

To Dictate or Not: The Exploration of a Self-Regulated Practice Schedule

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Schunk and Zimmerman (1994) have defined self-regulated learning as the degree to which individuals are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their learning process. Self-regulation has played a significant role in motor skill learning. For example, research has shown that skill learning is facilitated when learners are given the opportunity to choose when they receive augmented feedback during practice. Much like augmented feedback research, practice schedule research has primarily consisted of predetermined practice environments; the experimenter or instructor not only dictates the amount of practice but the type of skills to be learned. Thirty novice participants were randomly assigned to either a self-regulated or yoked condition in which they performed 90 golf putts from 3 distances: 3, 4.5, and 6 feet. Participants in the self-regulated group chose the putting distance on each trial during the practice trials. Results of the study showed that the self-regulated group who got to choose each trial during practice performed better than the yoked group during both a 5-minute and 24-hour serial transfer test. Results of this study suggest that actively involving learners during practice by giving them the ability to structure the scheduling of practice trials can produce learning processes that enhance motor skill learning.