

**Arnal, L., Fazio, D., Martin, G., Yu, C. T., Keilback, L., & Starke, M. (in press).
Instructing university students to conduct discrete-trials teaching with confederates
stimulating children with autism. *Developmental Disabilities bulletin.***

Background: The most common instructional strategy used in early intensive ABA intervention is known as discrete-trials teaching (DTT). 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 investigate a self-instructional package to teach DTT.

Participants and Setting: Participants included 7 university students enrolled in a Behaviour Modification course who volunteered to participate in the study.

Method: In Experiment 1, using an AB design, I compared DTT accuracy of 4 students, while teaching a confederate who role-played a child with autism. During the baseline phase students were asked to perform DTT to the best of their ability with a confederate role-playing a child with autism. Treatment consisted of a self-instructional manual on discrete-trials teaching principles and 6 mastery tests. Following treatment the confederates were once again asked to use DTT to teach the confederate and their performance was measured using a 19 component checklist. In Experiment 2 using a multiple-baseline design across 3 students, they evaluated the mastery of the same manual used in Experiment 1 combined with practice at scoring of a video demonstration of DTT. The demonstration video showed the researcher and a confederate role-playing a child with autism acting out several DTT sessions that highlighted common errors in teaching. The intervention also included feedback on accuracy of the students' scoring of the demonstrations.

Conclusions: In Experiment 1, performance improved from an average of 44% correct DTT before to an average of 67% after. In experiment 2, the 3 participants improved from an average of 42% correct DTT before the intervention to an average of 82% correct DTT after. In Experiment 1, 1 of 4 participants achieved mastery of greater than or equal to 90% DTT while teaching 1 of 3 tasks and in Experiment 2 one participant achieved performance mastery in 3 of 3 tasks.