
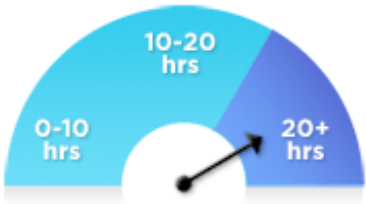
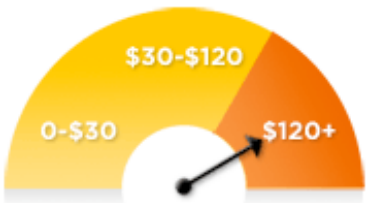


Incidental teaching

At a glance: Incidental teaching	
Type of therapy	Behavioural
The claim	Promotes language use, interpersonal interaction and learning readiness
Suitable for	People with ASD and developmental disabilities
Research rating Find out more about this rating system in our FAQs .	
Time Estimate of the total time for family in hours per week and duration.	 <p>The time commitment required for incidental teaching will depend on the type of program in which it is used and the specific needs of the child.</p>
Cost Estimate of cost to family per session/item or week.	 <p>The cost of incidental teaching will depend on the type of behavioural intervention program in which it is used.</p>

Visit the [Autism Service Pathfinder](#) to browse Service Providers information.

About this intervention

What is it?

Incidental teaching is not a therapy in itself, but a [naturalistic teaching](#) technique used in some therapies. No specific teaching method is applied. Rather, naturally occurring opportunities for learning are maximised and the child's attempts to behave in a desired way are increasingly reinforced the closer they get to the desired behaviour. Incidental teaching is based on [Applied Behaviour Analysis \(ABA\)](#) theory.

Who is it for?

Incidental teaching is suitable for people of any age who have autism or developmental delays. It is

typically used with children aged 2-6.

What is it used for?

Incidental teaching is used to improve language and other communication skills in children with autism. It also aims to help children transfer skills from one situation to another, and to encourage them to start conversations.

Where does it come from?

Incidental teaching has been part of the ABA approach since the 1970s. It was the first naturalistic teaching technique developed and offered an alternative to traditional techniques that taught skills in very controlled environments.

What is the idea behind it?

Incidental teaching is based on the idea that if a skill is rewarded, a child will use it more often.

All naturalistic teaching techniques assume that a child will use skills more easily in a wide range of situations if those skills are learned in a natural environment (like playtime), instead of in a highly structured setting (like a clinic). Incidental teaching relies on the child's natural interests as the basis for learning, with the teacher following the child's lead.

What does it involve?

Incidental teaching involves using several steps to improve communication skills:

1. Set up an interesting environment for the child (such as a play area with favourite objects and/or activities).
2. Restrict access to an interesting object in some way (for example, by putting it in a place that is visible, but out of reach).
3. The learning begins when the child asks for the object or makes a gesture (such as pointing).
4. Prompt the child to elaborate ('What colour teddy bear do you want?').
5. Wait until the child responds ('I want the pink teddy bear').
6. Reward the child by giving the desired item.

Incidental teaching can be very time-intensive. It might require many hours a day. Depending on the needs of the child, it can go on for several years.

Cost considerations

The cost of naturalistic teaching approaches will depend on the type of intervention or program used. ABA programs using incidental teaching will probably involve a high cost because they are time-intensive.

If you choose to work with a speech pathologist or psychologist, your costs might be covered for up to 20 sessions by Medicare. Some private health care funds might also cover a portion of the consultation fee. This can be claimed immediately if the provider has [HICAPS](#).

Does it work?

Quality research shows that this approach has positive effects on the behaviour of children with autism.

Who practises this method?

Anyone can practise incidental teaching. But most ABA programs are developed by [psychologists](#) and implemented by [special education teachers](#), [occupational therapists](#), [speech pathologists](#) and other aides.

Parent education, training, support and involvement

Parents usually play an active role in ABA programs that use naturalistic teaching techniques. The level

of parent involvement varies depending on the program or service in which incidental teaching is being used. Training might be available, depending on the specific program.

Where can I find a practitioner?

Contact your [state autism association](#) and ask for a recommendation to a service or practitioner. You can also find a speech pathologist through the [Speech Pathology Australia](#) website or a psychologist through the Australian Psychological Society's [find a psychologist tool](#).

Rated

(0 ratings)

GLOSSARY

Naturalistic teaching approaches (NTA)

A set of related teaching techniques used in some therapies for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). These techniques use everyday settings and situations to teach and encourage new skills. The idea is that this makes it easier for children to use these new skills in the 'real world'.

More to explore

Testing interventions for autism spectrum disorder
Therapy hours: how many are enough for autism spectrum disorder?

Web links

Autism Behavioural Intervention Association

Last updated	Last reviewed
13-07-2010	27-05-2010

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