

**Ryan, C. S., & Hemmes, N. S. (2005). Post-discrete-trial teaching performance by instructors of young children with autism in early intensive behavioral intervention. *The Behavior Analyst Today*, 6, 1, 1-12.**

**Background:** The most common instructional strategy used in early intensive ABA intervention is known as discrete-trials teaching. This involves a teacher presenting an antecedent, waiting for the child to respond, and then providing an immediate consequence. These steps are repeated many times in fairly rapid succession. Research has demonstrated that this type of intensive intervention, (approximately 35 hours per week for a minimum of two years) can lead to improvements in young children with autism. Given the high demand for ABA intervention and the effectiveness of this teaching strategy, studies have sought to examine various methods for training individuals to implement discrete-trials teaching to work with children with autism.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to evaluate a training package to teach discrete-trials teaching to 3 special education teachers specializing in autism.

**Participants and Setting:** Participants included three special education teachers, none of whom had received previous training in discrete-trials teaching. In addition, 2 male children with autism participate during training sessions with the special education teachers. At the time of the study, both of the children were currently receiving behaviour analytic services implemented by the special education teachers participating in this study. Sessions took place in the homes of the two children who were participating in the study.

**Method:** Approximately 25-35 training sessions were conducted in total, each lasting 1-2 hours in duration. The participants were divided into small groups of five, with each group receiving the same training process. The training procedure consisted of vocal, written (via a manual), and video instruction, modeling, in vivo practice, and performance feedback. Following training, participants were asked to conduct 10 discrete-trials to the best of their ability (using the knowledge they had just acquired) to teach a child with autism one of three tasks (receptive language, expressive language, or nonverbal imitation). These sessions were videotaped and the participants' responses were scored at a later time by the researchers. Following a live practice session, the researcher provided verbal feedback to the participant on their performance. The participants were then scored on their accuracy in emitting 12 target responses that had been previously identified by the researchers as essential to discrete-trials teaching. Each of the target responses was scored one at a time for every trial and a percentage for accurate responding was obtained for the training session. Training continued until the participants achieved 100% in both training sessions with a child and on 20 written and oral tests.

**Conclusions:** Results of the study indicated that training procedures were useful in training instructors and other paraprofessionals to demonstrate and maintain discrete-trials teaching skills. These findings are consistent with other findings in the literature with regards to the efficiency and effectiveness of training both professionals and paraprofessionals to implement discrete-trials teaching using techniques such as verbal and video instruction, role-playing, modeling, in-vivo practice and feedback.