

Things to Consider – Elementary

Time/Frequency

- Optimal time for Grades 1-3 is 25-30 minutes. Optimal time for Grades 4-5 elementary is 30-40 minutes. The key is to end the session slightly before students become restless. This ups the odds for interest in future lessons.
- Optimal frequency is 3-5 times per week.
- Introduction of new skills. A second skill should be introduced only when students can recall the steps of the previous skill, have had an opportunity to role-play it, and have shown some initial generalization of learning outside the small group setting. Therefore it may be necessary to spend four or five sessions on one skill.

Setting

- The greater the similarity between the small group setting and the real-world or application setting, the greater the likelihood that the student will actually perform the skill outside of the small group setting. So, whenever possible have the session in a setting where the desired skill is typically exercised. (ex. hallway, cafeteria, school bus, playground)

Participants

- When possible, selecting participants from a common peer group will not only make role-play more realistic, but will also increase the likelihood that students will attempt the skill with peers in the classroom or school setting.

Materials

- Whiteboard or easel pad, skill cards and skill-step posters are needed.
- Props for role plays can be helpful when appropriate

Generalization

- Generalization failure is much more the rule than the exception with many children so attend to factors that up the odds of generalization.
- It's helpful if all school staff members are familiar with the skills and there are visible reminders throughout the school.
- Parental involvement can enhance skill usage and generalization.
- Periodic review of previously learned skills reinforces the skills and encourages their use in new situations.

Other factors

- Whenever possible, have two adults – one to teach and one to facilitate participation and appropriate behavior. It's also helpful to have two adults to do the modeling of the skill.
- Be aware of cultural differences. Validate cultural background, making sure students understand that certain situations will call for different responses, not that their current (or family) way of doing things is inferior.