and the environment are organised in a particular way to have a physical and visual structure which makes sense to the individual as a visual learner. This is achieved through the components of:

- a visual schedule: how much work, for how long and what happens next
- a work station (desk and chair)
- a work system (start and finished trays)
- a sequence of tasks (work boxes, bags or folders)
- the concept of 'finished' and what comes next (reward).

What does it do?

This structure results in high self-esteem, self-motivation, independence and behaviour for learning.

TEACCH is an evidence-based program (Teach Autism program, University of North Carolina) that is built on the idea that individuals with autism are visual learners, so we must correspondingly adapt our teaching style and strategies.

How do I set up a work station at home?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBTcbLo9T2o> (a work system to teach play skills pre-formal learners)

<https://youtu.be/Qfm2sXI7UkA> (a work system for semi-formal learners)

<https://youtu.be/MwBHCPbo5C8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkymZzmg4jw> This link demonstrates the TEACCH framework well.



(The You Tube video clip shows a school setting. However this is simple to replicate and transfer to the home).

You will need:

- A table or work surface and a chair - preferably at the correct seating height for your child, and positioned to face a wall. Using a corner of a room works well as this limits distraction and helps focus attention.
- 2 trays or boxes, the one on the right labelled 'finished'
- Smaller containers such as baskets, boxes, cup-cake baking trays, pots fixed to a tea tray or cardboard.
- Save up your used eggboxes, yogurt pots, ice cube trays and food packaging with compartments as these make excellent sorting trays.
- A three part schedule labelled 1,2,3 (attached). This is because we are going to build up to completing 3 short tasks.
- A 'now and next' visual schedule (attached).
- How you represent the schedule depends on the stage (not age) of your child – you can use real objects (such as a piece of puzzle to signal workstation time, a photograph of the work station taken on your phone, symbols, words and objects combined or just written words (if your child is a good reader). Real objects or photographs work best.
- The 3 tasks in the workstation should be contained in 3 separate boxes or bags – use zip lock freezer bags, shoe boxes, Tupperware boxes; whatever you have to hand at home.

What is a task box?

A **task box** is a **box** (or it could be a large ziplock freezer bag) that contains all the materials required for a specific activity. The individual can open it, complete the activity, and then put the things back into the **box or bag**. We can use the same **task box** consecutively for a few days or weeks until the activity has been mastered.

Task boxes are usually part of a series of 3 different consecutive task box activities. When the task is complete, the individual places it in the '**finished**' tray.

The activities are usually simple and physically structured. The individual performs them for a short time (initially no more than 2-5 minutes per task). We can use the same task box consecutively for a few days or weeks until the activity has been mastered or use it again after a number of weeks have passed to see if your child remembers how to apply the skill.

What is a work system ?

This way of organising is called a **work system**. It is **sequenced from left to right** and this structure of 3 task boxes or bags is very important. The work system is **visually and physically organised** to show your child how to complete the task: what is expected, when it is finished, progress through the 3 tasks and their reward at the end (shown on the now and next schedule). The reward is important as it motivates your child to perform the tasks to

completion. When repeated a few times, the work system allows your child to be **independent**.

How to start

Most children will be familiar with the TEACCH system as they use it in the classroom. However, we know children with autism have difficulty generalising activities and skills mastered in one setting to another, so don't feel frustrated if this doesn't seem to work at first. Begin by showing your child the 2 part schedule: 'first workstation then reward'

Children with autism require explicit teaching so **model or demonstrate** for them what to do (perform the work system yourself to show them. You could even film this). You may have to show them a few times.

Reduce your language – the beauty of structured TEACCHing is it 'tells' the child what to do through its physical and visual structure and so does not need much instructional language. Too many verbal instructions can distract – give your child time to process and think. Reduce your pace and go slowly. You may need to say some simple verbal prompts at first such as 'First task one' and 'put it in finished tray' but that is all. Some children may need hand over hand guidance to prompt them at first.

Create a quiet distraction limited environment for your workstation, not near the TV or in a busy room of the house. This helps focus attention to the task. Keep it 'short and sweet' at first – about 5 minutes for all 3 tasks to begin with. If your child becomes upset or protests come back to it later.

It is important that the tasks contain skills that your child can already do independently. The work system is for them to generalise, practice, rehearse and consolidate their skills.

Task box activities build skills and concepts of:

- matching
- sorting
- grouping
- sequencing
- comparing (eg: language concepts tall/short, big/little, under/on)
- number and counting
- letter sounds
- stacking
- cutting out and following visual instructions to make and create
- completing a simple puzzle
- posting
- shape
- labelling
- colouring
- constructing

These skills are really important as they are the foundations of wider learning concepts and particularly linked to the development and understanding of communication and language skills.

A simplified way to think of the TEACCH framework is to compare it to a construction kit for Lego: the pieces are contained in a box (the work station), in numbered bags (tasks) and the instructions are visually sequenced (the schedule) so you can easily follow what to do.

What activities can I include in the task boxes/bags ?

Make sure you secure and firmly fix the containers to your tray with tape, glue or blutak.

For pre-verbal learners you could try the activities below. Build one first and then add to it.



Sorting: language concepts of soft /hard using household items.



Sorting: language concept categories and developing fine motor skills using tongs.

You could roll up different sized balls of paper.



Maths: Counting out a number of objects from a larger amount. (You can use any objects dried beans or pasta shapes, buttons, milk carton tops, lego building

blocks, shells, pebbles, leaves, conkers, etc.)

Counting through craft:



You could include activities you have ready made in the home such as inset puzzles, picture puzzles, matching socks. There are many ideas.

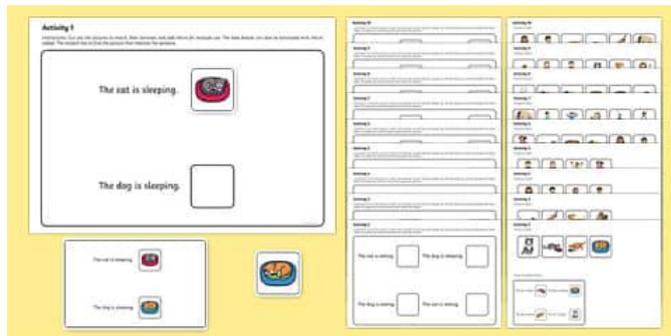
Sorting and grouping: any household objects by colour, shape, size or category (buttons, lego bricks, paper circles, clothespins, sweets such as smarties, socks, coins, playing cards, cutlery, pictures cut from a magazine, lego figures, small world characters, farm animals). By presenting this task in a number of ways, children really get to apply their knowledge and thinking skills and perform independently.



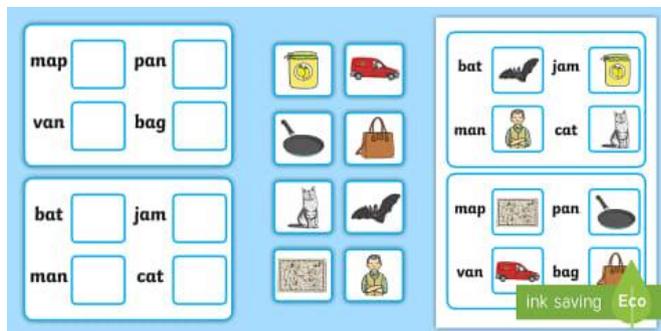


Posting objects into a container. Cut a hole or slot into a household container. Count the objects as they are posted.

For semi-formal learners, parents have free access to the **Twinkl website**. This contains a section on Autism Resource Pack with printable activity frames.



Picture to sentence matching.



Picture to CVC word matching.