

TAGteach Basic Principles
A series of articles

TAGteach
International

TAGteach Basic Principles Articles Series

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Article #1: TAGteach—Get the Point!

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

What is the point? With TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance), it's a 'tag' point. A tag point is a response, action, or position that when accomplished is marked (tagged) with short sharp sound from a clicker, finger snap, smart phone app or other stimuli. The sound is a signal that has one meaning; success. The sound has no other meaning in everyday life. The sound marks the exact moment the tag point is executed and gives immediate and clear feedback to the learner. The tag becomes a positive reinforcer through pairing with tangible rewards (a sticker for example) or as a result of good feelings of success. Younger learners trade their tags in for beads, stickers or other prizes. Older learners and higher level athletes often do not require a tangible primary reinforcer, since they are reinforced just by receiving the immediate and clear feedback from the tag.

Clear and Simple

Clarity and simplicity are key aspects of TAGteach. A tag point is defined so that the teacher can easily judge whether the tag point is achieved and can mark it with a tag. For example, a teacher might say to a learner who is being taught to draw the letter O, "The directions are to place your pencil tip at the place where the top of the letter will be." The tag point is "tip at top". Once this has been done correctly several times the teacher can move on. "The directions are to move the pencil tip to the left to start the letter." The tag point is "tip to the left". If there is any difficulty and the learner does not succeed after three tries, the teacher will break the skill down into smaller parts and go back to a previous point of success. With some learners it may be necessary to place a dot at the place where the letter should start, or to trace letters or to use other prompts to help the learner succeed at first. These prompts can be gradually faded out as the learner improves.

Tag Point Criteria

A tag point must satisfy the following criteria (WOOF):

What you want (phrase in the positive)

One thing (the word "and" will never appear in a tag point)

Observable/Measurable (you must be able to judge the completion clearly)

Five words or less

Ignore Errors and Try Again

There is no scolding or negativity associated with TAGteach. If the learner hears the tag she knows that the tag point was achieved. If she doesn't hear the tag she knows to try again. There is no "better, but..." in TAGteach. If the tag point is "point toes during the handstand" and the learner points her toes, but her legs were

apart, the learner receives the tag and the teacher does not say “That was better, but next time try to keep your legs together.” Instead, the teacher awards the tag for pointed toes and after a few repetitions says to the learner, “The tag point is legs together in the handstand.” The learner may forget to point her toes while thinking about keeping her legs straight. In this case the pointed toes tag point can be revisited a few times and eventually the learner will achieve a toe point with straight legs without ever being told that something was wrong. The learner learns to self-assess and think for herself without relying on corrections from the teacher. The next article in this series will discuss reinforcement schemes that have been used by TAGteachers. We invite you to join the TAGteacher discussion group at www.tagteach.com to meet others who are implementing TAGteach in various disciplines.

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Article #2: The Focus Funnel

By Theresa McKeon

A late night comedy show recently aired a skit with a character so frustrated by unresolved economic problems that he was reduced to repeating a single phrase. "Fix it...just fix it...fix it, fix it, fix it!"

In the gym, coaches experience this frustration when athletes, despite repeated directions and feedback, fail to correct particular parts of a skill. This frustration can turn into nagging and then escalate into yelling and punishment. So the question is, if a learner is physically and mentally capable of recognizing the directions to fix a task, what is keeping them from doing so?

One possibility is an insufficient connection to the information delivered by the coach. The coach says "When you are doing a handstand, push up tall all the way through your arms and legs and keep your feet pointed". The athlete performs the handstand but distractions keep her from remembering to say, point her feet. What are these distractions? For the most part, it doesn't matter. There will always be distractions. The solution is to strengthen the line of focus between the coach's directions and the athlete's performance of them.

