Determining How We Handle Errors
Autism Classroom Resources / Autism Classroom News

Pros for Errorless Learning / Teaching

- Students are successful and instruction is fun
- Students come into contact with the reinforcer more frequently
- Students avoid building errors into their learning--you avoid the student who touches his head before his nose when the direction is to touch his nose
- Engagement is high because students are successful

Potential Drawbacks of Errorless Learning / Teaching

- If not done well, students can become dependent upon the prompts. They learn to wait for the prompt the prompt always comes.
- Sometimes, again if not used accurately, students build the prompt into their learning. For instance a student who sticks out his hand but doesn't complete the action because he's waiting for the prompt.
- Learning can take a very long time for some students using errorless teaching because it takes a long time to successfully fade out the prompts.

Pros for Error Correction

- Although this isn't something we should base our decisions on, it comes more naturally to people and instructors. Consequently we have to expect it will be something students come in contact with frequently in their daily life.
- For some students, this is efficient because they learn from their errors. They make a mistake once, get prompted and shown the right answer a couple of times and then are able to give the correct response. This is why this is a typical strategy used in teaching.
- There is some research that it is more efficient than errorless teaching (Leaf, Sheldon, & Sherman, 2010).

Potential Drawbacks for Error Correction

- Many of our students don't learn much from mistakes. Mistakes require us to problem solve what we did wrong. Many of our learners learn it was wrong, but they can't determine what they should do next.
- Many of our students don't respond well to being corrected which may create some behavioral issues.
- Some students build the errors into their learning and have to be retaught.