



Instructional Pacing



Definition

Instructional pacing is the speed or rate at which an instructor presents the task in a lesson. Pacing may also refer to the speed at which progress is made through a particular curriculum or instructional program. The pace of instruction is an important consideration in reading, spelling, math, and social skills curricular areas. Students learn more when their lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. A brisk pace of instruction enhances student attention and increases the number of response opportunities—two factors that are strongly associated with increased learning. Some research also suggests that a brisk pace of instruction may actually decrease disruptive classroom behavior.

Things to Do

- ✓ Organize materials.
- ✓ Maintain a brisk pace.
- ✓ Ask questions and give corrective feedback.
- ✓ Manage classroom behavior.

✓ Organize materials.

Take time to organize the materials that you will be presenting in the lesson. Also, make lesson materials readily accessible to students to decrease interruptions during work time. One relatively easy way to maintain an effective pace of instruction is by preventing interruptions in the lesson that are due to misplaced materials and other instructional resources.

✓ Maintain a brisk pace.

TOO FAST

The research on pacing suggests that a moderate pace of instruction is best. That is, **too fast** a pace does not promote learning or on-task behavior, nor does a pace that is **too slow**.

TOO SLOW

A moderate pace of instruction that provides (in a direct instruction lesson) about six to nine learning tasks per minute would be optimal.

Brisk Pace ✓ Focuses attention
✓ Increases practice

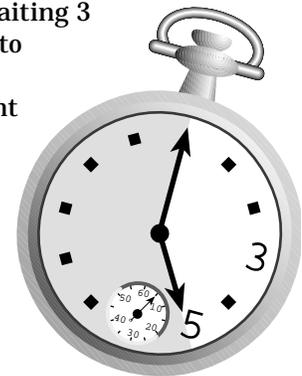
✓ Ask questions and give corrective feedback.

Use Questions to Maintain Student Attention and Interest

Questions concerning the skills/concepts in a lesson also need to be asked at a moderately brisk pace.

Wait for Students to Answer a Question

Research indicates that waiting 3 to 5 seconds for a student to respond to a question is appropriate. It is important not to rapidly jump from one student to another until the question is answered. Instead, provide a few prompts to the student to whom the question was directed.



Adjust Feedback to Maintain an Optimal Pace of Instruction

Immediate reinforcement and/or corrective feedback help maintain an optimal pace of instruction.

Manage classroom behavior.

Manage classroom behavior in a way that maximizes the pace of instruction. Provide positive reinforcement, prompts, and corrective feedback for classroom behavior (both appropriate and inappropriate) in a way that complements and does not detract from the pace of the lesson.

Variations of the Technique

-  As mentioned previously, the best way to employ the pace of instruction to promote learning is to use a fast but varied pace of instruction. This will increase the likelihood that student attention and interest will be maintained.
-  Pace also applies to methods of lesson presentation that do not rely on a teacher. For example, computer-assisted instructional materials should also be assessed in terms of the pace at which the learning tasks are presented and the pace at which learner feedback is provided.

Potential Problems and Solutions

Students Appear Distracted and Off Task During Instruction

Check the level of difficulty of the material to make sure that the students have the necessary skills to successfully acquire the skills/concepts.

Students Are Unable to Keep Up With the Lesson

Slow the pace of instruction. A fast pace of instruction may reduce disruptive behavior, but a slower presentation may increase accuracy.

Getting Ready

-  Prior to the lesson, review content/skill areas to be taught for potential problem areas, i.e., be alert to those areas in the lesson where students may have difficulty demonstrating acquisition or mastery. Prepare back-up instructional plans for these areas.
-  Ensure that the lesson to be presented is geared to the students' instructional level. Maintaining an optimal lesson pace will be very difficult, if not impossible, if the skills/concepts to be taught are too difficult for the students.



References

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