Strengthen that Connection with a Focus Funnel

Research (see http://www.myatp.org/Synergy_1/Syn_6.pdf) is debunking the "multitasking" myth and data suggest that there is reduced efficiency associated with trying to learn more than one thing at time. Although multiple tasks can be combined once learned, it is merely an exercise in frustration for coach and athlete to expect an athlete to learn more than one thing at a time. To avoid multitasking in your coaching, start with the academic portion of the lesson and put it through a funnel to provide crystal clear directions and a single point of focus. To use the funnel approach, start with the broad explanation of the lesson, reduce this to a clear instruction and reduce it further to a single point of focus for the athlete's particular turn. A point of focus declares "fix this one particular thing". We can further encourage a connection by providing a distinct call to attention for the athlete, a phrase that shouts, "Listen up, the really, really important information is coming now!"

For Example

The lesson is: To get a powerful tumbling pass, you need a powerful hurdle. Having clean lines in the hurdle helps you keep the power of your run directed forward. One way to keep a clean powerful hurdle is to reach into the hurdle with your shoulders and arms touching your ears. This will keep your head in line and your back straight which helps to maintain your power.

The directions are: Go to the floor and do four round-offs with good alignment.

The tag point is: Shoulders touch ears.

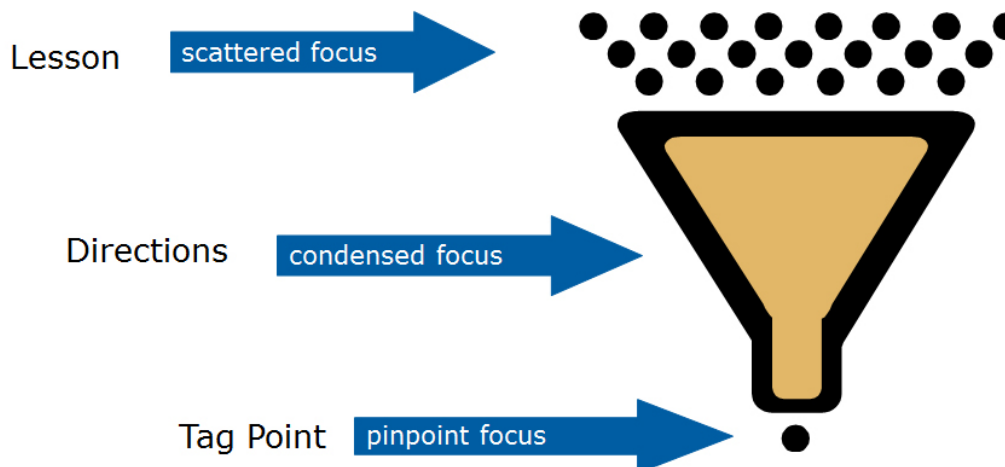
The athlete now has a single criterion for success, “shoulders touch ears”. If the shoulders touch the ears in the hurdle, there is absolute success for that tag point. Any additional refinements can be addressed with future tag points.

Another Example:

The lesson is: “Your feet need to stay together in the handstand, even when you are doing a pirouette on bars. If your feet come apart, they can pull you out of alignment and cause the handstand to tilt or even collapse. Besides, the judges will take a deduction for feet apart.

The directions are: Do one handstand half pirouette on the floor bar and 5 handstand pirouettes on the low bar and 5 handstand half pirouettes on the pit bar. Kick to handstand and before pirouetting; touch big toes together.

The tag point is: Big toes touch together.



Fixing it is Fun

Although studies show that success is in itself reinforcing, the measurable successes marked by audible tags can be used in a token economy. As an athlete 'collects the tags' she may turn them in to "buy" stickers, trinkets, come in late for a Saturday practice, choose the next skill or even the next tag point. Groups of athletes can combine their earned tags and turn them in for open gym time or the chance to compete in skill contests.

When the name of the game is perfection, we all have to "fix it" endlessly. The challenge lies in developing the concentration and motivation needed to fix everything. One solution is a direct line of focus between the coach's directions and the athlete's performance of them. The focus funnel™ provides this direct line by reducing confusion while introducing positive reinforcement and encouraging commitment to the performance.

