

HOW TO USE POSITIVE PRACTICE

by

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Preface

This book is designed to explain the use of **positive practice** to parents and teachers who have responsibility for the care and supervision of young persons. Other users include child care workers, counselors, and staff members of institutions for developmentally disabled, retarded, or emotionally disturbed young persons. This book is intended to be part of an instructional program supervised by a counselor or professional person who is familiar with positive practice. Exercises and illustrations included in the manual exemplify the use of **positive practice**. The instructor reviews the fill-in information provided by the reader to assure the reader's proper understanding and use of the **positive practice** procedure. Feedback and discussion about the exercises should be provided by a professional.

A list of references at the end of the book includes many of the studies that have used **positive practice** should the reader or supervisor wish further technical information about this method. These references also provide a more complete description of specific problems such as toilet training, classroom management, aggression, stuttering, habit control, bedwetting, stealing and others.

raise her hand for permission to begin with than to spend several minutes later doing the **positive practice**. The teacher had explained the procedure to her before she began this new rule, so Joan knew what to expect. She understood and agreed to do the practice.

Within two days, Joan's disruptions were eliminated. She raised her hand before leaving her seat or before talking to other children. On the two occasions when Joan forgot to raise her hand, the **positive practice** was initiated immediately after each instance. However, on those days when Joan raised her hand on her own, the teacher took great care to call on her immediately to encourage her new behavior pattern.

Self-Test

1. Did the teacher get angry? Yes _____ No _____
2. Did the child cooperate? Yes _____ No _____
3. Was the child inconvenienced by the practice?
Yes _____ No _____
4. Did the child get scolded for her misbehavior?
Yes _____ No _____
5. Did the child learn, or relearn, the correct behavior?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Was the misbehavior interrupted? Yes _____ No _____

Distinctive Features of Positive Practice

The above example illustrates several distinctive features of **positive practice**.

- Scolding the child is avoided.
- Punishment by spanking or withdrawing privileges is avoided.
- The teacher or parent need not be angry.
- The emphasis is on positive, not negative, behaviors.
- The misbehavior is interrupted immediately.
- The positive behavior becomes habitual through practice.

Insufficient Learning as a Cause of the Problem Behavior

Sometimes the child's mistake is not caused by carelessness, as in the previous example with Joan, who forgot to ask for permission. Lack of learning is sometimes responsible for problem behaviors. The following example illustrates the use of **positive practice** when the child's problem seems to be caused by insufficient learning.

A Bedwetting Problem

Ralph is a 12-year-old boy who once wet his bed every night. His mother and father had tried almost everything they could think of including waking him up at night, not letting him drink

before bedtime, taking him to the doctor for a physical examination, ignoring the problem without saying anything for months, and scolding and threatening him when they felt he was doing it intentionally. Ralph himself was very distressed and insisted that he did not know how to stop. He wanted very much to stop wetting his bed.

His parents eventually found a solution in a training program in which **positive practice** was a major procedure. They explained to Ralph that whenever the bed was found wet at regular inspection periods, Ralph would practice the positive behavior of "jumping out of bed and rushing to the toilet." First, he would lie down in bed pretending he was asleep for about one minute; then he would jump out of bed and go to the toilet where he stayed for a moment and then returned to repeat the sequence about 10 times. This practice established the habit of arising from bed at night when he sensed he had to urinate. The result was that Ralph wet his bed only twice during the first week.

After the first accident during the first week, Ralph had performed the "getting-up **positive practice**" 20 times under his mother's supervision, as they had agreed he should do. He was dry the next night, but just to be sure that the habit was well established, he voluntarily performed the getting up **positive practice** again the next night without being required to do so. His mother realized how strongly Ralph was motivated to learn a positive way of preventing bedwetting when she saw him initiate the practice on his own, and she praised him enthusiastically.

A second type of **positive practice** was used in the bedwetting control program. Two types of positive responses are possible regarding bedwetting. The first type is to arise from bed when one has the urge to urinate and that is the type used in the getting-up practice. A second positive response is to actively inhibit or hold back when the urge to urinate appears. As part of the training, Ralph practiced holding back for as long as he could whenever he had the urge to urinate during the day. This "Holding Back Practice" increased the ability of his bladder to retain urine so that he could manage to sleep longer during the night without wetting.

During the second week, Ralph had one bedwetting accident after the two accidents during the first week. Another accident occurred during the third week and then only one more during the fifth week. After each accident, he did the getting-up practice as soon as the accident was discovered and did it again before going to bed the next night.

