

The Effects of Constant and Descending Criterion- Level Frequencies on Skills Acquisition

Outcomes

By

Anna Budd

Abstract

Higher levels of performance during skill acquisition predict higher levels of response maintenance, but less is known about how many observations of high levels of performance are needed to produce this effect of criterion levels. Across two experiments, we analyzed multiple criterion-level frequency values, or the number of observations of criterion-level performance during teaching. In Experiment 1, we taught children with disabilities target skills to 90% accuracy using constant criterion-level frequencies: one day versus three consecutive days. Across three participants and five comparisons, participants required fewer sessions to meet the terminal acquisition performance criterion when the frequency value was set to one and response maintenance outcomes were comparable between conditions. However, we observed a large drop in accuracy in the 1-Day condition when fading prompts. This was addressed in Experiment 2. In Experiment 2, we compared the constant criterion of one session to a descending criterion that required three consecutive days in the initial teaching phase followed by one day in subsequent phases. Additionally, Experiment 2 investigated if the constant (1-Day) and descending mastery criterion had a varied effect on generalization, accuracy in responding when the prompt was faded. We were able to determine that the descending criterion condition mitigated the drop in accuracy when the prompt was faded. We replicated the 1-Day condition efficiency and

effectiveness outcomes in Experiment 2. We did not find the 1-Day nor the Descending criterion to be effective in producing generalization.

Keywords: acquisition-performance criterion, efficiency, frequency of observations, mastery criterion, response maintenance