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Article #3: TAGteach—Give Them What They Want

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance. In the previous article in this series we talked about the tag point – the exact response, action or position that a teacher pinpoints with a tag (the sound designated as the marker) to tell the learner “YES, that was right!”

With many adult learners and elite athletes, the information from the teacher or coach conveyed in a clear and precise way without the complication of words and emotion is all the positive reinforcement they need. Learners and athletes taught with TAGteach report that they like to work on only one aspect of a skill at a time and they really like to learn without criticism. Most learners and child athletes will embrace TAGteach and enjoy it more if the tag is associated with a tangible reinforcer.

The Simple “One for One” Reinforcement Scheme

The simplest way to use tangible reinforcers to ensure the learner understands that the tag results in a reward is to use a “one for one” plan. For example a speech therapist could tag each time her student echoes a sound correctly. Each time she hears the tag, the student would then move a bead from container A to container B. At the end of the session the beads in container B are hers to keep. This approach is good for creating the positive association with the tag and is helpful especially at first for young children and children with comprehension problems.

The Tag for Token Approach

Individual tags are associated with tokens that are traded in later for the tangible reinforcer. Each time Josh pauses appropriately after a period while reading aloud, the teacher gives the audible tag and at the same time moves a block across the desk to the other side. At the end of the session Josh trades in the moved blocks for stickers. This approach does not interrupt the flow of the activity. If the learner is going to earn many tags in a session, then the ratio of tokens to tangible reward items can be lowered. Possibly five blocks would be worth one sticker.

Tiered Reinforcement

More complex reinforcement schemes can be used to help sustain interest over a longer time span and allow the use of more substantial ultimate rewards. Brothers Sam and Luke work on their soccer skills every day for half an hour. For the first 15 minutes they work on specific drills and have three different tag points for 5 minutes each. The first tag point is kicking with the side of the foot as they pass the ball back and forth and then as they dribble through cones. The second tag point is planting the non-kicking foot so that it points towards the brother receiving the kick. The third tag point is eyes on the receiver while kicking. Everything that is not

the tag point is ignored. If there are form errors these can be tag points another time. The boys keep track of their tags and at the end of the session they each put one mark on a chart for every 10 tags. When the chart is full everyone goes out for ice cream. Both boys working on the same chart fosters co-operation rather than competition over who has the most tags.

The pizza party scheme is popular with kids and can last for weeks. Ten tags earns the cardboard base, 10 tags earns one piece of construction paper pepperoni, 10 tags earns a piece of yarn (cheese) and so on during math lessons every day. When each pretend pizza is complete the kids get to enjoy a real pizza.

What do They Really Want?

Ask them! Ask and observe to find out what the learners want and use these for reinforcement. Play time, "get out to play early" cards, favorite activities, movie tickets, read aloud story time, pick their own learning activity, even choosing their own next tag point can be rewarding. Use your imagination and let the learners use theirs and have fun coming up with ways to make tagging their favorite part of the day.

Next time we will talk about one of the most powerful aspect of TAGteach ... peer tagging. Hand the taggers over to the learners and see the magic happen.

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Article #4: TAGteach: The Power of Peer Tagging

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

The most powerful—and empowering—aspect of TAGteach comes from handing the audible markers over to the learners which gives them the chance to assess behavior just like a teacher. “Tagging lets you be the teacher and you feel good about helping your teammates do better,” said one 10-year-old cheerleader from North Carolina. “When learners tag each other they learn twice and become caring compassionate teachers,” said Theresa McKeon, coach of national level US gymnasts and TAGteach pioneer.

Peer tagging benefits

Being “the teacher” offers a look at the behavior from a very different perspective. Students learn twice when they tag their peers. First, they practice and learn while being tagged themselves. Next they learn by assessing whether their partner performed the tag point or not. The learner who is doing the tagging often internalizes the movement and performs it herself subconsciously while watching her partner. Peer tagging promotes empathy for others, gives concrete practice in focusing on the positive, and provides a mechanism for moving away from old-style teaching based on scolding and punishment.

