

Picture activity schedules

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

By the age of two, typical children imitate others' behavior, but children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may imitate only if someone models a response and says, "Do this." Typical 4-year-olds use scissors, but many youngsters with ASD do so only if invited, "Let's cut." Most 5-year-olds speak in sentences and greet familiar people, but their peers with autism may initiate greetings only if told, "Say, 'Hi.'" These examples illustrate the prompt dependence that is characteristic of so many young children with ASD. How did they become so dependent upon verbal prompts from others? It is possible that discrete trial teaching contributes to prompt dependence, although little research has examined this possibility. In discrete trial teaching, a trial begins when an instructor asks a question or gives an instruction. Then the child responds correctly or incorrectly or does not respond and the instructor delivers or does not deliver a reward. If the response is correct, the learner uses or consumes the reward, and then waits for the next trial to begin. The response sequence is: Wait for an instruction, respond, and use or consume a reward. In this paradigm, waiting for an instruction or prompt is repeatedly rewarded, and behavior other than quiet waiting delays the next trial and the next reward. Although discrete trial instruction may create prompt dependence, it is nevertheless an important part of contemporary science-based practice, and is essential to the development of verbal imitation, direction following, academic, and many other skills. However, activity schedules can help to promote the independent use of skills and are therefore a critical addition to discrete trial teaching. (PsycInfo Database Record (c) 2022 APA, all rights reserved) (Source: chapter)

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