Different Ways of Following Directions

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Verbal (spoken) directions are a part of everyday life for adults and children. Appropriate behavior, social interaction, and academic success are all dependent on the ability to understand and follow verbal directions. Following verbal directions requires strong knowledge of basic concepts and the ability to process and retain auditory information.

Basic concepts are words that individuals need to comprehend to perform everyday tasks such as following directions, participating in classroom routines, and engaging in conversation. In fact, basic concepts are typically the foundation of verbal directions. Basic concepts may include, but are not limited to:

- **Basic colors** - red, blue, green, etc.

- **Directions** - through, around, etc.

- **Quantities** - few, many, etc.

- **Sequences** - first, next, last, etc.

- **Shapes** - round, square, etc.

- **Size** - big, little, etc.

- **Social/emotional states** - happy, sad, etc.

- **Characteristics** - old, new, etc.

- **Textures** - rough, smooth, etc.

- **Time** - late, early, etc.

- **Spatial relationships and positions** - front, behind, top, bottom, etc.

Whether in the classroom with teachers, at home with parents, or in the community with friends, children are asked to follow directions. They actively engage their brains when listening and following verbal directions. There are five different types of following directions. These include basic directions, sequential directions, quantitative and spatial directions, temporal directions, and conditional directions.

Basic Directions

Following basic directions starts with a simple, one-step direction using one element, such as "Point to the ball." The difficulty increases as more elements are added to the verbal directions, such as color (*Point to the red ball.*), size (*Point to the large ball.*), action (*Point to the ball that is spinning.*), or location (*Point to the ball that is below the car*). Then, the higher levels combine these elements (*Point to the small red ball that is spinning below the car.*).

Sequential Directions

This skill targets the child's ability to follow multi-step and sequential directions. Multi-step directions require following two or more directions at a time (*Put the red block in the basket and close the door.*). Sequential direction tasks involve following directions in a specific order (*Put the glue in the box, push your chair under the table, and get in line.*).

Quantitative and Spatial Directions

Some verbal directions involve the use of quantitative concepts and spatial relations. Terms to denote quantity include *one, two, all, both, either, or, and, not, except,* and *don't.* Terms indicating spatial location include *first, second, third, last,* and *between.* Higher levels of this activity combine quantitative and spatial relations with descriptive elements such as size and color. For example, a higher-level direction may be: "Choose the toy that is between the small green rocket and the big yellow train."

Temporal Directions

Temporal directions target a student's ability to follow directions containing the words "before" or "after" in a variety of positions within the utterance. For example, in some instances, the term "before" is located in the middle of the direction: "Put the truck in the box before you put the robot in the box." Another trial may position the term "before" at the beginning of the utterance: "Before you put the doll in the box, put the rocket in the box." Higher levels of this activity increase auditory memory and processing demands by adding color attributes. For example: "After you put the green doll in the box, put the red plane in the box."

Conditional Directions

This task provides directions with certain conditions. Students decide what actions to do based on the given condition(s). For example: "If a doll is in the box, put the box on the truck." Some directions also involve negation: "If a rocket is not in the box, put the box on the truck." Higher levels add elements such as color, quantity, and size to increase the auditory memory and processing demands: "If a green doll and a blue train are in the box, put the box on the large truck. If not, put the box on the small truck."

Helpful Products

The list of Super Duper® products below may be helpful when working with children who have special needs. Visit www.superduperinc.com and type in the item name or number in our search engine. Click the links below to see the product description.

Webber® HearBuilder™ Following Directions—Professional Edition
Item #HBPE-133

Webber® HearBuilder™ Following Directions—Home Edition
Item #HBHE-122

Click on the following link for more information: http://www.hearbuilder.com/