Peer tagging offers a huge bonus to the teacher too. The teacher or coach can see right away if the learners understand the tag point by having them tag a peer. Everyone is engaged and learning, even if it is not their turn. Now the teacher has time to move about while each “junior teacher” is keeping their group on task.

Peer tagging in pairs

There are several peer tagging configurations that are used to get the most out of a session. The simplest of these is tagging in pairs. Learners work with a partner and take turns tagging each other for the tag point assigned and explained by the teacher. They switch places after a preset time limit (one minute) or after the learner has earned five or ten tags.

Peer tagging in triplets

This configuration works best when the activity involves actions by two participants. For example, two learners bump a volleyball back and forth while the third person tags. Once the players have 10 tags each, the group rotates so that everyone gets a chance to tag.

Peer tagging with multiple students waiting in line

Dribbling a soccer ball through a series of cones with the tag point being “kick with the side of your foot,” is an example. Student A tags the first person in line (student B) as he goes through the cones. When Student B finishes going through the cones, he collects the marker from student A and returns to tag the next student in the line (student c).

Peer tagging during drills

Any sports or lesson drill can be modified to include a peer tagging position. Just insert another position into the drill through which the learners rotate, handing the marker off to the next person when the positions switch. If there are injured players, they can be the designated tagger during the drills as a way to be involved in the practice.

Peer tagging with heterogeneous groups

Groups of different ages and skill levels can work together, tagging each other. As long as the tag point is well defined, even young children or those with learning deficits can see the correct response, action, or position—and tag it. Design tag points based on ability so that all learners can have fun helping each other improve. You’ll be amazed to see the effect of peer tagging on sibling relationships when competition and criticism turns into cooperation and positive reinforcement.

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Article #5: Incorporating TAGteach into Your Own Lessons

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

One of the wonderful things about TAGteach is its flexibility. Anyone can easily apply it to existing lessons. There is no need to change the technical aspects of your teaching to employ TAGteach.

Finding Tag Points

The first step in adapting existing lesson plans for TAGteach is to identify the tag points (see article 1 in this series for more on tag points). Look through your lesson plan and identify the places where you would be able to say “Yes – that was right” to your learner. These must be discrete and easily observable. If you can find something that you must repeat over and over to get compliance, this is often a good place to insert tag point. For example, you may be working on teaching proper technique for a soccer throw-in and find that you are frequently reminding the learners to keep both feet down. This can be turned from a “nag point” to a tag point by saying,

“The directions are: keep your feet on the ground during the throw.

The tag point is: back foot down.” (Back foot down virtually ensures the front foot is down too)

Tag if the back foot is down and do not tag if a foot is lifted. There is no need for a verbal reminder since the learner knows by the absence of the tag that the tag point was not performed and to try again.

Incorporating Tagging into Lessons

Tagging during drills and lessons can help keep the pace flowing without the need to stop for corrections and further instruction. Perhaps you are working on letter formation.

The tag point is: start letter at top.

As the learner works, you tag when the letter strokes start at the top. The learner has one thing on which to focus and can continue working without having to stop each time there is an error. He can assess the accuracy of the letter strokes for himself on the basis of the tags he hears and can adjust and improve accordingly.

Incorporating Tagging into Team Sports Drills

Many sports drills involve the rotation of participants through various positions. You can add one more position to the rotation – the person tagging. For example in a volleyball bumping drill you may have a line of bumpers, a tosser and several people collecting balls. A tagging position can be added. This person tags for the prescribed tag points – calling the ball, or bent knees in the bump perhaps. The learners rotate through all the positions, including the person tagging. This allows the seamless incorporation of TAGteach into the drill and gives the learners practice at evaluation as well as play.

There is no need to change the technical aspects of your teaching, or to make radical changes to drills or lesson plans in order to incorporate TAGteach. Just take a look at how you are teaching and find places where tag points can be inserted so that you can give learners immediate positive feedback without interrupting the flow of the lesson or drill.

Next time we will talk about using TAGteach to create and maintain focus even for the most inattentive of learners.

