



RESEARCH RUNDOWN

Does Practicing a Response Multiple Times Improve Learning?

We wanted to learn more about which strategies are effective when teaching new tasks to individuals with developmental disabilities. We sought to better understand the types of tasks that benefit from practicing the correct response multiple times following an error. We found that practicing helped most when teaching tasks that involved more complex motor responses.

What is this research about?

A strategy sometimes used to teach functional skills to individuals with developmental disabilities involves practicing the correct response several times after making an error. This strategy seems to work well for some tasks but not others. We wanted to better understand the types of tasks that do, or do not benefit from practicing the correct response multiple times. We assessed whether practicing the correct response improves learning in tasks that require complex motor responses and/or tasks that require simpler motor responses.

What did the researchers do?

We compared no-practice and multiple-practice error-correction procedures for teaching different types of tasks to individuals with developmental disabilities. Some tasks required more complex motor responses across teaching trials (e.g., simple signs, multi-step daily living tasks) and some tasks required simpler motor responses across trials (e.g., pointing to a matching picture in an array). In both procedures, correct responses were rewarded with praise and a preferred item. The consequence following an error was different in the two procedures. In the multiple-practice error-correction procedure, the correct response was modeled and the participant was required to practice the correct response 5 times, and in the no-practice error-correction procedure there was no practicing component.

What did the researchers find?

We found that for tasks that involved more complex motor responses, such as signs and daily living tasks, most

What you need to know:

Practicing a correct response several times after an error is a common strategy for teaching new tasks to individuals with developmental disabilities. However, this teaching strategy seems to help with learning some tasks and not others. We compared a practice and no-practice error-correction procedure for different types of tasks and found that most participants benefited from practicing tasks that require more complex motor responses.

participants benefited from practicing the correct response multiple times following an error. For tasks that required simpler motor responses, such as matching similar objects in an array, some participants did benefit from practicing but others did not.

The findings from this study suggest that practitioners may wish to use the simpler and less time consuming no-practice error-correction procedure when teaching tasks that require simple motor responses and use a multiple-practice procedure when teaching tasks that require more complex motor responses.



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Why is it important?

This project is important because we have a better understanding of which error-correction procedures are most effective when teaching new tasks. Ultimately, this information may help practitioners when designing educational programs to improve teaching methods for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Research Team

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