

TIP SHEET

What is DTT?

What is Discrete Trial Teaching?

- Discrete Trial Teaching is a method of teaching in which a therapist uses directed trial instruction, reinforcers, and clear expectations and repetition to teach new skills.
- DTT is a strong method for developing a new response to an event.
- DTT involves breaking a skill into smaller parts, teaching one sub-skill at a time until mastery, providing concentrated teaching, providing prompting and prompt fading as necessary, and using reinforcement procedures.
- It can be helpful to think of DTT as a series of “teaching attempts” with each “attempt” called a “discrete trial” or more commonly, just a “trial”.
- **Example:**
 - We ask Johnny to respond to the question, “What is your address?” and verbally state what his address is.
 - Each teaching attempt or trial may look like this:
 - **Trial one:**
 - Therapist says, “What is your address?”
 - Johnny responds by reciting his address.
 - The therapist says, “Great job telling me your address” and provides with token or other toy or edible reinforcement
 - There is a brief pause before a new trial would begin.
- Within DTT, each trial has a very specific set of steps that are clearly defined and scripted, and should be followed.
- Clearly defined steps can help identify what specific teaching methods are working and which ones are not.

Why is DTT scripted?

- Discrete trials are defined and scripted to make sure every trial is run the same way. By running each trial the same way, it allows one to identify why a trial procedure might not be working and implement a teaching strategy, if necessary.
- If every trial is run differently, it would be difficult to know what part of the trial is not working and may not be able to make an appropriate treatment change.

Each Unit of DTT consists of 5 component:

1. **S^D or Discriminative Stimulus:** A stimulus (or event) that signals that a given response will be reinforced. An individual, after a period of time, learns (discriminates) that under certain conditions, engaging in a behavior will be followed by reinforcement.
2. **Response:** The response is whatever the individual does immediately following the S^D this includes responding correctly, responding incorrectly, or not responding at all.
3. **Prompt** (if necessary)
1. **Consequence** (reinforcement): Something we give or do that increases the occurrence of a behavior.
4. **Intertrial Interval:** The brief pause between the conclusion of one trial and the beginning of the next trial. Data is recorded during this interval.

