

Tips from Easter Seals Outreach

Using an Independent Work Station

An independent work station is an area in the classroom used to teach students how to work without direct adult supervision on tasks that the student **already knows how to do**. The purpose is to teach students to complete independent work on concepts which they have already mastered. The **goal** of this area is to have students work 100% on their own without any adult prompts or attention.

The strategy is very effective in teaching children to work independently with in a system. The ability to complete assignments and activities without direct supervision is a skill that is very useful in the regular classroom setting. Having this ability will create successful inclusion in the regular education setting.

Who?

Most of your students can benefit from learning the independent work station system. An independent work station can be used with students at a variety of levels. The important thing to remember is that the 'work' in this area needs to be at the student's level and focused on skills the student has previously mastered. The work done here can be considered practice.

The tasks at the independent work station are individualized for the student who is working there at any scheduled time.

What?

There are as many options for work in an independent work station as your imagination will allow. Here are a few: (in no particular order)

1. Shoe box tasks (www.taskgalore.com, www.shoeboxtasks.com)
2. Folder games
3. Listening games
4. Writing templates
5. Math
6. Reading

There are a few rules for the independent work area

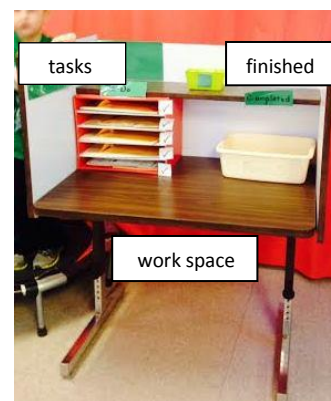
1. The work provided for your student must be based on a skill they have already mastered.
2. Each time independent work appears on a student's schedule there must be new work to do at the independent work station. Each task may only be used once per day.

When?

Any time, as long as it is represented on the student's individual schedule. Typically, we encourage completion of three tasks, with the total time in the area of 5 - 15 minutes depending on the abilities of the student.

Where?

Designate an area in your classroom. To begin we suggest an area where children can work from left to right. On the left are a series of tasks to complete; in the center a work space, and on the right a 'finished' area. A student will come to the area, start with the first task in the sequence on the left, do the work in the work space (center), and put completed in the 'finished' area (right).



Where do I start?

1. Designate an area or areas in your classroom.
2. Label the area with a color or icon and/or word that can appear on students' individualized schedules.
3. Gather a variety of student specific tasks to complete while they are in that area. Remember that a student should not do a task more than once per day.
4. Set up the area with the work to do and introduce it to the student. You may need to pre-teach the independent work system (working left to right, placing in finished, etc.).
5. Don't forget to put the independent work station on the schedule!