

Case Example for Strategy 4: Use Compensatory Strategies

What does the research say?

Checklists or other memory aids on paper, tablets, or other technology improve planning and completion of tasks.^{1,2,3} Technological devices such as walkie-talkies, laptops, and tablets support improving social communication skills.^{1,2,3}

What's an example of this research-informed practice?

One researcher conducted a case study of three adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who used iPads.² One of the participants, who experienced anxiety and had difficulty communicating feelings, examined socially appropriate behavior on YouTube and watched an individualized story-based intervention that outlined a day of work for her. The application also reminded her of her next task. The individual's independence increased, and a job coach was no longer needed.

How can this be adapted to vocational rehabilitation settings?

The provision of iPads is unlikely within the vocational rehabilitation (VR) setting. At the same time, smart tablets or smartphones are becoming much more common and less costly. Thus, a person may already have a smart tablet or smartphone, and staff within the VR agency may want to review the potential applications to be better able to make suggestions and understand which applications would work best for their clients. Thus, VR counselors would need to understand the range of applications and discuss with clients what their needs and challenges are before making any suggestions.

If smart tablets or smartphones are not feasible, then a VR counselor could refer a client to a job coach or work with the job coach to develop a written task list with approximate times. In addition to or in lieu of this list, a VR counselor could work with a client to identify communication challenges and create written strategies. For example, for a client who can read and verbalize, he or she could manage a challenge in the workplace by writing out common requests.

Resources Related to Compensatory Strategies

Applications:

- [Autism Speaks](#) has a comprehensive list of applications that spans a variety of topics for all age ranges, including communication and organization.
- The [University of Connecticut's Center for Students with Disabilities](#) has suggested applications.
- [Goodnet](#) lists applications, and a few are focused on individuals with autism.

¹ Foley, B. E., & Staples, A.H. (2003). Developing augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and literacy interventions in a supported employment setting. *Topics in Language Disorders, 23*(4), 325–343.

² Hill, D. A., Belcher, L., Brigman, H. E., Renner, S., & Stephens, B. (2013). The Apple iPad™ as an innovative employment support for young adults with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling, 44*(1), 28–37.

³ Wehman, P., Lau, S., Molinelli, A., Brooke, V., Thompson, K., Moore, C., & West, M. (2012). Supported employment for young adults with autism spectrum disorder: Preliminary data. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 37*(3), 160–169.

Task lists and other compensatory strategies:

- Indiana Resource Center for Autism's ["to-do" lists for people with autism](#) describes how to create "to-do" lists based on the strengths and needs of the individual with autism.
- Autism Speaks provides [multiple visual tools](#), many of which are focused on youth but may be valuable to adults related to communication and planning.