

A Result-Dependent Practice Schedule and Learning a Golf-Putting Skill

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This experiment involved an investigation of a new type of contextual interference practice schedule, which we refer to as result-dependent (R-D). The basis for this type of practice schedule is best illustrated by the game of golf where the outcome of a shot dictates the difficulty of the following shot. As such, contextual interference is introduced by the requirement to hit shots of various levels of difficulty between repetitions of the drive. And, rather than being determined by the experimenter, the order of performing the various levels of difficulty are performance-determined. To assess this practice schedule in terms of its relationship to the contextual interference effect, a group who practiced according to an R-D schedule was compared to groups that practiced according to traditional blocked and random schedules. The task was to learn to putt a golf ball to a specified target from four distances. Thirty participants, who were golf novices, were pre-tested and randomly assigned to the three practice schedule groups. Because the R-D schedule would involve participants experiencing various amounts of practice at each of the four distances, individual participants were yoked to individuals in the blocked and random schedule groups according to the order and number of trials at each distance. Following 80 practice trials on one day, participants performed two transfer tests (5-min. and 24-hr later) in which they putted from the four distances in a serial order. Results showed the blocked schedule group performed best in the 5-min. transfer while the random schedule group performed the worst. But, on the 24-hr. transfer test, the random group performed the best, followed by the R-D and blocked groups, respectively.