

The Rehabilitation of Practice

- **Reasons traditional “drill & practice” fails:**
 - lacks explicit fluency criterion as goal
 - long durations stretch endurance and attention
 - often the “chunks” are too big
- **Reasons well engineered practice succeeds:**
 - explicit time-based goal for practice
 - brief durations allow peak performance
 - builds fluent elements before application

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Parameters for Effective Practice

- **Chunk size:** complexity of the behavior unit(s)
- **Curriculum slice:** number of different behavior units
- **Performance duration:** build fluency in “sprints” before endurance (sometimes 30 secs is too long)
- **Total practice time:** to achieve fluency in limited time, work with small curriculum slices
- **Frequency and distribution of practice sessions:** distributed is better than massed practice (cramming)

Daily is Best!

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Designing Practice Procedures

- Use efficient materials and procedures.
- Emphasize self-paced practice and measurement.
- Practice at least once per day, preferably many times spread out across the day.
- Measure many times, chart your best each day.
- Design practice procedures to support criterion tasks.
- Practice in as many channels as possible/appropriate.

Designing Efficient Materials and Procedures

- Eliminate unnecessary or unnatural pacing or prompting.
- Allow learners to perform at their own pace without interruptions.
- Eliminate unnecessarily time-consuming response modes (output channels) and stimuli (e.g., lengthy text).
- Provide more response opportunities or examples than the performer can complete in the allotted time.
- Always test procedures and materials with yourself and with at least a few other experienced people, collecting snapshot performance measures.

Excessive practice durations prior to fluency can...

- suppress performance levels
- increase errors, problem behaviors, negative emotions, etc.
- dampen celeration or learning rate

To build endurance, build fluency first.

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**Always be sure to check performance
at the duration that "real life" will require.**

Example of a Chunking Sequence

- Use fact cards or computerized fluency exercises to master elementary facts, questions, discriminations
- Combine knowledge elements to master more complex Q & A or brief responses
- Use fluency aids to build flexible verbal repertoires alone or in groups
- Apply knowledge in simulations, games, and case study exercises

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**In the beginning, many brief practices are better
than a few long ones.**