



Naturalistic and Incidental Teaching Strategies

Tips for using everyday situations to work on skills

Naturalistic Teaching Strategies (NaTS) are used to teach skills in the “real world” rather than in the more structured setting of a typical classroom. Parents, and even peers and siblings, can take advantage of natural situations that occur in the home or community to support the child’s learning and/or applying things learned during school lessons to the real world. NaTS works best when you take advantage of your child’s interests and preferred activities to teach skills or information. When using NaTS, have fun with your child and provide frequent specific praise.

Other examples of how to use Naturalistic and Incidental Teaching:

- Model your problem-solving process out loud as challenging situations arise in the home.
- While driving in the car, use a frustrating situation as a way to model using coping strategies (like taking a deep breath) that have been worked on previously.
- While watching shows or movies, ask comprehension questions or wh- questions.
- After working on how to ask for help, create situations in which your child will have to ask for help (e.g., help with using the remote, finding a preferred item, opening something that is difficult to open, etc.)
- Measuring during baking or cooking
- Sorting items around the house or outside into categories (mammals, insects, birds, plants, etc.)
- Sorting clothes by type (t-shirt, underwear, socks, etc.)

**“The
quality of
human life...
depends on finding ways to make
everyone’s environment
more
nurturing...”**



~ Anthony Biglan, 2015

Examples of Teaching Language in the Natural Environment:

- Help your child request various toys during a free play period
- During snacks or meals, ask a child to request food items
- Model using prepositions (in, on, under, beside, etc.) while playing with blocks or other toys
- Label colors while doing a highly preferred art activity
- Teaching a child to ask and answer “wh-” questions while playing a game, such as Guess Who.
- Giving your child a chance to fill-in missing words while singing familiar songs with them.
- Teaching a child to count while helping to take food out of the cupboard or refrigerator.

Additional Resources

- Charlop, M. H. (2018). *Naturalistic and Incidental Teaching*. Part of the PRO-ED Series on Autism Spectrum Disorders—Second Edition.
- <http://www.carboneclinic.com/portal/conferences/files/Salerno-%20Course%20Jan%202017/Course%20Materials-Students/2.%20TUESDAY-WEDNESDAY/Tues-Wed%20%20Power%20Points/Salerno%20NET%20Jan%202017.pdf>
- <https://www.appliedbehavioranalysisprograms.com/faq/what-is-naturalistic-teaching/>
- https://www.special-learning.com/article/incidental_teaching
- <https://www.bcps.org/system/coronavirus/>

