

Specific Praise

Agenda for Brief Training

Discussion

- Definition
- Rationale
- Strategies to Increase
- Examples (& Non-Examples)
- Critical features

Application Activity

- Write sample specific praise statements for your identified student

Develop Self-Management Plan

- Define self-management
- Describe self-management for this skill
- Review/discuss materials needed to implement
- Practice using strategies

Review and Wrap-Up

Script used in: Simonsen, B., Meyers, K., Plumb, A., Duple Moore, T., & Sears, S. (2025). Intensifying tier 1 classroom Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) practices to support students with disabilities: A pilot study. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions*. Manuscript Available Online. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10983007241276526>

Recommended citation for script: Simonsen, B., Meyers, K., Plumb, A., Duple Moore, T., & Sears, S. (2024). Specific praise: Scripted training for intensifying tier 1 classroom Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) practices to support students with disabilities [Training Script]. University of Connecticut.

Specific Praise

What is specific praise?

“Specific, contingent praise is a positive statement, typically provided by the teacher, when a desired behavior occurs (contingent) to inform students specifically what they did well” (Simonsen et al., 2008).

Why provide specific praise?

- Delivering **contingent praise** for academic behavior increased participants’ (a) correct responses (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001), (b) work productivity and accuracy (Craft et al., 1998; Wolford et al., 2001), (c) language and math performance on class work (Roca & Gross, 1996), and (d) academic performance (Good et al., 1981).
- Delivering **contingent praise** for appropriate social behavior increased participants’ (a) on-task behavior (Ferguson, & Houghton, 1992), (b) student attention (Brodin et al. 1970), (c) compliance (Wilcox et al., 1988), (d) positive self-referent statements (Phillips, 1984), and (e) cooperative play (Serbin et al., 1977).
- Increasing the number of **behavior specific praise statements** was associated with an increase in on-task behavior (Sutherland et al., 2000).
- Providing contingent praise in conjunction with either establishing classroom rules in isolation (Becker et al., 1967) or classroom rules paired with ignoring inappropriate behavior (Yawkey, 1971) was associated with increased appropriate classroom behavior.

Why increase or differentiate specific praise to meet the needs of students with disabilities?

- Preliminary research supports the relationship between increased Tier 1 practices, including specific praise, and student outcomes (e.g., academic engagement, on-task behavior; Craft et al. 1998, Alber et al. 1999; Sutherland et al., 2000).
- **In this study, we will focus on specific praise for your identified student**—either as part of a group or an individual.

How can educators’ increase their frequency of specific praise?

- Self-management (e.g., Simonsen et al., 2017, 2020)
- Professional development and ongoing coaching (Sutherland et al., 2000)

What are some examples (and non-examples) of specific praise?

Examples of Specific Praise	Non-Examples of Specific Praise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During educator-directed instruction, the identified student raises their hand. The educator says, “Nice hand raise.” [This is specific praise for the identified student.] The identified student enters the class during educator-directed instruction; the student quietly walks to his seat. The educator walks over to the student and whispers, “Thank you for coming in the room quietly.” [This is specific praise for the identified student.] During instruction, one student is poking and attempting to talk with the identified student, who responds by showing the class “quiet symbol.” The educator immediately looks at the identified student, gives a “thumbs up sign,” and whispers, “Way to be responsible for your learning.” [This is specific praise for the identified student.] After an educator points to the consonant blend /th/ and says, “What sound?” All students in the group (including the identified student) respond by correctly pronouncing /th/. The educator says, “Nice pronunciation.” [This is specific praise for a group that includes the identified student.] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During educator-directed instruction, students are talking over the educator. The educator rolls his eyes and says, “Gee, thanks for listening.” [This is sarcasm, not specific praise.] A different student enters the class during educator-directed instruction; the student quietly walks to his seat. The educator gives the student a “thumbs up” to recognize the quiet entry. [This is general, non-verbal, and not the identified student.] During instruction, one student is poking and attempting to talk with another student, who responds by showing the class “quiet symbol.” About 1 min later, the educator looks at a second student, smiles, and says “good job.” [This is general, non-verbal, and not the identified student.] During a direct instruction lesson, the educator points to the consonant blend /th/, which is underlined in the word “through,” and says, “What sound?” [This is an opportunity to respond.]

What are the critical features of specific praise?

- Deliver **immediately after** the behavior
- **Specifically state** the desired behavior demonstrated
- **Pair** praise with other rewards (e.g., delivery of tokens or points) you use with your class/group
- **In this study, you’ll only count specific praise statements that include your identified student**

How will you deliver contingent, specific praise for your identified student?

Write three (or more) specific praise statements to use to engage your identified student during instruction.

