Task Analysis of Functional Dressing Skill

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The learner is to be expected to put on a ski jacket and zip it (it is currently wintertime). For the initial instruction, the jacket will be a nylon ski jacket with ribbed wrist cuffs and a large toothed zipper. The lining of the jacket will slip over the learner’s clothing easily as it is put on. A cloth pull loop can be attached to the metal pull tab on the zipper if the learner has difficulty pulling the zipper up using just the small tab.

The learner performs much better when an activity is predictable, so the steps of putting on the jacket need to be learned in the same way each time in order for him to make it part of his repertoire of self-help skills. He is better at manipulating items than paper-pencil tasks, though modifications to the zipper may need to be made so he can insert and pull. He appears to have some motor planning difficulties around sequencing, especially if actions cannot be watched or are complicated with crossing over midline and twisting movements. For this reason the steps of putting on the coat have been modified from the typical way an adult would put on a coat. The learner wants and needs to be alone at times, and when he wants this isolation, he prefers to go outside. Interacting with him at this moment in his escape, in order to help him put on a coat, is very upsetting to him. For this reason, it is very important for him to put on his coat independently. A plan has already been set up for where he goes when he wants some time alone outdoors, so this part of the escape he can do on his own already.

In order to minimize the stress that the demands of putting on a coat present to the learner, the routine needs to be as simple and as quick as possible, and one that can be generalized to other clothing as the seasons change. The steps have been decreased using the over-the-head method, without having to reach across his midline. Pre-assessment of movements indicates that the learner is able to lift his arms over his head and rotate them at the shoulders. He can use a strong pincer grasp to hold and pull, and the jacket chosen does have a large-scale zipper (large teeth and pull mechanism). A nylon loop has been made and has been threaded through the zipper pull to offer him a strap to use when pulling up on the zipper. But initial attempts to pull up on the zipper will be tried with only using the metal zipper pull on the jacket.

Because he needs to put on a jacket before he can “escape” from the over stimulating environment in order to walk around outside in the yard (as mentioned before, the outside boundaries have already been learned), the learner needs to have the coat routine become an automatic part of his escape routine. The door can be key locked and opened when the coat is on, so he learns that “coat on” triggers the opening of the door. This task analysis only involves the steps of putting on the coat, so a further chaining of steps in the development of his independent escape process has to be planned into the instruction, either before or after he learns to put on his coat on his own.

Many demands are put on the learner when he is learning the steps of a task. Both gross motor skills, i.e., grasping and manipulating the coat and pulling the zipper, and fine motor skills, i.e., grasping, manipulating the zipper are involved. The learner may need to watch modeling and/or allow another person to touch his hands/arms/back to facilitate the performance of the steps. His body will need to feel that the coat is positioned correctly, and he must be able to adjust it if it does not feel right.

The learner will need to be taught the skill sequence when not in the heightened stress mode, when he is more willing to have interactions with another person. If possible he could repeat steps verbally in this more relaxed state, so when help is not there and he is more stressed, he can coach himself through the steps with his own verbal routine. Since he prefers routines, this would possibly help him stay under control as he is verbalizing a familiar sequence of directions to himself.

The learner needs to understand and respond to visual and verbal instructions, especially if he resists being physically guided. Eye contact (social interaction) is important so he can watch the steps as the teacher verbalizes them. If touching is acceptable, then verbal coaching to correct coat and body positioning can be paired with physical prompts. The learner needs to understand the requirement of putting on the coat before going outside when it is cold. This can be done by following a verbal reminder (“It’s cold, put on a coat!”), a physical cue (coat hangs on the door knob), or as part of the routine (door is unlocked when coat is on). The learner needs to be able to cognitively connect the sequence of steps in putting on the coat, with each subsequent one being a response to the step before. He needs to remember to stop and do this task before grabbing for the door handle.
The task may be taught in two parts:

- First, he can put on the jacket on his own, request help with the zipper, then the door is unlocked and he can go out;
- Second, he can also zip his jacket, then the door is unlocked and he can go out.

After the complete sequence becomes automatic, the locking of the door may be faded, since the “jacket on” will end up being the trigger for the behavior of opening the door and going outside.

The following is a simple task analysis for putting on a zipped jacket with ribbed cuffs (no snaps or Velcro).

**Putting on Jacket:**

1. Pick up the jacket by the collar with both hands and hold jacket in front of your hips with the inside facing forward away from your body.
2. Move your hands to grasp the collar in areas above jacket armholes (hand grasps are spread apart), keeping the jacket at hip height.
3. Push jacket so it is tight onto hips.
4. Let go with hands, but at the same time hold jacket collar to hip area with wrists, hands are directed toward sleeve holes of jacket.
5. With pressure kept on jacket to hold it to hip area, slide hands and arms down along nylon lining into sleeve holes. As you are doing this, bend over at waist to push hands through to the wrist cuffs on the jacket.
6. Holding your arms in the sleeves in this position, straighten body to upright position.
7. Lift arms in the sleeves up and over your head, sliding the jacket over your hair and behind your head. At the same time, push your hands through the wrist cuffs, and let the jacket come down over your back and in to proper position.
8. With hands out of wrist cuffs, reach back and grasp the jacket’s waistband and help pull down the jacket into position, if needed.
9. At this point, the jacket is on, and can be zipped with assistance, or you can follow the next set of steps to zip jacket on your own. (If weather is not that cold, the jacket may not need to be zipped.)

**Zipping Jacket** (with zipper pull on the right side of the jacket opening):

1. Grasp the bottom edges of the front of the jacket at the base sides of the zipper with left and right hands, one of each side of opening. (Zipper pull is held on right side in right hand.)
2. Pull edges of jacket horizontally until zipper ends are close together.
3. Use left thumb and forefinger in pincer grasp on zipper above larger inset tooth at the bottom of the zipper.
4. Grasp zipper pull on the right side of the jacket with right thumb and forefinger in pincer grasp.
5. Put fleshy pad of your right middle finger under the base of the zipper.
6. Line up the edges of the zipper, and then move the zipper pull side under the left teeth.
7. Guide the zipper pull hole on the left side of the pull-tab onto large guide tooth of the left side of the zipper.
8. Push with your right middle finger braced under the base of the zipper pull while holding the left side of the zipper so it does not move. OR hold the right zipper pull stationary while pushing the left tooth down into the zipper pull hole.
9. When the large left tooth reaches the bottom of the zipper pull hole (you can turn over the zipper pull and see the tooth edge when it is all the way into the zipper pull), hold the base of the jacket next to the large left tooth with your left forefinger and thumb, and with your right forefinger and thumb in a pincer grasp (with middle finger removed from the base of the zipper), pull with the zipper pull tab up along the zipper until the slide reaches neck height.