Implementing Discrete Trial Teaching

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WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will explore how to implement discrete trial teaching by defining and discussing the following:

1. Discrete Trial Teaching
2. Errorless Learning and Error Correction

1. Discrete Trial Teaching

Consistency is essential for effective learning, so it is crucial for what we do in ABA. Make sure you are consistent with your requirements, teaching, reinforcement, etc. If not, the behavior changes you instill might not be consistent either.

You may recall that the discrete trial is a systematic, structured learning sequence with multiple opportunities to practice learning a new skill.

Here are some guidelines for S^Ds, responses, consequences, and prompting:

Component	Description
S^Ds	• Use clear and concise language. • Use consistent S^Ds and stimuli across behavior technicians (unless otherwise instructed). • Avoid repeating S^Ds without giving a consequence so the patient understands which response is expected. • Gain the patient's attention prior to giving the S^D.
Responses	• Allow three to five seconds for the patient to respond. • Have consistent expectations for the patient's response to avoid confusion. • Avoid reinforcing extraneous behaviors along with the target response.
Consequences	• Provide consequence immediately following the response. • Use varied reinforcement specific to the patient's MO. • Insert intertrial intervals (two to three seconds) between each discrete trial – long enough to allow each trial to be distinct but not so long that the patient loses interest.

Prompting	• Use the least intrusive prompt possible that will still result in a correct response. This allows the patient to be more independent and helps with fading prompts. • Use differential reinforcement by providing more reinforcement for independent responses than for prompted responses. • End tasks on an independent response if possible. The patient learns that they must perform the skill independently prior to the task ending.

TRY IT

Spot the error in the following video.

Video Transcription

Give me the comb. Thanks, you gave me the comb. Give me the comb. Thank you, that's the comb. Good job.

In the above video, the response was paired with an extraneous behavior. Check out the next video to see a better way to proceed.

Video Transcription

Give me the comb.

Let's do it better, OK?

Give me the comb.

There it is, that's right.

Give me the comb. Perfect job.

Give me the comb. Nice going.

Give me the comb. Wow, good listening, thank you. This is "comb".

2. Errorless Learning and Error Correction

It is also important to note the differences between errorless learning and error correction:

- Errorless learning
  - Most to least prompting
  - Prompt delay procedure, referring to a delay between the S^D and delivery of the prompt until eventually the prompt is no longer needed
- Error correction

- Least to most prompting
- No-no-prompt-repeat

HINT

Avoid inadvertent prompting. Because we want our patient to be successful, we sometimes accidentally give away the answer with our voice, body language, positioning, cues, etc.

TRY IT

Spot the error in the following video.

Video Transcription

Give me cup. Nice going!

Give me comb. Wow, good for you.

Give me fork. Super!

The above video had inadvertent prompting. The correct item was always placed in the center position. Check out the video below for the correct way.

Video Transcription

Give me cup. . Wow, good for you.

Give me comb. Super job!

Give me fork. Nice going.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you reviewed tips and techniques for implementing **discrete trial teaching**, a systematic, structured learning sequence that provides multiple opportunities for a patient to practice learning the new skill. Keep in mind that consistency – in your requirements, teaching, reinforcement, etc. – is essential for effective learning. You reviewed guidelines for S^{D}s, responses, consequences, and prompting. You also noted the differences between **errorless learning and error correction.**