

## 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<sup>D</sup> 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<sup>D</sup> 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.

