RULES AND ROUTINES

CHARACTERISTICS OVERVIEW CHART

Verbal Skills	Grade Levels	Cognitive Level	Areas Addressed
☒Nonverbal	☒PK	☒Classic	☐(Pre)Academic/Cognitive/Academic
☒Mixed	☒Elementary	☒High Functioning	☒Adaptive Behavior/ Daily Living
☒Verbal	☐Middle/High		☒Behavior
			☒Communication/Speech
			☒Social/Emotional

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Many students with autism (AU) rely on rules and routines to keep their environment predictable and, therefore, feel safer. Educational professionals and parents must understand the importance of rules and routines for individuals with autism and apply them in various settings and situations. Application of rules and routines in school and home helps students with autism engage more successfully in activities and prevents problem behavior.

DESCRIPTION

Generally, students with autism have rigid patterns of thinking. Their tendency to follow rules and routines often causes problems for adaptive functioning, including daily living skills, communication, and social interactions. Students may insist upon the same routine or environment and be upset or even have an emotional meltdown if the sameness is broken by unexpected changes or people.

However, this characteristic of autism can be applied in a positive way. For example, it is widely known that many individuals with autism benefit from structured environments in which they understand the rules and routines. Students with autism are more likely to engage in activities in those situations. For example, highly structured programs, such as the TEACCH model, the LEAP

model, or Pivotal Response Training, show how consistent application of rules and routines facilitates student learning.

Rules and routines must be established for a student to follow in class or other places in school, including transitions. It is suggested that the rules and routines be explained and stated using positive words (i.e., saying "Walk quietly in the hallway" instead of saying, "Do not run in the hallway"). The teacher may set up a time for the student to read and repeat the rules in a daily routine.

Examples of Rules	
Rule and Routine Area	**Examples**
Classroom Rules	• Raise hand when you have a question • Stay in seat for individual work • Work quietly • Walk in line to the cafeteria
Home Rules	• Do homework before play • Make bed before eating breakfast • Change underwear everyday

Routines help create an efficient environment – they save time. When students know routines, they can perform daily activities more quickly. Teachers often establish and teach routines related to (a) taking lunch count, (b) handing in work, (c) handing out work, (d) getting ready to leave at the end of the day, (f) lining up for recess, (g) walking down the hall, and so on.

STEPS

The following steps may be used to develop rules and routines for a student:

1. *Determine the most important rules or routines.* Most students benefit from structure. Observe the student's daily routines and activities and prioritize individual needs.

2. *Develop rules or desired behavior for a setting.* Rules and routines can be developed differently depending on situations or people. For example, teachers can establish different rules for their classes. Rules need to be concise and observable. In addition, they should be stated using literally accurate and positive words to prevent confusion.

3. *Teach the rules directly.* Once rules are established, teach them to the student directly. Direct instruction gives a rationale for the rule and provides knowledge about how to use the information. To teach rules and routines, teachers may use modeling or social narrative strategies. The adult may also teach rules using behavioral strategies, including prompting, fading, shaping, and direct instruction.

4. *Provide support.* There is no specific way to provide rules or routines; however, supports should be based on the student's age, interests, and individual needs. Visual supports of rules or routines are often very useful in enhancing student understanding of activities or sequences.

5. *Evaluate and generalize rules and routines.* Monitoring the student's progress is an important part of instruction. In addition, the student should eventually be able to generalize the rules and routines to various settings.

BRIEF EXAMPLE

Evan is a 16-year-old high school student. His social studies teacher, Ms. Johnson, was concerned about Evan's noncompliance during class and discussed his behavior with his special education teacher, Ms. Smith. They agreed that Evan seemed not to understand classroom rules and routines. The teachers developed rules for Evan and planned to teach them on a regular basis in both the social studies class and the resource room.