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Article #6: Incorporating TAGteach into Daily Routines

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

TAGteach is not just for lessons or teaching physical skills, it can also be very useful for reinforcing daily routines during class and at home.

Behavior Management

Sometimes children need to sit quietly in their seats and pay attention to the teacher, wait their turn or cooperate in group activities. You can tag a learner who is being attentive, standing quietly, using an inside voice or any other behavior that you would like to have continue or be repeated. It is tempting to think that the children “should” do these good behaviors and so it is unnecessary or even wrong to reward them. In fact if you use the power of positive reinforcement and tag the behavior you like and ignore the behavior you don’t like, you will quickly find that there is more and more good behavior and less and less disruptive behavior and this becomes reinforcing on its own for everyone involved. At first the learners may specifically “try” to do the behaviors that earn them the tags, but eventually these will become the norm and you won’t need to reinforce with a tag as often.

Defining Tag Points

Tag points for behavior management can be very specific and described to the learners. For example you could say,

“The directions are: when I start talking you should be looking at me.

The tag point is: eyes move to teacher.”

You can play a game with tag. Tag anything that is within the realm of acceptable behavior and not specify exactly what you are looking for. Let them try to figure out what earns them a tag.

Involve the Learners

Involve your learners in selecting tag points and allow them to tag each other. For example they could tag another person every time that person smiles at them or does something helpful. If there is animosity between learners, they could just tag if the other person is ignoring them or staying in their own space. This may seem contrived and artificial and maybe a bit silly at first, but soon the good behavior will start to creep in and become the norm and the tag frequency will drop as the tags become unnecessary for the maintenance of the behavior.

Use Other Markers

It is not necessary to use the audible marker for everything. Sometimes it works well to use the TAGteach philosophy (reinforce the desirable and ignore the

undesirable behavior) or use something other than an audible marker. For example, you could put tickets in a jar, beads in a cup, tally marks on a white board or use other ways to mark and track incidents of desirable behavior.

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Article #7: Using TAGteach to Get and Maintain Focus

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with a sound marker to identify successful performance.

TAGteach can be used to create and maintain focus even for the most inattentive and distractible of learners. There are four main factors that can increase a learner's focus on a task:

Clearly Define the Goal and Criteria for Success

It may be difficult for a learner to become dedicated to a goal that is ill-defined or without immediate benefit. To create a goal that will deserve intense focus, the learner must understand it clearly. Break the overall task into small easily defined units and start with only one. For example, the goal is to read a sentence. Print the sentence and cut it up into individual words. Place them face down and have the learner choose one at random. If this is not interesting enough, put colorful stickers on the back of each word. Use your imagination to create a situation in which the learner wants to interact with the words.

The directions are: pick up a word card with a yellow sticker and say the word. After you have said the word, put the card in the finished pile.

The tag point is: card in finished pile.

Notice the behavior of 'say the word' is woven into the directions and tag point. The learner must read the card to be able to put it in the finished pile. This design has a bit of strategy involved keeping the learner practicing without all the focus being on what might be a difficult task for the student, 'read the word'. If he can't read the word, this is information to the teacher. "This particular game is too hard and we have to go back to learning the individual words."

As the student puts the card into the finished pile, he receives a tag and can pull a bead on a tagulator (see website) or take part in whatever reinforcement plan you have designed.

Add Difficulty Gradually

Once all the words have been used as above, the next step could be to turn over each word and match it with the printed sentence and finally to read the sentence. The tag point associated with each activity must refer to one thing and be easily understood and accomplished.

Use Effective Reinforcement

In order to hold attention, the game must move quickly with the tags happening at a rapid rate. The reinforcement (pulling beads on a tagulator to be counted and traded later for stickers or a choice from the treasure box) must be something the child wants and is willing to work for. Consulting the learner on the nature of the reinforcer and on the selection of tag points can go a long way to creating enthusiasm for the task.

