

Skill Deficit vs. Performance Deficit Worksheet

Sometimes your child may have unwanted behaviors around a certain activity or task. At times, it can feel like a child is just refusing to do something for the sake of refusal! Here are some questions to ask yourself when you are noticing your child refuse to complete a task.

1. Does my child know how to complete this task?
2. Am I certain that they know how?
3. Is it possible that they know how to complete one part of the task and not another?
4. Is my child able to identify WHEN this particular task should be completed?
5. Would it be helpful if I created a visual with all of the steps in the task?
6. Would a verbal reminder be helpful to my child so that they knew when this task should be completed?

Example of Skill Deficit: A child has been able to do homework independently for a few months, but suddenly is avoidant about homework and is often tearful about doing homework. After careful observation, an adult notices that the child completes their reading assignment and spelling assignment with no issues but when the math assignment is next the child complains that they are too tired, they try to leave the table, and they become teary and frustrated. The big question is whether this child does not WANT to do math or does not know HOW to do this particular assignment. If they do not know HOW, then teaching them how to do the assignment is likely to reduce the unwanted behavior. If you find that it is that they do not WANT to do the assignment, setting up a reward system for completing math homework may be your best bet. Sometimes, it turns out that a child does not want to complete an assignment because they do not know how to complete it. In this case, setting up a reward system for completion of the assignment as well as a reward system for LEARNING HOW to do the assignment would be beneficial. So you might say that as you go through each step of the math problem, a child will earn a star. Once they earn however many stars it takes for the assignment to be completed (this will take some planning from you), they can earn 20 minutes of video game time.

Example of a Performance Deficit: Your child has learned a variety of social cues through a behavioral program with their therapist and is able to perform them when asked to do so and identify them when asked to do so. However, you notice that when your child is speaking with their peers, their peers are interrupted before they are done speaking. You know that your child knows that a pause after a sentence indicates that it is your child's turn to speak because you have seen them do it in their therapy sessions and you have seen them do it at home and in the classroom. It is possible that your child does not know WHEN this skill should be used, in some cases. This is an opportunity to create a visual for them so that they can learn WHEN this skill is important to be used, and you may reward them upon seeing the skill used in the correct settings.

