

Lesson Plan

Objective: To assess the prevocational task preferences of students with severe mental retardation whose communicative and behavioral deficits prohibited the use of commercially available interest tests.

Setting and materials: The sessions are conducted each morning in the prevocational classroom. The students sat on two sides and an end of a 1.4 by 5.2-m work table situated in the center of the room.

Content taught

- Designed to develop skills and work habits requisite for entry into sheltered employment. These include:
 1. Sorting parts of a flour sifter (sorting task)
 2. placing inserts and envelopes into booklets (collating task)
 3. folding/stapling/labeling written sheets and stuffing them into envelopes (stuffing task)
 4. assembling components of a pulley
 5. assembling components of a flour sifter
 6. attaching resistors to a circuit board

Teaching procedure

Phase I: Method of Pair Choices (determining preferred tasks)

- The teacher presents a 36 by 45 cm tray containing two representative objects taken from each of the tasks.
- Objects are randomly arranged on the left and right sides of the tray.
- The tray is placed on the table beside the student and given the instruction, “Pick one up, please.”
- The student selects one object from the tray and sets it on the table.
- The teacher removes the tray with the remaining object.
- The choice is recorded.
- The materials are supplied to work the selected task for a 7-min period.
- At the end of the period, a buzzer sounds to end work.
- The students are provided a 2-min break.
- The teacher records data and prepares for the next choice.
- All choice pairs are selected at random from the available pairs to be presented.
- The task selected to work on one trial is paired at random with a different task on the next trial.
- On the sixth trial, a new pair combination is selected at random and the procedures repeated.

- For all choices, the task chosen on one trial is included in the pair combination of the subsequent trial, unless all combinations with that task was presented on previous trials.
- A new combination is selected at random.
- This permits a student to work continuously on preferred tasks, until all pairs with that task is presented, thus maximizing the continuity between choices and facilitating comparisons of preferred and nonpreferred tasks.

Note: These procedures tentatively identify each subject's most-preferred, moderately-preferred, and least-preferred tasks.

Phase II: Validation of Phase I Through Forced Comparisons

- The pairings for the two chosen moderately-preferred tasks are presented in a reversal design over four conditions:
 1. The preferred task with moderately-preferred task "A: and the nonpreferred task with the moderately-preferred task "B" during the first condition.
 2. The preferred task with moderately-preferred task "B" and the nonpreferred task with the moderately-preferred task "A" during the second condition.
 3. The third and fourth conditions replicated the first two conditions.
- The procedures for the four remaining objects (most-preferred, least-preferred, and the two other moderately-preferred tasks) were the same as in Phase I.
- Random procedures to select task pairs on each trial.
- The task selected on one trial was included in the pair presentation of the subsequent trial, unless all combinations including that task are presented on previous trials.
- Then, a different pair combination is selected at random and presented.

Method of evaluation

- Count number of times each task is chosen.

Lesson plan based on: Mithaug, D. E., & Hanawalt, D. A., (1978). The validation of procedures to assess prevocational task preferences in retarded adults. Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 11, 153-162.