Self-Test

1. What were the two types of positive responses to bedwetting?
a. _____
b. _____
2. Was the problem caused by (circle one):
a. deliberate misbehavior
b. lack of learning
3. Was the child motivated to correct the accidents?
Yes _____ No _____
4. Was the child made to feel threatened or punished by the need to do **positive practice**?
Yes _____ No _____
5. Was the getting-up practice given (circle one):
a. continuously
b. only when needed
6. Was **positive practice** a constructive way to deal with this bedwetting problem?
Yes _____ No _____
Why? _____
7. Did the **positive practice** for bedwetting take time or effort by the child?
Yes _____ No _____
8. If the accidents were deliberate, do you think the **positive practice** requirement would have been effective?
Yes _____ No _____
What reasons are there for it being effective? _____
9. Did Ralph's mother supervise him while he was doing the **positive practice**?
Yes _____ No _____
10. Did Ralph's parents discuss the reasons and procedure for **positive practice** before they began requiring it?
Yes _____ No _____

The correct answer to Question Number one above was holding back and getting up out of bed. The other correct answers were 2. b; 3. yes; 4. no; 5. b; 6. yes; 7. yes; 8. yes; 9. yes; 10. yes.

The above example illustrates the application of **positive practice** when the child's problem is caused by insufficient learning, rather than by deliberate misbehavior or lack of concern.

Deliberate Misbehavior or Insufficient Learning

When a child's mistake is deliberate, the child is more likely to object to the extra effort required by **positive practice**, but when insufficient learning is the cause, the child is more likely to perform the **positive practice** willingly or even eagerly in order to learn the correct behavior. When the child realizes that by practicing the positive behaviors the problem may be avoided in the future, then the child is more likely to look favorably upon the practice. He may want to practice because no blame is attached to him. Furthermore, if each step in the process is explained, then practicing each step becomes meaningful and is more likely to be carried out in the future.

Positive practice may be effective because of the inconvenience and effort it involves or because it provides additional learning. If the child's errors are caused by a deliberate action, the extra effort involved in **positive practice** will discourage future misbehaviors. But if the misbehavior is the result of insufficient learning, the child will stop the misbehavior, or error, because of the intensive practice of the correct behavior.

Self-Test

1. Is it necessary to know whether an error is deliberate before using **positive practice**?
Yes _____ No _____
2. If a child shows annoyance during **positive practice**, is the cause of the error likely to be (circle one):
 - a. insufficient learning
 - b. a deliberate intention
3. If a child enthusiastically performs the **positive practice**, is the cause of the error likely to be (circle one):
 - a. insufficient learning
 - b. a deliberate intention

The correct answers are: 1. No; 2. b; 3. a.

Not Enough Time for Learning

We often give a child too little help. A child may be given verbal instruction but allowed no practice and no transition period between instruction and accomplishment. The child is expected to perform accurately without practice, and to have no deficiency in any part of the behavior. Even the instructions may be too brief.

The **positive practice** procedure provides practice when it is needed, and only when it is needed, which is after a mistake has been made. If no mistakes are made, the instruction is probably adequate and no practice is needed.

Carelessness
Positive practice requires time and effort. Consequently, a careless person is encouraged to be more careful in the future. The greater the time and effort required in practicing the correct action whenever a mistake occurs, the less likely it is that the mistake will occur again.

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Avoiding Criticism and Punishment

The emphasis in **positive practice** is on practicing positive behaviors. When a problem occurs, the parent decides what the correct behavior should be, and concentrates on helping the child rehearse that correct behavior.

Criticism or punishment is not criticism nor simple punishment meant to

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As part of the emphasis on positive behaviors, the parent avoids negative language such as "Don't slam the door," "Don't yell," "Don't curse," "Don't hit him," "Don't forget your homework," and so on. Instead, the positive action is stressed such as "Do your homework after dinner," "Speak softly," or "Please close the door softly."

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

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Identifying the Response to be Practiced

Deciding on the Correct Behavior

One of the first steps in using **positive practice** is to determine what behavior will be practiced. The practice selected should represent the correct behavior. If any other behavior is selected, then the child will be likely to react to the required **positive practice** as punishment rather than as a necessary and reasonable learning experience.

Example: Slamming Doors

Assume that a parent wishes to use **positive practice** to teach a child to close the door gently as he enters the house rather than slamming it as he has been doing. Check which one of the following behaviors would be **positive practice**.

Self-Test

1. Have him apologize to the parents for the noise.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
2. Scold him.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
3. Have him close the door gently.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
4. Have him explain why doors should not be slammed.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
5. Have him empty the trash.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____

In the above example, the correct behavior was to close the door gently. **Positive practice** would require the child to walk into the house several times, each time closing the door gently under the parent's supervision. This practice would assure that the child practice in the correct behavior. In addition, the time and effort spent in repeatedly walking outside the house, closing the door gently, and walking out again would motivate the child to be more careful the next time.

