DRAGEN ACADEMY · FREE LESSON · SUPERVISORS, TEACHERS, PARENTS, BCBAS · 8 MINUTES

How to teach anyone a skill in four steps.

Esta lección en español

What it is. **Behavioral skills training** is instruction, modeling, rehearsal and feedback, repeated until the person can do the skill to a standard you wrote down first. It is how staff, parents and students are taught anything that has to be done a certain way.

Why it matters. Telling is not teaching. People trained by lecture alone rarely do the skill correctly afterward; add rehearsal and feedback and most reach the standard. Most professional development skips steps three and four because they take time and cannot be faked.

THE METHOD

How to do it yourself: seven steps, one checklist.

1. **Define the skill as a checklist of observable steps** — five to twelve of them — and write the standard: “nine of ten steps, two times in a row.” If you cannot write the checklist, you are not ready to teach it.
2. **Instruction.** Say why the skill matters, hand over the checklist, explain each step. Five minutes, not fifty.
3. **Model.** Do it in front of them, narrating the steps as you go. Real situation if safe; role-play if not.
4. **Rehearse.** They do it while you watch with the checklist in hand. Role-play first if the real thing carries risk.

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5. **Feedback, immediately.** First what they did right — specific, not “good job.” Then *one* thing to change. Show it again if needed.
6. **Repeat steps three to five until the standard is met.** Then watch once in the real setting within a week. Training that stops in the training room stays there.
7. **Booster when it drifts.** It will drift. That is normal, not failure; ten minutes of steps four and five brings it back.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Priya, a new technician, and the token board.

Made-up example. The names and numbers below are invented to show the method.

Skill: run a token board. Checklist of eight steps (state the rule; show the board; deliver a token within two seconds of the target behavior; name the behavior; no token for other behavior; exchange at the agreed number; deliver the reinforcer within five seconds; reset and restate). Standard: eight of eight, twice in a row.

Round	Steps correct	Feedback given
1 (role-play)	5 / 8	“Your praise was immediate and specific — keep exactly that. One thing: token in hand within two seconds.” Modeled again.
2 (role-play)	7 / 8	“Two seconds, every time — that’s it. One thing: say the rule before the first trial.”
3 (role-play)	8 / 8	Standard, once.
4 (role-play)	8 / 8	Standard, twice. Done for today.

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Live, Thursday	8 / 8	Holding in the real session.

Total time: about forty minutes across two days, and a technician who can actually do it. A one-hour lecture on token economies would have produced a technician who could describe it.

MISTAKES TO AVOID

Where training becomes theatre.

- Skipping rehearsal because “they get it.” Understanding and doing are different skills.
- Feedback that is all praise, or all correction. Specific right, then one change.
- Training the whole team in a room with no practice, and calling it done.
- No checklist, so “good job” cannot be defined and drift cannot be seen.
- No live check. The training room is not the classroom.

TRY IT

One question, then the answer.

A supervisor explains a new data sheet for twenty minutes, then emails the checklist. Which of the four steps happened?

▼ Show the answer, and why

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Instruction only. No model, no rehearsal, no feedback — so nobody, including the supervisor, knows whether the technician can fill the sheet correctly. Twenty minutes of talking plus ten minutes of “you try it while I watch” would have answered that question.

Something to keep

BST fidelity checklist.

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Skill:	Standard (e.g., 9 of 10 steps, twice in a row):

#	Step, observable	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Live check
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						

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10						

Feedback given (specific right → one change), by round

WHERE DRAGEN HELPS

This is how Academy workshops run.

Every DRAGEN workshop is built on this page: a competency, a checklist, practice while someone watches, feedback, again. The measure is whether someone can do something that afternoon they could not do that morning.

SOURCE

Where this comes from.

Parsons, Rollyson & Reid (2012), “Evidence-based staff training: A guide for practitioners,” *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 5(2), 2–11, is the plain-language guide the steps above follow.

Examples on this page are made up. They contain no client, student or family information. This lesson teaches a method; it does not replace your child’s care team, your BCBA, or your payer’s written rules.

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