Meet Cassie
Cassie is a twelve year old girl who has Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD. Although Cassie is fairly independent, she still has difficulties with many small things that could impact her independence as she got older. Cassie struggles with the following concepts: eye contact, responding to her name, and repeating words or phrases (echolalia).

Method One:
McGee, Krantz, McClannahan
“The child stood in front of a large bookcase on which 5 identical shoeboxes were displayed in randomized arrangements. Word cards similar to those used in teaching were attached to the end of each box, including the 3 target words and 2 distractor words for each set. The preferred toys were concealed in boxes with corresponding labels, and distractor boxes concealed other toys that weighed and sounded similarly to preferred toys; wide rubber bands prevented visual access to the boxes’ contents. On probe trials, the teacher maintained eye contact with the child and instructed, ‘Find the ___’. Throughout… the teacher followed correct selections by assisting the child in opening the box and saying ‘You found the ___ so you can play with it now’… No prompts or feedback followed incorrect selections… On each trial, independent observers recorded the label of the box selected, and scored each selection as correct or incorrect… Results show that incidental teaching promoted acquisition and retention of sight-word reading responses” (McGee, Krantz, McClannahan).

Method Two:
Fenske, Krantz, McClannahan- how they decided to use Incidental Teaching
“We recently taught prepositions to several boys, ages 6 to 11, by arranging preferred snacks in relation to transparent plastic containers, and using elaboration requests such as ‘Where are the raisins? Say, ‘The raisins are on top of the box.’ Then we gradually faded the request for elaboration (Say, ‘The Fig Newton is beside the box’) in a most-to-least prompt-fading sequence. When our data… showed that he correctly responded to general requests for elaboration… we went to the classroom, put a pencil on top of, under, beside, and behind his notebook, and asked ‘Where is the pencil?’ Some of the boys did not use correct prepositions when they encountered different target objects in a different environment… When we collected data on the boys’ responses to untrained stimuli on the playground, all scored 80% to 100% correct on each target preposition, and we concluded that we could now identify some new language goals to be addressed with incidental teaching. A specific incidental teaching program is completed when the data document that the child displays new language skills in contexts that were never used during (McGee, Krantz, McClannahan, p.156).

Assessment:
In order for Incidental Teaching to be used effectively, the child must “use the target language skills spontaneously, in relevant contexts, and in situations in which teaching has not occurred” (Fenske, Krantz, McClannahan, p.78). In the above 2 studies, some explicit assessment methods are provided. While performing Incidental Teaching, Look for:
High percentages of initiations for incidental teaching items
Increased selection of toys following introduction to incidental teaching
Quick pacing of episodes (not making full use of playtime, with immediate re-initiations for the same toys). (McGee, Krantz, McClannahan, p.156)

References:
Fenske, Krantz, McClannahan.

Autism
Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD, is “a complex developmental disorder that can cause problems with thinking, feeling, language and the ability to relate to others.” (American Psychiatric Association.) ASD involves traits such as inconsistent eye contact, lack of response to verbal attempts to gain attention, less verbal/nonverbal cues/gestures than peers their age, decrease in language development as time goes on. Other traits are repetitive and/or unusual behaviors, desire for sameness/routines, intense interests, and trouble deciphering another person’s body language.