During this practice, the parent might detect some specific reason for the slamming and correct it. The problem might be that the child rushed through the entrance, throwing the door out too far as he entered, in which case the parent could instruct him to open the door only part way during the **positive practice**. Or, the parent might discover during the **positive practice** that the door spring, or door-closing device, is too tightly adjusted for a young child in which case the spring or device could be realigned. The **positive practice** exercise permits the parent, as well as the child, to discover the reasons for the errors.

Example: Forceful Stealing

As another example, consider a retarded girl who forcefully takes objects from other children in an institution for retarded children. Which of the following behaviors would constitute **positive practice** training for her repeated acts of stealing?

Self-Test

1. Have the child return the object.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
2. Have the child transferred to another room.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
3. Have the child clean her room.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
4. Have the child ask the other child for the object.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
5. Have the child give five reasons for not stealing.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____
6. Have the child ask an adult for a similar object.
Positive Practice: Yes _____ No _____

In the above example, the correct behavior that the child should have exhibited when she wanted an object was to ask the other child or the adults present if she could have it. In implementing the **positive practice**, the adult supervises as the child repeatedly asks for the object from another child, or from an adult caretaker, instructing the child when necessary about what to say and do. This practice assures that the child knows exactly how to ask politely and effectively for objects. During the practice, the child shows that she has learned and demonstrated what she should do.

On the other hand, a child will not learn how to properly request objects if the parents use procedures such as sending the child to another room, having her return the object, having her list reasons why she should not steal, or having her clean her room. All of these alternatives would have taken time and effort by the child. But only **positive practice** would assure that the child learned and demonstrated what she should do in the future.

The importance of selecting the correct response for **positive practice** may be seen in the next example.

Example: Football Playing Errors

Harold is a 12-year-old boy who has difficulty in the school football games. He runs fast, can tag other players easily, knows all of the plays and passes well. But he frequently drops the football when he tries to catch it. The coach then becomes angry and assigns him to do 10 laps around the field or 30 push-ups or takes him out of the game.

Self-Test
What should the coach do using **positive practice** as his guide?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Since the child may require detailed instruction or physical assistance to learn the correct behavior, the parent or teacher should supervise the **positive practice** closely. Preferably, the parent or teacher should remain next to the child to provide immediate instruction or assistance until the practice trials are being performed correctly and quickly.

Simple Correction Versus Positive Practice

Simple correction may be sufficient when a problem is not severe, has occurred only rarely, or is not a deliberate action to annoy someone. For example, if a child does not pick up his belongings in his room even after repeated reminders, the persistence of this habit suggests that simple correction, or a simple request, would not be sufficient. A simple correction might be to have the child interrupt his play activity and pick up his clothes. For **positive practice**, the child would be required not only to pick up the clothes once, but to practice picking up the clothes several times, perhaps in each room of the house where the problem has occurred.

Example: Breaking Dishes

The correct response in simple correction is not always the same as the correct response in **positive practice**. For example, if a child breaks a dish, simple correction would require the child to repair the dish or replace it by paying for, or buying, another one. But, **positive practice** would require the child to practice the correct manner of handling dishes slowly, gently, and firmly.

When the correction action is different from the **positive practice** action, both actions can be required. In the above example, the child could be required to practice proper handling of dishes, as well as replacing the broken dish.

Example: Being Late

Correction is not always possible. In those cases, **positive practice** can be used. For example, a child who failed to notify the parent he would be late cannot correct that incident, but the child can be given practice in writing notes describing where he will be, and when he will be back. The child should also practice putting notes on the kitchen table before leaving the house.

Example: Vomiting

Another example of the difference between correction and **positive practice**, was a severely retarded woman who was vomiting on her clothes, in her bed, and in various areas of the ward several times a day. The vomiting appeared to be partly self-induced and deliberate rather than medically related.

Self-Test

What would be a simple correction response the woman might be required to make? _____

What might be a **positive practice** response the woman could be required to make? _____

As a correction, the woman might be required to clean up her clothes, bed and floor area after she vomited. For the **positive practice**, she might be required to rush to the toilet or sink and bend over it with her mouth open in order to vomit in the correct place. This practice would be repeated for several trials, each of them initiated from the part of the ward where she had vomited. In the treatment of this problem, both the correction and **positive practice** procedures decreased vomiting to zero from a previous average of several episodes per day. The woman spontaneously began to rush to vomit in the toilet stool or sink, without being asked, instructed or requested to do so.

Practicing the Correct Behavior Several Times

We have seen that the effectiveness of **positive practice** depends on learning taking place and on time and effort being spent. If only one practice trial is given, then little opportunity is provided for learning to take place, and little time or effort will have been spent. Consequently, **positive practice** should involve several practice trials. The importance of this can be seen in the following example.