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How will you increase the likelihood that you will specifically praise your identified student?

- **Self-management in general**

- According to Skinner (1953), we manage our own behavior in the same manner as we manage anyone else's—"through the manipulation of variables of which behavior is a function" (p. 228).
- Self-management is engaging in one response (**self-management behavior**) that affects the probability of a subsequent behavior (**target or desired behavior**). For example, keeping a "to do" list (self-management behavior) may increase the likelihood that you "do" the things on your list (target behaviors).

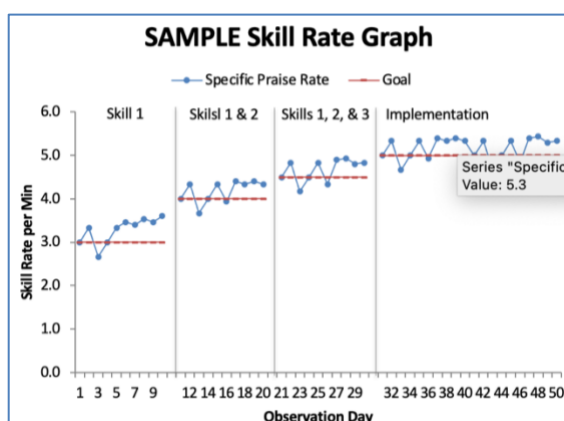
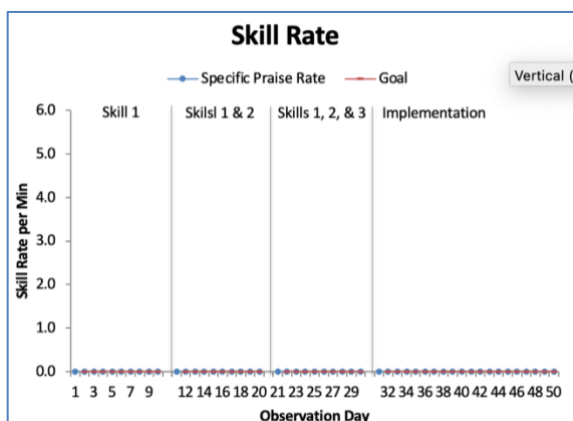
- **Self-management in this study**

- In this study we will ask you to (a) arrange your environment to increase the likelihood that you use specific praise (set goals and give yourself reminders), (b) self-monitor (count) your use of specific praise during a 15-min segment of instruction, (c) self-evaluate (graph your specific praise rates daily and decide whether you met your daily goal, and (d) self-reinforce (give yourself a privilege on days you meet your goal).
 - **Arrange your environment.** Today, we will set an initial goal for your specific praise rate. Your goal is the criterion you will use to determine if you can self-reinforce. This goal can be adjusted (if needed). In addition, we'll ask you to select a strategy to prompt or remind yourself to use high rates of specific praise.
 - **Self-monitor.** Press button to advance the golf counter each time you specifically praise the identified student—either individually or as part of a group—during the selected 15-min segment of educator-directed instruction. (**Note**, if this is the first skill you're monitoring, you'll only count specific praise. If you are monitoring 1-2 additional previously trained skills, you'll count specific praise in addition to previously trained skills).
 - **Self-evaluate.** Record total skills in the provided Excel Spreadsheet and view the updated graph to determine if you met your performance goal. (We will show you how to use the Excel Spreadsheet.)
 - **Self-reinforce.** Select a small celebration (e.g., a cup of coffee on the way home, an extra 15 min of TV) each day that you meet your goal. It needs to be something you like, and will allow yourself **ONLY** on days when you meet your goal.
- To help, we will send you **weekly reminders** about trained skills and ask you to share your updated graph with a data collector. In that email, we'll also ask you to let us know if you adjusted your goal based on your previous week's performance.
- We will use the following table (next page) to further develop your **self-management plan**.

Self-Management Plan	
Estimate Your Current Skill Rate <i>If specific praise is the first skill you're trained in, estimate current specific praise rate.</i> <i>If you are already self-managing other skills, add (a) your estimated specific praise rate to (b) other skill rate(s) to estimate total skills per minute</i>	 _____ skill(s) per minute
Set Initial Skill Rate Goal <i>If specific praise is the first skill you're trained in, set an initial goal for your specific praise rate.</i> <i>If you are already self-managing other skills, add your goal rate for specific praise to goal rate(s) for other previously trained skill(s)</i>	 _____ skill(s) per minute
Plan for Increasing Specific Praise <i>Identify how you will (a) prompt/remind yourself to use high rates of specific praise, (b) use other strategies (e.g., script specific praise into your lesson) to increase specific praise, and (c) prompt/remind yourself to self-monitor.</i>	(a) (b) (c)
Self-Reinforcement (Small Celebration) <i>Identify the celebration, or reinforcer, you will give yourself on days you meet your goal.</i>	
Procedure for Self-Reinforcement <i>Identify when you will (a) enter your skill data, (b) determine if you met your goal, and (c) reinforce yourself (i.e., how you will deliver/access your small celebration).</i>	
Procedure for Email Coaching & Data Update <i>Identify when you will check email to receive additional prompts and upload a copy of your Excel File via an Anonymous Qualtrics Survey (Link will be in the email: (https://uconn.co1.qualtrics.com/ife/form/SV_5qOTq9Hfq8hQBxQ))</i>	

