

Independent Workstation Tasks Guidance

You will need...

Essential; Independent tasks/activities pitched at an appropriate level for the child

Preferable; a desk space where the child can work

Possible; dedicated workstation space, a visual work system/task management board, reward tasks

Who...

Originally workstations were part of the TEACCH approach for students with a diagnosis of ASD but they can also work equally well with any child that has difficulties working independently.

Why...

They can be used for a few reasons, and the key reason may differ between children. In the main workstations are used to develop the ability to work independently, to provide predictable routine and reduce stress. They also support overlearning of key skills and often improves self-esteem.

What...

Simple, structured activities reinforcing work that the child already knows how to do. They should be presented visually so the child knows what to do and they should have clear beginnings and ends so that the child knows where to start and when it's over.

Remember that you can't do something independently if you don't know how to do it.

The skill taught during this time is going to be the ability to work independently. This time is not going to be used to teach other new skills or reinforce skills that they are not totally secure with

If possible, using activities which are interesting, perhaps linked to a special interest, can be more motivating and increase the chances of success.

Where...

If possible, set up a quiet, low distraction area. A table facing away from the room with a bookcase or cupboard to provide some screening can help. If the same area is used for 1:1 teaching and workstation activities, make sure that it is visually clear which he/she will be doing at a given time. It may be worth considering any adult led teaching away from the workstation. Otherwise, a small change in the environment can help eg. remove workstation trays and present teaching activities in a different manner or using different symbols/words signage that can be altered depending on the time.

When...

This will differ from child to child and class to class depending on the needs of the child and the key reason for them accessing independent workstation tasks. It may be used for the child to work through whilst the adult works with another group or at a time when the child is struggling to access the class learning (e.g. carpet time). It could also be used as part of the child's routine to keep them busy during a time that may previously have caused a problem e.g. transitioning in from playtime.

How...

For some children it will be as simple as directing them to the tasks at the appropriate time of the day and leaving them to work through these.

Some children will need more visuals and physical structure in order to support their independence. These children are also the ones that are more likely to need a physical workstation space to work in. These children will need;

1. Trays/ folders containing the child's activities are placed to the pupil's left.
2. The activities should be numbered, have colour squares or pictures to match a strip on table top. You may also use photos of the activities themselves. The child will remove and match each to the corresponding tray/folder.
3. The child should complete the activity and then place the completed activity to the right.
4. Repeat with the following drawers/folders
5. Once all numbers/colour squares have been removed from strip on table top and activities have been completed, the child has finished. A symbol at the bottom of the strip directs them to the next activity or their timetable. It may be that this symbol is something motivating to act as a reward for completing the workstation tasks.
6. The child should be able to complete these steps independently (although they will need some prompting when first introduced to the system). If you are still having to give a lot of support to the child, then you may need to make some adaptations; ensure that the work is something they can do independently and that the visual structure is easy to follow.

Remember...

- There needs to be a place to put the work when it's finished (this avoids the need to take it to a teacher) Work stays completed going into the finished basket (so teachers can check and students value their product) students should never be expected to take their tasks apart and ideally-students should never see staff disassembling their work (it demeans their efforts).
- The activities should only contain the pieces required for the work to be complete (no extra pieces).
- Tasks need to be rotated to ensure it does not get boring
- It is best to correct and respond to pupils' mistakes after workstation time. You may need to simplify a task or re- teach a task if the pupil needs help. Encourage the pupil to leave task completed in the drawer or folder, so an adult can check later.
- The child should also have access to a space on the main group table so that they are still included in the class group.