Example: Headweaving

*Tina was an 8-year-old autistic girl in a special program. She could not speak and did not learn easily in her individualized instruction. One of the major obstacles to learning was her continuous side-to-side rolling movement of her head which she engaged in at all times. The teachers had repeatedly told her to stop, had tried ignoring it, had tried rewarding her when she momentarily stopped, and even tried scolding and stopping her. But all to no avail. Then **positive practice** was used.*

*The first step was to avoid being angry with Tina, which meant that scolding and punishment should not be used. The second step was to identify the correct behavior. The teachers reasoned that the correct behavior for Tina would be to keep her head still, and to move it only upon instruction. So, the teacher sat behind Tina and gently held her head still for 15 seconds when she had a head-rolling episode. Then Tina was told to hold her head stationary in an upward direction for 15 seconds without movement. Five minutes of practice trials followed each head-rolling episode. Within one week Tina rolled her head only one-half as much as she had before, demonstrating that the **positive practice** was effective, but not totally stopping the behavior.*

*Because the **positive practice** head restraint was partly effective, the teacher increased the number of practice trials so that 20 minutes of practice was required instead of five minutes. Within four days of this longer practice duration the head-rolling decreased to a near-zero level. On most days thereafter, the teacher no longer had to use the head restraint. Tina now participated in the class instruction, keeping her head stationary, thereby allowing her to attend closely to the teacher's instructions. She was transferred to a higher level class where she continued to refrain from headweaving.*

Self-Test

In the above example, what was responsible for the eventual elimination of Tina's head-rolling? _____

If your answer was "increased duration of practice," then your answer was correct.

1. Did the increased duration of practice give more opportunity for learning? Yes _____ No _____
2. Did the increased duration of practice involve more time and effort from Tina? Yes _____ No _____
3. Did the **positive practice** work? Yes _____ No _____
4. Do you think that Tina was annoyed by having to do the **positive practice**? Yes _____ No _____
5. Did the increased duration of practice help Tina to keep her head still? Yes _____ No _____

All five have "yes" answers.

Occasional Versus Repeated Mistakes

If a mistake is made only occasionally or is not a serious one, then a short duration of **positive practice** may be sufficient to prevent future mistakes. But, as in the example of Tina, a longer duration was needed because she had been rolling her head all day for years, and this action was hindering her school progress. Similarly, in the previous examples of the child slamming the door, the action had occurred repeatedly. That was also true of Harold, who had repeatedly failed to catch the football. In all of these instances, the **positive practice** should have required many trials over many minutes in order to provide ample learning opportunity and more expenditure of time and effort.

On the other hand, if a child occasionally makes a mistake (such as forgetting once to brush his teeth, or once forgetting to wipe food from his chin) then one practice trial might be sufficient.

Exercise

Give two examples from your experience of a mistake that would require no more than one practice trial of **positive practice**.

Example 1: _____

Example 2: _____

Give two examples from your experience of a mistake or misbehavior that would require a long period of many practice trials.

Example 1: _____

Example 2:

Give Positive Practice Immediately After the Mistake

Positive practice should be performed as soon as possible after the mistake or misbehavior. By performing the practice immediately, the mistake, or episode of misbehavior, is interrupted, and further mistakes or misbehaviors will not be practiced.

In an earlier example, a child's misbehavior in a special education class was reduced by having her raise her hand to ask permission to leave her seat. Initially, the teacher delayed the **positive practice** until the recess period. The result was a reduction of the misbehaviors from about 30 misbehaviors per day to only two per day. Then the teacher required at least one practice trial to be done immediately. The misbehaviors dropped to only one per day. Another advantage of giving the **positive practice** immediately is that the misbehavior is interrupted, thereby preventing a long episode of misbehaviors.

Self-Test

Delaying the performance of **positive practice**:

1. Will make it less effective. Yes _____ No _____
2. Will allow the mistakes to be repeated. Yes _____ No _____
3. Will help the child realize why the practice was given.
Yes _____ No _____

The correct answer to Questions 1 and 2 is "yes." The correct answer to Question 3 is "no."

When Immediate Practice is Inconvenient for Parent

In some instances, great inconvenience would be caused to a parent or teacher to have **positive practice** given immediately after a mistake or misbehavior occurs. The parent or teacher may be preoccupied, or the child's schedule may not allow time for practice.

Examples

Some examples of such inconveniences would be a child who was misbehaving as he left the house to meet a school bus that was leaving very shortly. Or a teacher in a class of 30 students who saw a child bullying a smaller child while the teacher was busy giving the homework assignment before the end of the class. Or a teacher of retarded students who saw one student picking his nose while she was taking a group of these students from one building to another.

In the event that **positive practice** cannot be given immediately, give it as soon as convenient, just as the teacher did during the next recess period for the "hand raising practice" in the earlier example.

Exercises

When might **positive practice** be given in the following examples?

1. The boy who misbehaved just as he left his home to meet the school bus. _____

2. The teacher in the large class who observed one of her pupils bullying another as she was giving the homework assignment.

