

Section: Instruction
Topic: Correcting Errors

Everyone makes mistakes when they're learning something new. It is important to help a person learn the correct way to do an activity so that they do not make the same mistake again. Knowing how to correct a mistake in just the right way can help a person learn a new activity a lot more quickly.

After completing this section, you will be able to decide if you need to correct what a person did and How to use the different steps in a correction procedure when a student makes a mistake.

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So now you're doing a dynamite job of providing assistance and reinforcing correct responses, right? What do you do when a student makes an error? You use a correction procedure to help them get it right. Sometimes you will decide to provide some assistance to a student, but despite this help, the student will still respond incorrectly. Other times you will decide to provide no help, watch the student respond, and they will make an error. In both cases, you will follow the three steps of a good correction procedure: 1) stop the student, 2) help the student respond correctly, 3) have the student do it again correctly, and reinforce him.

Stop the student. When you see a student making an error, interrupt him/her. You can say, "Stop" or "Wait." You can also interrupt the student by helping them get the correct response. Here you don't need to say "Stop" or "Wait."

Help the student respond correctly. Provide just enough assistance for the student to get it right. For example, if Tim walked past the baskets at the grocery store, you might say, "Tim, are you forgetting something?" Tim then goes back and gets his basket. In this case, an indirect verbal cue was just enough help for the error to be corrected. In other situations, more assistance may be needed. For example, Tracy picks up a screwdriver and tries to put it on the head of a screw but misses twice. You then lightly steady her hand with your hand, and help guide the

screwdriver to the slot in the screw. Here, physical assistance was just enough help to correct the error.

Have the student do it again correctly, and reinforce him. After correcting the student, you back up to the previous step and have the student do it again, this time getting it right. Hopefully, the student will respond correctly without any more assistance. If you don't think this will happen, make sure you provide enough assistance so the student responds correctly this second time around. Continuing with our example of Tim at the grocery store, after he goes back and gets a basket, you would put the basket back, ask Tim to walk back to the entrance door, and say, "Now remember what to do." Tim would then approach the baskets, pick one up, and proceed to the next step. You would say, "Right." At the benchwork table with Tracy, you would have Tracy put the screwdriver down. She would then pick it up and place it on the screwhead. This time you would provide some physical help so she got it right without missing the screwhead. You would say, "That's better."

A caution: Sometimes it is difficult to do a complete correction in the community. For example, if a student has paid the cashier incorrectly, you really can't take the money back from the cashier and have the student do it over again. The cashier and the other customers in line would not appreciate this. In this instance, it's OK to let the cashier handle the problem, or just tell the student to give another dollar, or take the extra dollar back and keep going. In situations where a complete correction procedure is difficult to do, you don't need to do all three steps.

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Assignment # _____
Due Date _____
Name _____

Below are situations where some aspect of instruction has been provided. For each situation, your task is to decide if there was a problem with the instruction provided; if so, what the problem was; and what you would have done instead.

1. At Foodvalue, Charlena has a picture card of Chicken Noodle Soup. She finds the soup section, matches her card to a can of Broccoli Soup, and begins to place the can of Broccoli Soup in her basket. The tutor says, "Wait, Charlena, that isn't Chicken Noodle Soup." The tutor then helps Charlena match her card to a can of Chicken Noodle Soup. Charlena puts the noodle soup in her basket, gets her next picture card (lettuce) and begins walking toward the produce section of the store.
 - a. Is there a problem?
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What would you do instead?

2. In the weight lifting room, Amy begins to incorrectly set up the leg extension table. She is supposed to put two 5 lb. weights on the weight bars of the table. Instead, she picks up a 10 lb. weight. The tutor says, "Amy, wait. You need to find a 5 lb. weight." Amy puts on the 10 lb. weight. The tutor says, "Amy, that's not right. Find a 5 lb. weight." Amy then picks up another 10 lb. weight and starts to put it on. The tutor interrupts Amy and says, "Amy, a 10 lb. weight is too heavy for you. Take off the two 10 lb. weights." (The tutor points to the weights and then to the floor). Amy takes the weights off. The tutor continues, "Now put on two 5 lb. weights." (The tutor points at two 5 lb. weights). Amy puts two 5 lb. weights on correctly.
 - a. Is there a problem?
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What would you do instead?