Forward Chaining

Teaching the initial step in a task analysis to mastery and then sequentially teaching additional steps. After a step is mastered and subsequent steps are targeted for teaching, all previous steps along with the current step are required to be accurately completed to be considered correct and result in reinforcement delivery.

Backward Chaining

Teaching the final step of the task analysis initially and progressively teaching early components. As earlier steps are added, all previously taught steps and the current step are required to be accurately completed in order to be considered correct and result in reinforcement delivery.
Example: 7-step self-feeding task analysis

**Step 1:** Grasp utensil

**Step 2:** Manipulate utensil to access food

**Step 3:** Bring utensil to mouth

**Step 4:** Manipulate utensil to insert food in mouth

**Step 5:** Remove utensil from mouth

**Step 6:** Chew food

**Step 7:** Swallow food

Who benefits?

- Students with intellectual disabilities
- Students with learning disabilities
- Students with developmental disabilities
- Students with ADHD
- Anyone!

How do I implement this strategy?
Decide on the task you want to teach your student, and then divide it into easily measurable and attainable tasks.

### FORWARD CHAINING

1. Teach Step 1 of 7 (i.e. grasp utensil).
2. Once Step 1 is mastered, move on to teaching Step 1 + Step 2, in the proper order (i.e. grasp utensil and then manipulate utensil to access food).
3. Once Step 1 + Step 2 is mastered, move on to teaching Step 1 + Step 2 + Step 3 (i.e. grasp utensil, manipulate utensil to access food, and then bring utensil to mouth). This continues until all 7 steps are mastered in the correct order.
4. Each time a task (i.e. Step 1 + Step 2) is completed or mastered, deliver reinforcement.
5. Fade prompts once tasks are mastered, but prompt the new task until mastery. In forward chaining, you will fade prompts at the beginning of the chain, and prompt all novel tasks toward the end of the chain.

### BACKWARD CHAINING

1. Teach Step 7 of 7 (i.e. swallow food).
2. Once Step 7 is mastered, move on to teaching Step 6 + Step 7, in the proper order (i.e. chew food and then swallow food).
3. Once Step 6 + Step 7 is mastered, move on to teaching Step 5 + Step 6 + Step 7 (i.e. remove utensil from mouth, chew food, and then swallow food). This continues until all 7 steps are mastered in the correct order.
4. Each time a task (i.e. Step 6 + Step 7) is completed or mastered, deliver reinforcement.
5. Fade prompts once tasks are mastered, but prompt the new task until mastery. In backward chaining, you will prompt at the beginning of the chain, but fade prompts when tasks are beginning to be mastered toward the end of the chain.