3. The teacher who observed nose-picking as she was guiding a group of retarded students outside. _____

In the above examples, the teacher or parent may not have had sufficient time to spend on extended **positive practice**, but if only one brief trial is possible immediately when it is observed, the misbehavior will be interrupted, and the child will have experienced an immediate consequence. For example, the teacher of the retarded student who was picking his nose could have had the child use a handkerchief to blow his nose, doing so only once. When the group reached the other building, the teacher could have required several practice trials.

How might a brief period of **positive practice** have been required immediately for:

1. The teacher who observed the bullying incident right before the end of class? _____

2. The parent whose child misbehaved by dropping a piece of trash on the floor as he left for the school bus? _____

If you called for a very brief practice trial of a correct behavior then the answer is correct.

Convenience for the Parent or Teacher

Because supervision of the child is required during **positive practice**, the parent or teacher should try to arrange the practice period at a convenient time. Yet, the requirement of immediacy, as we have seen, may result in the parent or teacher interrupting a class lecture, a guided walk, housework, a telephone conversation, or other activity.

Similarly, immediate practice may result in disruption of necessary activities of the child such as catching the school bus, doing homework, doing work in class, and doing chores around the house.

Scheduling Positive Practice

The solution to this problem is to require only a brief practice trial immediately to interrupt or correct the misbehavior immediately, and to provide extended practice at a later time. The later time should be convenient for the parent or teacher and at a time when the child is not engaged in an essential activity.

Examples

Convenient times for a teacher to do the positive practice might be:

- Before school starts.
- After school ends.
- Recess period.
- When the class is busy writing a report.
- An independent project period.

Can you list other convenient times for teachers?

Convenient times for a parent to supervise the positive practice might be:

- After dinner.
- After the dinner plates have been put away.
- Saturday morning or afternoon.
- Sunday morning or afternoon.
- After a telephone call has been completed.
- After the housework is completed.
- After the parent returns from work.

List examples of more convenient time periods for parents.

Child's Schedule

To select a time that would be least disruptive to essential activities of a child, consider times when the child is engaged in leisure or recreation.

Periods for practice for a child might be when the child is:

- Watching television.
- Playing with toys.
- Playing ball outside with other children.
- Lying in bed and relaxing during the day.
- "Doing nothing."

List examples of periods likely to be least disruptive for your child and most convenient for you. _____

Giving Approval for the Correct Response

Giving Approval During Positive Practice

While the child is performing the **positive practice** trials, attention should be paid to the amount of approval given. If the parent or teacher gives abundant praise and snacks, the child may begin to misbehave in order to obtain rewards that accompany the practice.

Example: Toilet Training

*George learned how to toilet himself after his mother taught him with a **positive practice** training program. Whenever George wet his pants, the mother required him to perform 20 correct toileting trials, each trial consisting of the child rushing from a distant point in the home to the toilet and sitting momentarily on the toilet seat after lowering his pants. After each trial, the mother gave George a piece of cereal or a drink, praised him and hugged him. After having been dry for several weeks after the initial training, George began wetting again. When the praise, snacks, and hugging were eliminated, the child stopped wetting. Apparently, the reinforcers had caused George to wet his pants deliberately to get access to them.*

Feedback cannot be eliminated entirely during **positive practice** because the child would not know whether the practice was done correctly.

The rule is to provide simple feedback during the practice trials, but not to give excessive praise or rewards. It is sufficient to tell the child in a fairly neutral manner that the practice is correct or to give feedback about what should be improved.

The following example of **positive practice** in teaching correct eating illustrates how approval should be given.

Example: Proper Eating

A program for teaching proper eating had been completed in a ward of profoundly and severely retarded persons in an institution. The instructional program taught the students to raise their drinking glass with one hand rather than both hands; to keep the unused hand out of the food and on the lap; to use the knife, fork or spoon rather than their hands; to use the proper utensil for each food; to put a new morsel of food in the mouth only after the previous morsel had been swallowed; to hold the utensil firmly enough to avoid spilling; to fill the spoon only partly to

avoid spilling; to place the napkin on the lap; and to wipe the mouth and clothes if spilling occurred.

After training was completed, mistakes and accidents continued to occur for several students despite the fact that each student had learned how to perform each step correctly. To assure that the students were motivated after training, the instructor walked around the table at each meal, warmly praising and stroking the students in turn for correct eating behavior.

When a mistake occurred, however, the instructor required the student to practice the correct eating behavior, and did so in a manner that provided feedback, but avoided excessive praise lest the students deliberately make errors in order to obtain praise during practice.

