

## Direct Instruction and Naturalistic Teaching

### Teacher Led vs. Student Led

- Two instructional approaches that are commonly used with students with autism:  
*Direct Instruction* and *Naturalistic Teaching*.
- One difference between these two approaches depends on whether the instructional interaction is teacher-led or led by the student's interests and attention.

### Direct Instruction

Direct instruction is led and planned by the teacher, usually with a specific target behavior or skill in mind. It usually takes place in a low-distraction setting with one adult.

- In this instructional approach, curriculum is presented consistently and systematically, usually following a script.
- Instructional episodes often involve the student/s in verbal and non-verbal responses; choral responding is used with pairs or small groups.
- Direct Instruction can be used with individuals, pairs or small groups. However, in all cases, this teaching method is teacher-led, meaning that it is the teacher who decides the focus and how the task/s will be implemented. Additionally, the interaction is between the teacher and the student/s; that is, the student/s respond to the teacher without much interaction with each other.
- Sometimes students with autism need an environment with low-distraction, repetition, and structure to learn. A more formal type of direct instruction is called discrete trial teaching.
- Direct Instruction can teach a wide variety of skills, including but not limited to, basic language, functional skills, basic arithmetic facts, narrative language, spelling, some academic content, and social skills.

### Naturalistic Teaching

Naturalistic teaching follows the student's lead, takes place in a natural environment, and structures opportunities to practice language and communication skills.

- The natural setting provides intrinsically motivating items and materials- reinforcement is embedded into the task.
- Naturalistic teaching can be used to teach a wide variety of skills, especially communication skills, play skills, expressive language skills, and social skills- all areas of challenge for many people with autism.

There are several types of naturalistic teaching:

- Incidental Teaching
- Natural Environment Teaching
- Script Fading
- Natural Language Paradigm
- Milieu Teaching