

Two–Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Modeling and Breaking Down Tasks

There are many ways to help young people learn a new skill or how to complete a task at a higher level. One way is to provide modeling. Modeling is the practice of showing, or demonstrating, how to do something. It is a highly effective way to teach a new task.¹ Breaking down tasks is another way to teach a new skill or elevate performance. When we break down challenging tasks into smaller steps for young people, we help them feel confident about completing the task correctly. We're also teaching them effective project management strategies.² These strategies can be incorporated into any program to teach a new skill or encourage higher levels of performance in everything, from cleaning up after snack to the Argentinian tango.

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to incorporate modeling and breaking down tasks in your program.

Plan Time to Demonstrate

When introducing your lesson or activity of the day, plan time to model and explain (break down) the task for participants.

Introducing Modeling

Ask that all eyes and ears are focused on you. Explain that you are going to demonstrate how to do a task. State what the task is and why participants need to know how to do it. This links learning activities to your learning goal, another helpful strategy that promotes learning.

Example: "Can everyone please look up here? Thank you. I'm going to demonstrate how to do the Tango 8-Step. You'll need this for our dance routine later."

Point Out the Important Parts

Cue participants to notice the key parts of the task you'd like them to do. You can use phrases like, "See how I'm..." and "Notice where..."

Example: "When I'm cleaning up after snack, I pick up my trash like this and take it to the garbage can. See how I'm using my walking feet to go to the garbage can?"

Breaking Down Tasks

Think about what the final product, action, or goal is. Then write out the steps, things to understand, or

tasks that need to be completed, in order to reach the end point. When facilitating your lesson or activity, list out these steps, in order, for your participants.

Example: "Today we're going to paint winter scenes. First, I need you to use a pencil and sketch out your idea for a winter scene painting. Next, you'll come ask for a sharpie. Then, you'll outline your sketch in sharpie. After that, you'll come get paint, paintbrushes, and an apron. Then you can start painting."

Timing

Modeling and reviewing the task's steps are strong ways to start off any lesson. Throughout programming you can model the steps, repeat your explanation, or model the final product to anyone you notice struggling or in need of redirection.

Tips in Action!

[Watch](#) staff at Launch at Maple Elementary model and break down a task for a game.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:

<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expanded-learning-opportunities/>

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

¹ Raising children network. (2006-2019). *Teaching skills to children: Different Approaches*. Australia:Raisingchildren.net. Retrieved from: http://m.raisingchildren.net.au/articles/teaching_skills_to_children.html

² Today parenting team. (April 13, 2015). *Breaking down large tasks for small kids*. New York: NBCUniversal Media. Retrieved from: <http://community.today.com/parentingteam/post/breaking-down-large-tasks-for-small-kids>