When a student raised a glass of milk with both hands, for example, the instructor told the student disapprovingly that this was a mistake and required the student to lift the glass to his or her lips several times while guiding the student so only one hand was used. The instructor gave a simple instruction to "pick up the glass to your mouth," and said, "that's right" when the student finished doing so. But no stroking was given, nor enthusiastic praise, nor any other reward. At the end of each trial, the instructor said, "Now, pick up the glass to your mouth again," after telling the student he or she was right. The instructor did not require or allow the student to drink from the glass at each trial, but only to bring the glass to the lips so that the correct use of one hand to raise the glass was practiced, but without the intake of milk.

Similarly, if the mistake was overfilling the spoon (with spilling resulting) the instructor required several practice trials in each of which the student was guided in properly filling the spoon and bringing it to the lips. The instructor's comments were to "pick up a little bit," "that's right," "now, let's do it again," but not stroking or praising.

Exercise

When food was spilled by a child because of overfilling the spoon, what should the instructor have required as positive practice?

Should the instructor have pointed out that an error was made?
Yes _____ No _____

Should the instructor stroke and praise the student as the student practiced partly filling the spoon?

Yes _____ No _____

If the instructor, while going from one student to another, saw that student fill the spoon correctly as soon as a spill occurred, should the instructor have given enthusiastic praise?

Yes _____ No _____

Would the instructor have given strokes, hugs, snacks or other warm expressions of approval at that time of the self-initiated correct response?

Yes _____ No _____

Your answers were correct if you stated that enthusiastic approval should be given when the student was seen to fill the spoon only partly without being asked to, but that neutral feedback should have been used if correct spoon-filling was being required because of the failure to do so spontaneously before being asked.

Giving Approval for Spontaneous Correct Behavior

The previous examples illustrate an important rule concerning the use of **positive practice**. Before **positive practice** is used, provide approval to the child for spontaneously engaging in the correct behavior.

Example: Homework

Before requiring **positive practice** of a child when he has not done his homework, the teacher or parent should have been showing enthusiastic approval on the occasions when the child had been doing the homework.

Example: Stealing

Before requiring a child who steals objects to practice sharing and giving things to the victim, show approval when the child spontaneously _____

Example: Cursing

Before a child who curses, insults, or criticizes his classmates is required to practice giving compliments and appreciation, the parent or teacher should give approval immediately after each time the child does positive things spontaneously.

Give examples of some very specific actions or statements the parent or teacher would look for and give approval for such as:

1. Offering to help.

2. Compliments on clothing.
3. Passing food at mealtime.
4. Sharing a gift.

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

When the approval for spontaneous correct behavior is given, **positive practice** may be unnecessary for some children.

Example: Self-Stimulation

***Positive practice** was chosen as a means of eliminating self-stimulatory behavior in some institutionalized severely retarded persons. The behaviors included body-rocking, headweaving, nose-touching, and self-slapping. The intended **positive practice** consisted of requiring the persons to maintain head, body, hands, or fingers stationary for an extended period, moving that part of the body only when it was normal to do so, such as after an instruction.*

*Prior to initiating this **positive practice** for normal body movement, the instructor began to consistently reward students for normal body, hand, and head movements. The result was a reduction of these strange repetitive self-stimulatory behaviors for almost all students and a complete elimination of some of them. The high frequency of praise and rewards for the spontaneous correct behaviors reduced the need for a required period of practice trials.*

The following illustrations are examples of approval for correct behaviors accompanying **positive practice**.

Example: Dirty Hands

A parent has been giving her child **positive practice** trials in washing his hands when she found them dirty at meal time. He washes up before one meal. What should the parent say and do at that time?

Example: Shouting

A teacher has been giving a student **positive practice** trials in speaking very softly whenever the student shouts in class. About one hour after a **positive practice** period, the teacher noticed the child whispering to a classmate to avoid disturbing the class. What should the teacher say and do when she saw this? _____

Manner of Explaining to the Child the Positive Practice Rationale

Prior to initiating a **positive practice** program, the child should be given an explanation of what the correct response is, why it is desirable and what the results should be. Manual guidance may be necessary with severely retarded persons because they are not likely to understand. An explanation or even a demonstration should be given to assure that other children understand what is needed. This demonstration and explanation of the rationale will make the child more cooperative and receptive to performing the **positive practice** and less likely to object because of its abrupt imposition. The explanation is best given the day before the **positive practice** is to be used to allow ample time for the child to change his conduct spontaneously.

One method of increasing the cooperation of a young child is to explain the **positive practice** as a game, such as by calling it "The-Show-Me" game or "The-Practice-Makes-Perfect" game. By demonstrating the practice game during the explanation, and by having the child perform a few practice trials before a mistake has been made, the child will be more inclined to cooperate when a mistake is actually made.

Exercise

What would you say in explaining to a child the rationale for a **positive practice** procedure you intend using for spelling mistakes?

What if the Child Refuses to do the Required Positive Practice

If a child refuses to perform the **positive practice**, it is likely that the procedure is being used as a simple punishment. **Positive practice** differs from punishment. Yet, because of the effort and time that is required of the child to practice the positive aspect of the behavior, the child may feel it is punishing. To avoid the child's reaction to **positive practice** as a simple punisher, special attention should be paid to several important points relating to the differences between **positive practice** and punishment.