Both teachers established general rules that Evan should follow in every class (i.e., listen to the teacher when she or he is teaching in a class). Then they developed rules for the social studies class (i.e., sit in an assigned seat for a group activity). They introduced the rules to Evan and reviewed as necessary. Ms. Johnson reported that Evan's noncompliant behavior decreased remarkably. She also found that his problem behavior in other places such as the cafeteria and hallway was reduced. They planned to expand the rules for Evan to deal with various settings and people.

TIPS FOR MODIFICATION

For most students with autism, especially students who have limited skills in communication and other adaptive functioning, rules and routines must be directly taught. For instance, an activity schedule consisting of a set of pictures or words provides visual cues and helps the students know the sequence of activities. Social Stories[TM] are also useful to introduce the rules and routines.

SUMMARY

Rules and routines can prevent problem behavior by providing information about what to do in a certain environment. Students can benefit from rules and routines as structure alleviates their confusion across settings and activities throughout the day.

RESEARCH TABLE

Number of Studies	Ages (year)	Sample Size	Area(s) Addressed	Outcome
5	2-10	10	Challenging behaviors, parent-child interactions, activity engagement, sleep problem	+

STUDIES CITED IN RESEARCH TABLE

1. Mruzek, D., Cohen, C., & Smith, T. (2007). Contingency contracting with students with autism spectrum disorders in a public school setting. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities, 19,* 103-114.
   A contingency contract procedure was implemented to promote adherence to rules of conduct in an elementary school setting by two male participants, one 10-year-old with autism and one 9-year-old with Asperger Syndrome and ADHD. Both students engaged in frequent challenging behaviors, including tantrums, antisocial vocalizations, and physical aggression. Written contracts were developed in collaboration with participants and revised several times during the study as participants progressed. Results showed that contingency contract procedures decreased problem behavior.

2. Kashinath, S., Woods, J., & Goldstein, H. (2006). Enhancing generalized teaching strategy use in daily routines by parents of children with autism. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 49*, 466-485.
    Five preschool children with autism participated in an intervention with a parent within daily routines in the family's home. Parents learned to teach routines to address their child's communication objectives. All parents demonstrated proficient use of teaching strategies and generalized their use across routines. The intervention had positive effects on child communication outcomes.

3. Buschbacher, P., Fox, L., & Clarke, S. (2004). Recapturing desired family routines: A parent-professional behavioral collaboration, *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 29*, 25-39.
    A 7-year-old boy, dually diagnosed with autism and Landau-Kleffner Syndrome, and his family participated in a study designed to examine the use of functional assessment and positive behavior support carried out in equal partnership with family members to reduce challenging behavior and increase the child's engagement in three family-chosen home activities. Following parent implementation of positive behavior support, results indicated (a) reductions in challenging behavior, (b) increases in the child's engagement, (c) increases in positive parent-child interactions, (d) decreases in negative parent-child interactions, and (e) increases in the number of instances when the child slept through the night.

4. Schmit, J., Alper, S., Raschke, D., & Ryndak, D. (2000). Effects of using a photographic cueing package during routine school transitions with a child who has autism. *Mental Retardation, 38*, 131-137.
    A 6-year-old boy participated in the study, which used an intervention consisting of providing the boy a photographic cue in conjunction with a verbal cue that represented the next activity to occur. Results indicated that giving advance notice of an activity change in the form of combined verbal and photographic cues helped increase the number of transitions made appropriately.

5. Clarke, S., Dunlap, G., & Vaughn, B. (1999). Family-centered, assessment-based intervention to improve behavior during an early morning routine. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 1,* 235-241.
    This study demonstrated an assessment-based intervention conducted in a family context to improve the responding of a 10-year-old boy with Asperger Syndrome during the early morning routine of getting dressed and ready for school. The intervention package included three general components: (a) a visual chart was developed, (b) the boy's clothing arrangements were modified, and (c) a reinforcement contingency was provided. The results showed that the intervention produced a substantial reduction of problem behaviors.

REFERENCES

Buschbacher, P., Fox, L., & Clarke, S. (2004). Recapturing desired family routines: A parent-professional behavioral collaboration, *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 29*, 25-39.

