

Errorless learning for moderate to severe memory loss

Errorless learning makes limited demands on the part of the learner.

- Pay attention to the trainer.
- Imitate the trainer.

Combine spaced retrieval + errorless learning (SR + EL) to teach a wide variety of information or skills. Just a few examples:

- Information: names of people and objects, use of memory strategies, and current events.
- Skills: using a swallow strategy, using assistive device, using a cell phone, and wayfinding.

Use SR + EL to reduce problem behaviors

- Repetitively asking the same questions.
- Urinating in inappropriate places.

Spaced retrieval time intervals (can modify as needed)

- 5 seconds, 10 seconds, 20 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, 2 minutes, 4 minutes, 8 minutes, 16 minutes

How to do errorless learning

- Establish the prompt question and the expected response.
- Teach the question and response to the learner, ensuring he or she can easily imitate the response.
- Start training immediately following instruction by asking the prompt question.
- If the learner hesitates, starts to make a mistake, or starts to add elements to the response, immediately interrupt with the correct response. ONLY provide the correct response with no additional words or actions. Repeat until the learner is correct.
- Once he or she provides the correct response, wait 5 seconds quietly and then ask the prompt question again.
- If correct, wait 10 seconds. Continue in this way, extending the wait each time.
- If at any point the learner hesitates, is incorrect, or adds elements to the response, simply interrupt with the correct response and immediately ask the prompt question again.
 - If correct, drop down one level for the next wait period.
 - If incorrect, repeat until the learner is correct. Stop after 3 repeated errors.

When goal is met

- The goal is considered met when the learner can answer the prompt question correctly at the start of 3 consecutive sessions prior to any instruction.
- The learner may benefit from booster sessions to reinforce the information or skill.

7 tips for working with people who have a more severe memory impairment

- Set the stage for success.
 - Eliminate background noise.
 - Work in quiet setting with good lighting.
 - Make sure learner is wearing glasses and hearing aids (if needed).
 - Sit face-to-face.
- Carefully choose the prompt question and response.
 - Use the learner's own choice of words.
 - Make sure the learner isn't struggling to perform the response. If so, break the task down into smaller steps.
- Do not allow hesitation or the slightest mistake.
 - Variability in practicing the response will lead to mistakes and confusion.
- Ask the prompt question as soon as the waiting period is up.
 - Nicely interrupt if someone is talking. "Excuse me but I have to ask a question..."
- No talking until you pass the 2-minute waiting period.
 - Explain to the learner that sitting quietly will help their memory.
 - If he or she talks, simply nod your head to acknowledge but don't engage.
 - Instead, work on your documentation (or sit quietly).
- Be patient.
 - It can take several sessions to pass the two-minute mark.
 - Once you pass the four-minute mark, the rate of progress typically dramatically improves.

Recommended reading

Benigas, J. E., Brush, J. A, Elliot, G. M. (2016). *Spaced Retrieval Step by Step: An Evidence-Based Memory Intervention*. Baltimore: Health Professions Press, Inc.

Watch a video and learn more by reading the article [7 tips to maximize errorless learning for moderate to severe memory loss](#) on EatSpeakThink.com.