How Positive Practice Differs From Punishment

First, the child should have been given an explanation of **why** the practice was needed. This explanation should have been given at least a day before the new rules were put into effect.

Second, the use of **positive practice** for severe or continuous problem behaviors should be established as a **routine** method of dealing with problem misbehaviors so the child becomes accustomed to this general strategy prior to initiating it for a new problem.

Third, the parent should impose the **positive practice** requirement in a **calm, even-toned** manner without anger to avoid having the child view the requirement as punishment.

Fourth, the parent or teacher should demonstrate or explain the **specific details** of the correct response to be practiced in those instances where the child may not have learned how to perform it.

Fifth, **gentle manual guidance** should be used to assist the child as soon as the instruction is given, especially if the child is nonverbal, as with retarded students. This manual guidance is a substitute for the verbal description of the correct response. Even if the child is verbal, the manual guidance will communicate the parent's resolution that the correct response must be practiced.

Sixth, a child is likely to feel he is being punished if he is told to "Go do your homework" or "You lose your allowance" when he had shown bad table manners at a meal. But, he should recognize the parent's intent as educative if he is required to practice proper table manners instead.

Seventh, when the correct action is performed, give **feedback** about the correctness of the behavior and warmly praise the child whenever he or she performs the correct action spontaneously.

Positive practice is a method of eliminating the need for anger, punishment, criticism, nagging or bad feelings, and instead emphasizes what positive and reasonable action is needed now and in the future to avoid problems.

Self-Imposed Positive Practice

When a child deliberately misbehaves, the **positive practice** requirement must usually be imposed on an unwilling child. However, in dealing with older children or adults who are motivated to correct their problem, the practice can often be self-imposed. This self-imposition was seen in the example of the boy who practiced getting-up exercises from the bed on his own in order to prevent future bedwettings. Self-imposed **positive practice** can often be used by older children or adults when the problem behavior is caused by a deficiency of learning.

Example: Stuttering

*As part of a stuttering treatment program, a college student, Paul, was taught how to breathe smoothly. Paul had sought treatment because of difficulties his stuttering caused in class discussions. The **positive practice** program consisted of having him breathe smoothly for about two minutes whenever he began to stutter. The instructor taught Paul how to breathe correctly and had him practice during an instructional session. Whenever Paul began to stutter in class, he momentarily stopped speaking, adopted the new breathing pattern for the next two minutes and continued his speaking but in that breathing pattern. Within one week, the stuttering episodes had decreased to about two percent of the previous rate, and after a month, Paul scarcely stuttered at all.*

Was Paul motivated to eliminate his problem?

What was the source of his motivation? _____

Was the duration of the **positive practice** specified? _____

What was the duration? _____

Was the **positive practice** imposed or self-imposed? _____

By starting the smooth breathing as soon as Paul started to stutter, was that stuttering episode interrupted? _____

Example: A Head Jerking Tic

Mrs. Trapelo, a housewife, was very embarrassed by her nervous habit of jerking her head to the side. She obtained instruction on how to control it by tensing her neck muscles.

How would you instruct her in the use of a **positive practice** program for eliminating this head-jerking tic?

Specifically:

What would you designate as the correct response to be practiced?

When should she perform this correct response? _____

For how long? _____

Would this be an example of self-imposed **positive practice**? _____

The correct answers are that Mrs. Trapelo would be instructed to tense her neck muscles for about two minutes as soon as her head started to move. This practice would have to be self-imposed because she was an adult. Her motivation to eliminate this habit was so great that she should have no trouble following the instructions.

Can you describe a similar application of positive practice from your experience? _____

Keeping a Record

Keeping a record of the behavior being treated helps in evaluating the effectiveness of **positive practice**. Keeping a record also provides a clear basis for discussion with and feedback from a supervisor.

The record should be started several days before **positive practice** is begun to provide a comparison with the pretraining behavior of the child. At least one week of pretraining record-keeping is advisable.

Below is a sample record for a child who was mistreating his younger sister. The **positive practice** procedure required him to reassure, help and praise his sister.

Sample Record

Date	No. of Misbehaviors	Comments
Jan. 4	 7	I scolded him after each fight.
Jan. 5	2	His father spanked him after one bad incident.
Jan. 6	3	I tried ignoring it, but couldn't.
Jan. 7	 5	Still tried to ignore, finally sent him to his room.
Jan. 8	2	His sister was with friends visiting most of the day.
Jan. 9	 6	I was too busy to break up the fights, yelled at him.
Jan. 10	3	Explained positive practice procedure in morning.
<hr/>		
Started Positive Practice		
Jan. 11	2	He didn't mind the practice, but did mind missing the TV show the first time. The second time he insisted it wasn't his fault, but still practiced when I insisted.
Jan. 12	1	He cooperated in the practice, but didn't like it. He helped his sister an hour later with her flute. I praised him and gave both an ice cream.