Clarke, S., Dunlap, G., & Vaughn, B. (1999). Family-centered, assessment-based intervention to improve behavior during an early morning routine. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 1,* 235-241.

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RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Rules and Routines: An iCAN Module. Interactive Collaborative Autism Network (iCAN):
  http://www.autismnetwork.org/about/index.html

- Rules, Routines and Reasons: The Three Rs of Autism: http://www.autism.org.uk/about-autism/autism-library/magazines-articles-and-reports/article-collection/the-three-rs-of-autism.aspx
  This printable resource gives the user a case example for practical application.

- Using Picture Schedules with Autistic Children. Suite101.com:
  http://www.suite101.com/content/using-picture-schedules-a70002
  This links to an article about routinely using pictures in educating children with autism.

- Behavior: Teaching Rules and Routines: About.com
  http://specialed.about.com/cs/behaviordisorders/a/rules.htm
  This is an article about using rules and routines to establish acceptable behaviors.

These books listed below provide multiple examples of visual environmental supports and how they can be used.

- Hodgdon, L. A. (1999). *Solving behavior problems in autism*. Troy, MI: Quirk Roberts Publishing.

- Hodgdon, L. A. (1999). *Visual strategies for improving visual communication: Volume I: Practical support for school and home*. Troy, MI: Quirk Roberts Publishing.

- Janzen, J. E. (1998). *Understanding the nature of autism: A practical guide*. San Antonio, TX: Psychological Corporation.

- McClannahan, L. E., & Krantz, P. J. (1999). *Activity schedules for children with autism: Teaching independent behavior.* Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

- Quill, K. (1995). *Teaching children with autism: Strategies to enhance communication and socialization*. Clifton Park, NY: Thomson Delmar Learning.

GENERAL RESOURCES

- Autism Internet Modules (AIM) www.autisminternetmodules.org
  The Autism Internet Modules were developed with one aim in mind: to make comprehensive, up-to-date, and usable information on autism accessible and applicable to educators, other professionals, and families who support individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Written by experts from across the U.S., all online modules are free, and are designed to promote understanding of, respect for, and equality of persons with ASD. Current modules are:
  - o Assessment for Identification
  - o Home Base
  - o Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention (PMII)
  - o Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
  - o Pivotal Response Training (PRT)
  - o Preparing Individuals for Employment
  - o Reinforcement
  - o Restricted Patterns of Behavior, Interests, and Activities
  - o Self-Management
  - o Social Supports for Transition-Aged Individuals
  - o Structured Teaching
  - o Structured Work Systems and Activity Organization
  - o Supporting Successful Completion of Homework
  - o The Incredible 5-Point Scale
  - o Time Delay
  - o Transitioning Between Activities

- Visual Supports

- Interactive Collaborative Autism Network (iCAN) http://www.autismnetwork.org
  iCAN offers free online instructional modules on autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Modules have been developed in these areas:
    - Characteristics
    - Assessment
    - Academic Interventions
    - Behavioral Interventions
    - Communication Interventions
    - Environmental Interventions
    - Social Interventions

- Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmain1.html
  The Indiana Resource Center for Autism staff's efforts are focused on providing communities, organizations, agencies, and families with the knowledge and skills to support children and adults in typical early intervention, school, community, work, and home settings.
    - IRCA Articles http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/ftrainpapers.html
    - IRCA Modules http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmodules.html

- Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism www.txautism.net
  The Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism in conjunction with the network of Texas Education Service center with a grant from the Texas Education Agency has developed a series of free online courses in autism. Please check the training page, www.txautism.net/training.html, for update lists of courses, course numbers and registration information. Current courses include the following:
    - Autism 101: Top Ten Pieces to the Puzzle
    - Autismo 101: Las 10 piezas principales del rompecabezas
    - Asperger Syndrome 101 Online
    - Asperger Syndrome 101 Online
    - Navigating the Social Maze: Supports & Interventions for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders
    - Communication: The Power of Communication for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders
    - Communication: The Power of Communication for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders