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# Math Computation: Promote Mastery of Math Facts Through Incremental Rehearsal

## Math <sup>[1]</sup>

Incremental rehearsal builds student fluency in basic math facts ('arithmetic combinations') by pairing unknown computation items with a steadily increasing collection of known items. This intervention makes use of concentrated practice to promote fluency and guarantees that the student will experience a high rate of success.

## Materials

- Index cards & pen

## Steps to Implementing This Intervention

### In preparation for this intervention:

- 1. The tutor first writes down on an index card in ink each math fact that a student is expected to master-but without the answer. NOTE: Educators can use the A-Plus Math Flashcard Creator, a free on-line application, to make and print flashcards in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The web address for the flashcard creator is: [www.aplusmath.com/Flashcards/Flashcard\\_Creator.html](http://www.aplusmath.com/Flashcards/Flashcard_Creator.html) <sup>[2]</sup>
- 2. The tutor reviews the collection of math-fact cards with the student. Any of the math facts that the student can orally answer correctly within two seconds are considered to be known problems and are separated into one pile. Math facts that the student cannot yet answer correctly within two seconds are considered 'unknown' and collected in a second pile -- the 'unknown facts' deck.
- 3. The tutor next randomly selects 9 cards from the pile of known math facts and sets this subset of cards aside as the 'known facts' deck. The rest of the pile of cards containing known math facts is put away ('discard deck'), not to be used further in this intervention.

## During each day of the intervention:

The tutor follows an incremental-rehearsal sequence each day when working with the student:

- First, the tutor takes a single card from the 'unknown facts' deck. The tutor reads the math fact on the card aloud, provides the answer, and prompts the student to read off and answer the same unknown problem.
- Next the tutor takes one math fact from the 'known facts' deck and pairs it with the unknown problem. When shown the two problems in sequence, the student is asked during the presentation of each math fact to read off the problem and answer it. The student is judged to be successful on a problem if he or she orally provides the correct answer to that problem within 2 seconds. If the student commits an error on any card or hesitates for longer than two seconds, the tutor reads the math fact on the card aloud, gives the answer, then prompts the student to read off the same unknown problem and provide the answer. This review sequence continues until the student answers all cards within two seconds without errors.
- The tutor then repeats the sequence--taking yet another problem from the 'known facts' deck to add to the expanding collection of math facts being reviewed ('review deck'). Each time, the tutor prompts the student to read off and answer the whole series of math facts in the review deck, beginning with the unknown fact and then moving through the growing series of known facts that follow it.
- When the review deck has expanded to include one 'unknown' math fact followed by nine 'known' math facts (a ratio of 90 percent 'known' material to 10 percent 'unknown' material), the last 'known' math fact that was added to the student's review deck is discarded (put away with the 'discard deck'). The previously 'unknown' math fact that the student has just successfully practiced in multiple trials is now treated as a 'known' math fact and is included as the first item in the nine-card 'known facts' deck for future drills.
- The student is then presented with a new math fact to answer, taken from the 'unknown facts' deck. With each new 'unknown' math fact, the review sequence is again repeated as described above until the 'unknown' math fact is grouped incrementally with nine math facts from the 'known facts' deck-and on and on.

Daily review sessions are discontinued either when time runs out or when the student answers an 'unknown' math fact incorrectly three times.

## References

- Burns, M. K. (2005). Using incremental rehearsal to increase fluency of single-digit multiplication facts with children identified as learning disabled in mathematics computation. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 28, 237-249.

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[2] [http://www.aplusmath.com/Flashcards/Flashcard\\_Creator.html](http://www.aplusmath.com/Flashcards/Flashcard_Creator.html)