

# Tip 4: Breaking Down Tasks and Activities



## Watch this video

- [Video - Tip 4: Breaking Down Tasks and Activities](#)

## Definition

Breaking down tasks and activities involves describing a complex task as a sequence of smaller, more manageable steps or actions that need to be completed to reach a specific goal.

## Benefits

Sometimes, it is necessary to break down a complex skill or task into smaller, more manageable steps in order to meet your child's learning needs.

If your child is struggling with a task, consider discussing this with the teacher who can help with breaking the task into smaller steps.

The benefits of breaking down tasks and activities include:

- a child's learning goals are more easily reached
- it keeps children on-task and engaged if they can tick off each step of a task as they complete it
- children are more likely to recall material later
- it allows for verbal instructions/steps to be presented visually so that children can refer back as needed
- sequences or steps are followed and practised, making complex goals more attainable
- minimises the load on a child's working memory
- individual steps/skills/behaviours can be identified for intervention if required.

## Using the tip

1. The number of steps involved in breaking down a specific task will depend on your child's age and ability. Review the task that your child needs to learn.
2. Break the skill/task down into small steps (usually between four and 15 steps). If you are unsure of the steps for a particular task/skill, contact your child's teacher for assistance.
3. Write the steps using clear and concise wording that suits your child so that they can successfully complete the skill/task by following the steps in order.
4. You may like to include corresponding pictures next to each written step, if it is appropriate for your child and/or task.
5. Use tick boxes (or similar) so that your child can mark that the step/task has been completed.
6. Start with easier steps so that your child can experience success early.
7. Provide a visual copy of the steps that is easy for your child to follow (size, font, etc.).
8. Monitor your child's progress and provide support and/or prompting as needed.
9. Be sure to **reinforce** any independent response and successful completion of the task.
10. Talk with your child about how breaking down the task helped them with their homework and practising new skills, and decide if any further modifications or supports are needed.



**Example:** break down the task of washing your hands.

1. Walk to the sink.
2. Turn on the tap.
3. Rinse your hands.
4. Get the soap.
5. Scrub your hands.
6. Rinse your hands.
7. Turn off the tap.
8. Dry your hands.

**Example:** maths – BIDMAS graphic organiser.

<b>Write the equation:</b>	
<b>Brackets</b> ( ) Complete all operations in brackets first.	
<b>Indices</b> $X^2, X^3$ Complete all operations in indices (left to right).	
<b>Division</b> $\div$ <b>Multiplication</b> $\times$ Complete all $\div$ and $\times$ (left to right).	
<b>Addition</b> $+$ <b>Subtraction</b> $-$ Complete all $+$ and $-$ (left to right).	
<b>Write the solution:</b>	



## Best Practice Tips

When using the Breaking Down Tasks and Activities tip:

- break down larger routines, into smaller steps
- seek assistance from your child's teacher, if required
- order steps sequentially
- use visuals to support written steps, if appropriate
- use tick boxes (or similar) so that your child can mark when each step is complete
- monitor: teach difficult steps, and celebrate the steps achieved.