

16 Elements of Explicit Instruction: Archer and Hughes 2011

- 1. Focus instruction on critical content** – Teach skills, strategies, vocabulary terms, concepts and rules that will empower students in the future and match the students' instructional needs.
- 2. Sequence skills logically** – Consider several curricular variables, such as teaching easier skills before harder skills, teaching high-frequency skills before skills that are less frequent in usage, ensuring mastery of prerequisites to a skill before teaching the skill itself, and separating skills and strategies that are similar and thus may be confusing to students.
- 3. Break down complex skills and strategies into smaller instructional units** – Teach in small steps. Segmenting complex skills into smaller instructional units of new material addresses concerns about cognitive overloading, processing demands, and the capacity of students' working memory. Once mastered, units are synthesised. (i.e. practiced as a whole)
- 4. Design organised and focused lessons** – Make sure lessons are organised and focused, in order to make optimal use of instructional time. Organised lessons are on topic, well sequenced, and contain no irrelevant digressions.
- 5. Begin lessons with a clear statement of the lessons' goals and your expectations** – Tell learners clearly what is to be learned and why is important. Students achieve better if they understand the instructional goals and outcomes expected, as well, as how the information or skills presented will help them.
- 6. Review prior skills and knowledge before beginning instructions** – Provide a review of relevant information. Verify that students have the prerequisite skills and knowledge to learn the skill being taught in the lesson. This element also provides an opportunity to link the new skill with other related skills.
- 7. Provide step-by step demonstrations** – Model the skill and clarify the decision-making processes needed to complete a task or procedure by thinking aloud as you perform the skill. Clearly demonstrate the target skill or strategy, in order to show the students a model of proficient performance.
- 8. Use clear and concise language** – Use consistent, unambiguous wording and terminology. The complexity of your speech (e.g. vocabulary, sentence structure) should depend on students' receptive vocabulary to reduce possible confusion.
- 9. Provide an adequate range of examples and non-examples** – In order to establish the boundaries of when and when not to apply a skill, strategy, concept or rule, provide a wide range of examples and non-examples. A wide range of examples illustrating situations when the skill will be used or applied is necessary so that students do not under use it. Conversely, presenting a wide range of non-examples reduces the possibility that students will use the skill inappropriately.
- 10. Provide guided and supported practice** – In order to promote initial success and build confidence, regulate the difficulty of practice opportunities during the lesson, and provide students with guidance in skill performance. When students demonstrate success, you can gradually increase task difficulty as you decrease the level of guidance.
- 11. Require frequent responses** – Plan for a high level of student-teacher interaction via the use of questioning. Having the students respond frequently (i.e. oral responses, written responses or action responses) helps them focus on the lesson content, provides opportunities for student elaboration, assists you in checking understanding and keeps students active and attentive.
- 12. Monitor student performance closely** – Carefully watch and listen to students' responses, so that you can verify student mastery as well as make timely adjustments in instruction if students are making errors. Close monitoring also allows you to provide feedback to students about how well they are doing.
- 13. Provide immediate affirmative and corrective feedback** – Follow up on students' responses as quickly as you can. Immediate feedback to students about the accuracy of their responses helps ensure high rates of success and reduces the likelihood of practicing errors.
- 14. Deliver the lesson at a brisk pace** – Deliver instruction at an appropriate pace to optimise instructional time, the amount of content that can be presented and on-task behaviour. Use a rate of presentation that is brisk but includes a reasonable amount of time for students' thinking/processing, especially when they are learning new material. The desired pace is neither so slow that students get bored nor so quick that they can't keep up.
- 15. Help students organise knowledge** – Because many students have difficulty seeing how some skills and concepts fit together, it is important to use teaching techniques that make these connections more apparent or explicit. Well organised and connected information makes it easier for students to retrieve information and facilitate its integration with new material.
- 16. Provide distributed and cumulative practice** – Distributed (vs. massed) practice refers to multiple opportunities to practice a skill over time. Cumulative practice is a method for providing distributed practice by including practice opportunities that address both previously and newly acquired skills. Provide students with multiple practice attempts, in order to address issues of retention as well as automatidty.