Quit While You Are Ahead

Because the measure for success with TAGteach is the earning of the tag for each component and not the completion of the final larger goal it is possible to stop on a note of success even if the whole planned sequence was not completed. If the learner is focused and playing the game and has performed better than expected, stop and give the ultimate reward of cashing in the beads. This often has the effect of causing the learner to ask to do “just a few more” and this is terrific – exactly what you are looking for – a learner who wants to stay with a task a bit longer.

Next time we will talk about using TAGteach around the house to encourage co-operation with household tasks.

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Article #8: TAGteach and Children with Special Needs

By Victoria Fogel, BCABA

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

In his article we have a guest author, Victoria Fogel, a behavior analyst who has used TAGteach to teach children diagnosed with autism.

Working with children diagnosed with autism can pose very difficult challenges. These challenges range from trying to decrease severe behavioral problems to teaching a child how to communicate their basic wants and needs. A child appropriately communicating what they want for the first time or hanging up their backpack after several weeks or months is a huge success for that child. For some of these children, these successes do not occur often and it may require months and years of training to learn to walk a short distance independently, dress themselves, identify the people who take care of them, and communicate their wants and needs. As a behavior analyst, teacher, and trainer I am always troubleshooting to find ways to accelerate the learner's acquisition rate. TAGteach is a way to accelerate the learning process while simultaneously creating a safe, positive environment conducive to learning.

TAGteach is an effective teaching technology that uses an acoustical sound to mark when a desired behavior/skill occurs. The acoustical sound indicates to the learner that they performed the behavior/skill correctly. Positive reinforcement is the foundation of TAG methodology; focusing on the behavior you want to increase and then reinforcing that behavior. This creates a safe environment for the learner, which in turn provides motivation to learn. This is extremely important when working with children diagnosed with autism because often they lose motivation to continue with a teaching session after a couple of trials. If error corrections are given frequently and the sessions are not run at a rapid rate, the learner will quickly lose motivation.

Traditionally we have used error corrections to extinguish the incorrect behavior/skill and teach the correct behavior/skill, but error corrections often appear to have the effect of punishment. TAG does not punish the child's attempt to learn a new behavior/skill. Instead, the method reinforces the child's attempt by setting the stage for success. For example, we used TAG with a child having difficulty focusing on vocalizing while counting. The tag point was "say the number aloud" while he was dropping tokens into a cup, up to a specified number. Each time he said a number, he received a tag. This encouraged him to say the next number and allowed him a small success at each step. Children with special needs in learning benefit from this high rate of reinforcement along with clear and simple directions.

I have implemented TAGteach with children diagnosed with autism and have experienced wonderful results. Teaching sessions are conducted at a faster pace, children learn at an accelerated rate, and I am able to fine-tune my teaching skills. Learners appear to enjoy the teaching sessions. When I asked one learner why he liked TAG he said, "Because I win!"

TAGteach can rapidly and dramatically increase the learning acquisition rate. One of my learners had considerable difficulty walking from her bus to her classroom door, and required intense prompting to walk this path. She had worked on this task for two years. I began TAGteaching with this learner, simply tagging her for each correctly placed foot. After 23 TAG sessions, she was able to walk independently from her bus to the classroom door. Two years of effort using conventional methods could not begin to compare to what we accomplished in less than a month with TAGteach.

This is a precise teaching method that focuses on what the child is doing right, empowers the teacher, and provides motivation to learn. TAG is a beneficial teaching methodology that can aid in the treatment of autism and facilitate a positive, productive learning environment. Parents of children with special learning needs can apply the techniques we have developed for use with autism. In applying the principles of TAGteach (described in previous columns) to children with special needs, the teacher must be sure to break the task into readily achievable pieces, start with something the child can already do, keep the rate of reinforcement very high, and avoid corrections that the child may find aversive.

Next time we'll talk about the versatility of TAGteach and how you can seamlessly incorporate tagging into existing lesson plans, without changing the technical content of your teaching.

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Article #9: Using TAGteach to Gain Co-operation Around the House

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a new way of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

Here we talk about how TAGteach can be used to help gain co-operation around the house with household chores. Yes your pre-teen can clean her room and be happy to do it!

