














Teaching

Sometimes kids have trouble with certain tasks and behaviours because they don't have the skills they need to be successful. Lots of new skills can be taught with the right approach. You have already taught your children many things, often without realising it - here are some tips to help you be even more skillful with your teaching skills.

What to Do	How/Why?	
Work out what skills are important to work on – choose one or two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the important skills to work on. E.G how to ask someone to play ask for help manage strong emotions not just colours, numbers etc 	
Check your expectations are realistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with what your child can easily do, without any help. Next, find what they can do with a little help/support/a bit of a stretch. This is the next step. Keep going with this, adding new steps after the first one is achieved. 	
Choose a teachable moment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When kids or adults are tired, hungry, upset, angry, overwhelmed etc is not a teachable moment. Wait for a calm time. Teaching during times of high emotion may result in an unintended 'payoff' because kids will get their connection needs met any way they can. 	
Use your child's interests and strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.G. If a child loves looking at themselves in the mirror, teach brushing of teeth in front of a mirror. Including our child's interests will motivate them to try If we start with what they are good and build from there we are more likely to get success 	
Use your child's learning style to make learning easier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do they learn best by looking? Doing? Listening? Moving? This is their 'learning style' use this for success. e.g. a child who learns through moving will develop their drawing/writing skills more easily if they are making marks with pavement chalk on your driveway rather than sitting at a desk. 	
Provide the sensory input your child needs to be calm and alert.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do they need a quiet place to learn? Will music in the background help or stop focus? Look at the child's individual sensory needs and include them in their learning 	
Make it fun and rewarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make it fun. Can the skill be taught through play/a game/singing/jumping on the trampoline? Follow any step that requires effort with something that is easy and fun. Work out what will motivate your child to try hard. Think stickers, high fives, praise, time with favourite people or activities. 	

What to do?	How/Why?	
<p>Focus on the positive (also known as Shaping)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give attention and praise to any success – don't wait for perfection, then gradually lift the standard until all the steps can be achieved. • When the skill is easy, change praise to 'poker machine praise' (they don't know when it will come – this is called Fading). • When things don't go to plan focus on the thing you want your child to do next time, not the thing they did wrong this time. 	
<p>Less is more – keep it short and sweet – or change the plan entirely.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child is very resistant, maybe they are not ready for learning this skill. You are probably better to wait a while and build other strengths. • Practise, Practise, Practise – but keep it short and sweet. Stop when your child is getting tired or isn't enjoying themselves. • Short, frequent, fun times practicing will build a new pathway in your child's brain more quickly than practicing for an hour once a week. 	
<p>Break it down to small steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When there are several steps, or a sequence, to a skill e.g., brushing your teeth or making a bed, decide if your child is going to start with the first step (putting on the toothpaste) or the last step (putting the pillow on the bed neatly). 	
<p>Fit it into everyday life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, giving your child a jug and some containers in the bath means they will tip and pour and by doing so they will be developing their fine motor skills and the skill of being able to pour themselves a drink – but it doesn't feel like work, it is fun. 	
<p>Check for genuine understanding and that the skill can be used in many places/ways (is generalized)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, we can teach kids to say/sign hello but if they don't do so with meaning they won't know when or who to say/sign hello to. This means the skill is not actually useful. 	
<p>Limit screen time to make teaching and learning more successful</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids who spend a lot of time on screens, which are highly entertaining but require no effort, often don't learn how to stick at a hard task. • While kids are using screens, they are generally not developing other skills e.g. how to play with someone else. • Screen time before bed can make it harder to fall asleep and tired kids don't learn as well. • Violent content can increase aggression and decrease empathy 	

Choose the best method for the situation and your child		
Method	How/why	
Set a good example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our brains have 'mirror neurons' so we tend to copy what we see. Make sure you behave in ways you would like your child to behave as you are the most important teacher in your child's life. E.G. Speak quietly if you want your child to stop yelling 	
Modelling - showing how to do/what needs to be done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can show each step needed by: You doing it, then getting your child to copy. Using pictures/photos (Visuals) to show the steps needed. Using video footage, preferably of the child themselves being successful 	
Coaching – supporting kids to solve their own problems, not telling them what to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instead of telling kids what to do, prompt and support them to be successful. E.G. if kids are fighting over a toy, get the kids to think of a solution rather than punish them for not sharing 	
Labelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using words to describe what is happening, how kids are feeling and what they need to do, in a step-by-step approach can really help kids learn. Only use labelling when everyone is calm, or to let kids know you understand their feelings 	
Gradual exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gradually help kids learn to cope with things they don't like See Gradual Exposure tipheet (in triggers/payoffs) 	
'First this, then that' technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful to get reluctant kids to have a go at things they find hard or don't like Make sure the first task is easy and the second task is something they are really keen to do Make sure they understand the process (use visuals)) 	
Role play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practicing skills, such as how to cope with losing a game, can be helpful. Start by making it easy and predictable, then as the coping skills develop, make it a little harder. Have a laugh together, along the way, if you can. 	
Social Stories (or scripts)	Social stories explain, via photos and a simple script, social situations or events which helps kids understand how they should behave and respond. They are best for kids who can understand pictures	
One step at a time (forward or backward chaining)	When a skill has several steps, we can break it down into small parts. We then decide to start with the first one (forward chaining) or the last one (backwards chaining). E.g. getting dressed we could start with putting a foot into a sock, or start with pulling the sock up	
Explaining – give a verbal description of what needs to be done and explain why	Useful when people are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using 'smart/thinking' brains so words and abstract ideas can be processed. wanting information Not useful when people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are upset/angry/overwhelmed (not able to use their smart/thinking brain) or need to 'do' or be shown 	