- **Self-monitor and self-evaluate.** To track your data daily, you (a) use a golf counter during the 15 min of instruction selected for this study, (b) show the number on the counter to the data collector, (c) save the golf counter number until you have time, and (d) enter it into an Excel spreadsheet.
 - If this is the first skill you are monitoring, your graph will only show your **specific praise rate** as Skill 1. If this is the second or third skill, your graph will show a **cumulative rate** of all skills (based on the total on your golf counter).
 - Today, enter your **goal skill rate** (from your self-management plan) in the aqua cell in **Column F**
 - Starting with the next observation, you will do the following daily
 - **enter** the **date** in **Column B**
 - **enter** the **count** of skill statements (e.g., specific praise) from your golf counter in **Column C**
 - **enter** the total **minutes** you self-monitored (typically 15 min) in **Column D**
 - **examine** the **calculated skill rate** (locked cell calculates skills per min) in **Column E**
 - **self-evaluate** if you met your goal, and **enter** Y (yes) or N (no) in **Column G**
 - **self-reinforce** on days you met your goal; **enter** Y (yes) or N (no) in **Column H** to indicate whether you celebrated (self-reinforced) or not
- See screenshot of the excel template and graph below; we'll practice during the training.

<div>Enter the date in this column</div> <div>Enter the number from your golf counter in this column</div> <div>Enter the number of minutes you recorded data in this column</div> <div>Enter your goal rate (skill per min)</div> <div>Enter whether you met your goal (Y/N) and celebrated each day.</div>							
Day	Date	Count of Skill Statements	Total Min Recorded (Typically 15)	Skill Rate	Goal Skill Rate	Goal met? (Y/N)	Did you celebrate (self-reinforce)? (Y/N)
1				#DIV/0!			
2				#DIV/0!			
3				#DIV/0!			
4				#DIV/0!			
5				#DIV/0!			
6				#DIV/0!			
7				#DIV/0!			
8				#DIV/0!			
9				#DIV/0!			
10				#DIV/0!			



How will you know if specific praise is supporting your identified student?

- In addition to monitoring your own behavior, briefly rate your identified student on three behaviors using a **Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) Scale**.
- Use the following **definitions** (from the [DBR Booklet](#); Chafouleas et al. 2010) when considering your rating on the DBR scale.
 - **Academically engaged** is actively or passively participating in the classroom activity. For example: writing, raising hand, answering a question, talking about a lesson, listening to the teacher, reading silently, or looking at instructional materials.
 - **Respectful Behavior** is defined as compliant and polite behavior in response to adult direction and/or interactions with peers and adults. For example: follows teacher direction, pro-social interaction with peers, positive response to adult request, verbal or physical disruption without a negative tone/connotation.
 - **Disruptive** is student action that interrupts regular school or classroom activity. For example: out of seat, fidgeting, playing with objects, acting aggressively, talking/yelling about things that are unrelated to classroom instruction.
- **Directions for completing a DBR**
 - Find the spot along the line that best reflects the percentage of total time the identified student exhibited each target behavior. Note that the percentages do not need to total 100% across behaviors since some behaviors may co-occur.

[illegible]

Date: _____ Time: ____ to ____

Academically Engaged Behavior (% of time)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0% 50% 100%

Never Sometimes Always

Respectful Behavior (% of time)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0% 50% 100%

Never Sometimes Always

Disruptive Behavior (% of time)

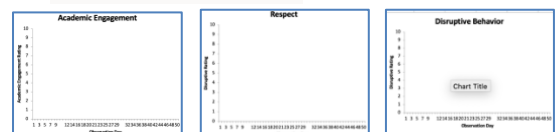
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0% 50% 100%

Never Sometimes Always

Notes:

- Enter the value for each behavior into the excel spreadsheet (provided). We'll show you how this works during training (see screenshot on left).
- Graphs will automatically update with new data each day.



Thank you!!! Please reach out to Brandi.Simonsen@uconn.edu or other members of the study team with any questions or support needs!!