Jan. 13	0	Didn't play with or hit, ignored his sister.
Jan. 14	0	They went to store together and did not fight. I told him I was proud (and his father told him that too) and offered to take both to the movies.
Jan. 15	0	Getting along fine. Watched TV together.
Jan. 16	0	Had sister play with his friend; gave all french fries.
Jan. 17	0	Sister helped prepare for his birthday.
Jan. 18 /	1	Had one fight. I gave only brief (1 minute) practice since this looked like an accident.
Jan. 19	0	Still playing together and no fights.
Jan. 20	0	I bought them a checker set for getting along so well.

The record includes a separate line for each date to be written in the left column. Each day should be noted even if no misbehavior occurred on that day. A tally mark is put in the second column for each misbehavior and the total for each day is entered in the third column. The last column is for comments to be used when discussing the progress with a counselor and to ascertain what one is doing. The triple horizontal lines indicate when **positive practice** was initiated (Jan. 11) and the **positive practice** program began.

Exercise in Using Positive Practice

Use of Positive Practice by Others

Describe a situation from your experience in which someone used positive practice. _____

Describe a situation from your experience in which positive practice should have been used. _____

Of the children you care for, consider how you might use positive practice for their problems.

1. Name of child _____

Describe the nature of the problem behavior. _____

Identify the correct behavior. _____

What would be the **positive practice** requirement? _____

2. Name of child _____

What is the nature of the problem behavior? _____

Identify the correct behavior. _____

What would be the **positive practice** requirement? _____

Use With One's Own Children

In the space below, state how you will use **positive practice** for some problem behavior of your own child or student.

Name of child _____

Problem behavior exhibited _____

Correct behavior to be used _____

Number of trials to be given _____

Number of minutes to be given _____

When will the **positive practice** program be initiated? _____

How much beforehand will an explanation be given? _____

Time: _____ Place: _____

Will the correct response be rewarded when it occurs spontaneously?

Yes _____ No _____ How will you reward it? _____

Will rewards and praise be given for the correct responses made during the series of **positive practice** trials? Yes _____ No _____ Will feedback be given? Yes _____ No _____ What specifically will you say? _____

What later time period will you use to give the rest of the practice trials when it will be more convenient? _____

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page.

Describe the results of your use of **positive practice**.

Did the misbehavior decrease? _____

Did the child show annoyance at being required to do the practice?

Did the child perform the **positive practice** correctly? _____

Did the child perform the correct response spontaneously at any time? _____ Describe. _____

What changes would you make in your training procedure the next time that you use **positive practice**? _____

Describe any noteworthy aspects of the procedure or of your child's behavior. _____

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Introduction

Positive Practice versus Simple Practice

Positive practice emphasizes learning through practice. The notion of practice is not new. However, the emphasis here is on practicing a corrected behavior when a mistake has been made. This is more than the practice needed when one first learns a new skill. It means stopping all activities, whenever an error occurs, and then carefully performing the correct behavior several times. This systematic, repeated practice when an error occurs assures that the error will be interrupted, in addition to assuring that the desired behavior will be emphasized.

Example of Positive Practice

Joan was a fifth grader who repeatedly failed to raise her hand in class to ask for permission to leave her seat or to talk aloud. Joan apparently knew what the proper behavior was because she previously had raised her hand for permission. Simple practice in the usual manner had been given at the start of the year when the teacher asked all the children to raise their hands at the same time to show they understood the instructions.

But now, Joan repeatedly disrupted the class to talk to other children or play while the teacher was speaking. As punishment, the teacher reprimanded Joan and did not allow her to go to recess. The teacher did not enjoy scolding the girl, nor did the teacher feel that the girl should be deprived of her recess period, but there seemed to be few alternatives. Little improvement resulted from the teacher's efforts to give instructions, praise Joan, or ignore the problem. Nor did punishment through scolding and loss of recess eliminate the problem. Joan continued to disrupt the class—even when she had just been deprived of recess.

*The teacher decided to try **positive practice**. She discussed with Joan what the new rules would be. Whenever Joan began talking or walking about, the teacher had her return to her seat and practice raising her hand. The teacher stood next to Joan and asked her to show her how she would raise her hand next time she wished to leave her seat or talk. When her hand was raised properly for a few seconds, the teacher told Joan she had acted correctly and to lower it. "Now, let's try it again," she said, and required Joan to repeat this practice 5-10 times. The teacher spoke calmly, to avoid showing anger. The practice was started right after a disruptive behavior began so that the practice interrupted it. From Joan's point of view, it would be easier to*