Errorless Learning

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What is it? A type of learning that decreases or eliminates the opportunity for incorrect choice selection, therefore maximizing the possibility of a correct response. Simply put, errorless learning allows learning to occur with few or no negative stimuli. (Green, 1996; Smith, 2001; Smith, Iwata, Goh, & Shore, 1995).

Why is it important? If students with ASD or other disabilities are allowed to error, they will likely just practice that error over and over again.

Errorless learning:

* Minimizes the number of errors
* Increases overall time available for instruction
* Reduces the likelihood that errors will be repeated in future trials
* Reduces frustration and the occurrence of inappropriate emotional behaviors by increasing opportunities for reinforcement

How to implement?

1. Identify show the student the desired behavior.
2. Identify prompts that will ensure success.
3. Have the student begin to perform the response.
4. Provide prompts to make sure the student performs the desired behavior correctly.
5. If behavior/response is incorrect, increase prompt to make the child successful.
6. Repeat the trial several times until the student appears to be able to demonstrate the desired behavior correctly and independently.
7. Following a specified number of non-prompted behavior, conduct a trial to assess the student’s correct or incorrect learned behavior
8. Finish the lesson on a successful trial with appropriate reinforcement.
9. Fade or decrease prompting as soon as indicated by data collection.

Example: Ms. Johnson utilized errorless learning when teaching David, a 12 year old boy with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), to discriminate between pictures of men’s and women’s bathroom signs. She first instructed David to touch the men’s bathroom picture, and then provided a full prompt by taking David’s hand and touching the correct picture. She gave David a token on his token board (reinforcement) or completing the task.

After three trials, Ms. Johnson faded the prompt by gently lifting David’s hand toward the correct picture. When David successfully performed the task with a lower level of prompt, he received another token. Gradually, Ms. Johnson faded all prompts and after several trials, David could successfully perform the task with no prompts. Reinforcement was eventually faded as this was now considered a mastered task.

References:

Errorless Learning/Teaching. ASAT (Association for Science in Autism Treatment): http://www.asatonline.org/intervention/procedures/errorless.htm

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