Shaping

What is Shaping?

- Shaping is a procedure where a terminal behavior, or a behavior that hasn't occurred yet, is determined to be the goal at the end of the shaping process, this is the behavior we want to "shape up"
- Next, in order to "shape up" the behavior, reinforcement is provided for the nearest successive approximation of the behavior and, subsequently, reinforcement is withheld when the next, closer shaping step is required
- The terminal behavior is reached when the response meets the criterion level of duration, frequency, or additional determined measures

When do we use Shaping?

- Shaping is used to teach young learners and advanced learners a variety of skills
- Skills that can be taught using shaping procedures include:
    - Language development
    - Social interaction (ex: eye contact; length of conversation or exchanges; vocal volume during conversation);
    - Length of appropriate sitting during a meal or classroom activity;
    - Handwriting skills on homework or class assignments
    - Length of on-task during a class or homework
    - Decreasing time between parent directive "clean your room" and on-set of child independently cleaning
    - Length of studying for test or exam

Examples of Shaping Procedures

Language Development
1. Reinforce lip movements or oral-motor movements such as forming an "o" with the mouth
2. Sound production or initial speech sounds (i.e., "aaaa" "eee")
3. One-word responses (i.e., drink)
4. Two-word responses (i.e., want drink)
5. Production of full sentences (i.e., I want drink)

As a child progresses through each step, remove reinforcement for step 1 while providing reinforcement for step 2. Once teaching step 3, remove reinforcement for step 1 and 2, and continue process until the child has successfully produced the terminal behavior required.

Tips

- Do not move too quickly between shaping steps (typically 2-3 days of success, 80% or greater or 0 prompts required, before moving to next step)
- If a child gets stuck at a shaping step, a previous step can be slightly modified to promote success
- Prompts and prompt fading techniques are used to move between shaping steps (see prompt fading handout for additional details and procedures)
- Perform the task yourself to determine what natural steps will be required to meet the terminal goal
- Provide preferred items as reinforcement for shaping steps to increase motivation for independently completion of behavior