

Errorless Teaching

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Why

Errorless Teaching procedures can function as one or more motivating operations, maintaining the frequency of responses on the part of learners which have resulted in access to currently available reinforcers (establishing operations) and reducing the frequency of responses which have resulted in access to escape or avoidance as reinforcers (abolishing operations).

When

Errorless Teaching should be considered in four specific situations: (1) with very young children with developmental disabilities, including autism, especially if these children have exhibited a tendency to avoid instructional situations; (2) with children or adults who have a history of failure with respect to specific academic tasks or school itself; (3) with children or adults with developmental disabilities, who exhibit severe aggressive or self-injurious behavior; and, (4) with children who have experienced any form of abuse.

How

After selecting a task to teach, begin by capturing or contriving a motivating operation for a mand or presenting a cue for any other task. Then, immediately (with a zero-second delay) provide a prompt sufficient to evoke the correct response quickly and easily (e.g., if the learner demonstrates single-word echoic responses and you are teaching a spoken-word mand, provide an echoic prompt -- say the word and wait for the learner to repeat it; if the learner demonstrates motor imitation responses and you are teaching a sign tact, provide a demonstrate prompt -- demonstrate the sign and wait for the learner to imitate it; if the learner demonstrates neither type of response and you are teaching a receptive ID, provide a full hand-over-hand prompt until the learner cooperates with the prompt and the correct response occurs). If the correct response occurs and you are teaching a mand, provide immediate access to the requested item or activity. If you are teaching a tact, a receptive ID, or another type of task, provide an immediate opportunity to mand.

Then, provide additional trials (massed, i.e., one right after the other, or interspersed, i.e., mixed with trials of other tasks) and try to fade all or part of the prompt as quickly as you can. If you provided an echoic prompt, fade the prompt across an increasing time-delay (begin by waiting for the response to occur for .5 seconds). If you provided a demonstration prompt, fade the prompt across topography (begin by providing a demonstration of all but the last part of response and wait .5 seconds for the response to occur). If you provided a hand-

over-hand prompt, fade the prompt across topography (begin by providing hand-over-hand guidance for all but the last part of the response and wait for .5 seconds for the response to occur).

If the correct response occurs with less prompt, and you are teaching a mand, provide an additional amount or duration of the requested item or activity. If you are teaching a tact, a receptive ID, or another type of task, provide an immediate opportunity to mand. If the correct response does not occur, and you are teaching a mand, do not provide access to the requested item or activity. If you are teaching another type of task, do not provide an opportunity to mand. Rather, repeat the trial and the prompt with no time delay or with a demonstration or hand-over-hand prompt for the entire response. Then, within the next few trials, begin to fade the prompt again by reinstating the .5 second time delay or the demonstration or hand-over-hand prompt of all but the last part of response and the .5 second wait. Gradually fade the time delay and the wait to 1 second. Gradually fade the demonstration or hand-over-hand prompt from all but the last part of the response to all but the last several parts of the response to no part of the response at all. Continue with these procedures until the correct response occurs without prompts and within 1 second on 5-6 consecutive trials which have been interspersed with trials of other tasks and a single probe trial for three consecutive days.

If the correct response does not occur on subsequent trials, do not provide access to requested items or activities or an opportunity to mand. Simply provide additional trials interspersed with trials of other tasks. When the correct response occurs again and it's a mand, provide access to the requested item or activity. With any other type of task, provide an opportunity to mand.

References

The overwhelming majority of studies report that errorless teaching results in more rapid acquisition of targeted skills and substantial reductions in the frequency of problem behaviors.

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