

# Introduction

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Following directions is an integral part of our daily communication and functioning. We have to follow directions in various ways for a multitude of activities every day. We follow directions when we use a recipe, carry out the responsibilities of a job, build something, pay our bills, drive to a new location, and so on. The ability to follow directions is frequently impaired in someone who has language or thinking difficulties. Life and communication can become very confusing and frustrating when the ability to follow directions is impaired.

Many factors can hinder one's ability to follow directions, such as:

- Difficulty understanding language or concepts due to aphasia.
- Difficulty with mentally manipulating information and then acting upon it.
- Impulsivity, causing action before receiving and analyzing all pertinent information.
- Difficulty following a multimodality task.
- Perseveration, causing an inability to shift from how one task is done to a different method.
- Difficulty attending to and completing multi-step activities.

The exercises in *Just for Adults: Following Directions* have been developed to address different forms and processes involved in following directions. In some of the sets of activities, the items get progressively harder. The later exercises use the underlying processes targeted in the initial exercises.

The exercises can be done in multiple ways.

- Have clients read items silently and complete them independently.
- Have clients read task items aloud and perform the action or write the response. In general, performance improves when a person has multi-modality input (i.e., hearing it while reading it.)
- Read the items to the client and have the client respond appropriately.

On page 6, you will find a screening tool that is not to be used as a test but rather as a way to observe a client's use of strategies and reasoning patterns. Some questions to think about while observing how the client completes the screening include:

1. Does the client need to use verbal rehearsal to aid comprehension?
2. Is the client impulsive, and does his impulsivity lead to errors?
3. Does the client read too much into the task and become confused?
4. Is the client aware of his error responses?
5. Does the client ask for clarification when having difficulty or does he just keep going, whether the item is understood or not?
6. Does the client miss salient information?
7. Is the client able to think convergently and divergently?
8. Does the client have trouble shifting from one task to the next?

These guidelines will help you present the activities in this book.

- The exercises are not for testing purposes. Try to make them as enjoyable as possible. Talking about the specific task items, particularly when correcting error responses, will help to improve the client's ability for achieving the goals. Do not get into debates if the client is unable to see another viewpoint for a response. Just move on to the next item.
- Review common direction words and practice the appropriate motor response before beginning a section of activities. For example, ask the client to draw a circle, a box, or underline. Write examples on index cards for future reference if necessary.
- Help the client associate directions to appropriate body parts before asking him to follow the direction. For example, when he hears the word *wink*, which body part does he associate with it?
- Be flexible with presentation and accept answers that differ from your viewpoint if the person can give a logical explanation. The answers in the Answer Key are provided as a reference and are not intended to be all inclusive.

I hope you and your clients find these exercises enjoyable and beneficial.

Kathy