Identify the Tag Point

Think about what it is you want your child to do (as opposed to what you want him not to do). For example "I want my kids to take their dishes from the table, clear the plates into the garbage and put the dishes in the dishwasher". Since this is a relatively simple sequence that most children can easily follow, you explain the sequence and then say "the tag point is: dishes in dishwasher". Discuss this at breakfast and get agreement from everyone that this is the tag point for the next week.

Choose the Reinforcer

It is beneficial to have agreement about the reinforcer that will be earned for each tag. It could be a ticket in a jar that the family will redeem for popcorn and a movie once there are 100 tickets in the jar. It could be a sticker on chart leading up to some other ultimate reward or it could be the immediate delivery of a skittle or a new colored pencil. Discussing both the tag point and the nature of the reinforcer will ensure the success of the game.

Implement the Game

Ask the children what the tag point is at the end of the meal if it seems that someone might forget. If they do forget, just keep quiet and leave the dishes on the table. Put your own dishes in the dishwasher, tag yourself and put a ticket in the jar. This may seem silly and contrived at first, but if you are creative with your tag points and the reinforcement is worth working for you will soon find that an air of cooperation takes over as everyone works towards a common goal. Resist the urge to nag or remind after the fact and pretend that you really don't care about the dishes. Never mind that you are rewarding the children for doing what they "should" do anyway. Use rewards that you would give them for free anyway (family night at the movies for example). After a week or so of putting the dishes in the dishwasher, this will become a habit that will not need to be reinforced every time and you can move on to something else.

Multiple Tag Points

When teaching a physical skill, only one tag point is ever used at one time. With behaviors around the house, however, it is feasible to have multiple or more broadly defined tag points. For example the kids could all have their own taggers and anytime anyone sees anyone else doing anything helpful they can tag the other (they could say "tag" if there is not an actual tagger handy). This gives a group of children a way to earn a lot of tickets in the jar quickly while practicing cooperative behavior at the same time.

Next time we will talk about using TAGteach to help teach math and science concepts.

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Article #10: Using TAGteach for Language and Music

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

Here we talk about how TAGteach can be used to help reinforce language and music concepts.

Identify the Activity and Break it Down

Use TAGteach as a way to help solidify language and music concepts in a positive way that allows the learner to self-assess performance. The first step is to identify the activities that the learner needs to work on. The next step is to break each activity down into discrete parts that can be tackled one at a time.

A Language Example

A critical part of language instruction is of course, reading. There are many components, including punctuation, pronunciation, word decoding and more. Let's consider a punctuation example. Beginning readers often read straight through periods without stopping. We would like the reader to take a breath after each period.

"The directions are: when you see a period stop reading and take a breath. The tag point is take a breath."

Start with a 2 sentence paragraph. There is potential to receive two tags, one after each sentence. If the learner hears two tags then another sentence can be added. If not, the learner can identify where the tag should have been heard and can try again. The learner can move a "chip" from one side of the desk to another while reading as an easy and unobtrusive way to count the tags. The number of chips can be used to control the length of the session. Once all the chips are moved to the other side of the desk it is time to move on to the next activity.

A Music Example

Learners often have difficulty remembering to play flats and sharps. The traditional way to help them remember is to circle them on the music as a visual reminder and to correct them verbally (or with the help of a ruler in the bad old days) if they make a mistake. Upon making a mistake and hearing a correction the learner invariably stops and starts over from the beginning, thus practicing the first part of the piece over and over and not getting to the last part as many times in one session. This can be prevented by working on one line at a time and by using tag points instead of correcting mistakes. Consider the example of a piece with B-flat to be played five times in the first line. Circle the B-flats with a colored pencil to make them stand out. The tag point is "play B-flat at the circles". If the learner does not get five tags, he can try to identify where the tags were and were not and can try

again. The piece can be approached line by line in this manner, or even bar by bar if the learner is having little success.

Next month we will talk about using TAGteach to help teach physical movement.

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Article #11: Using TAGteach for Math and Science

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

Here we talk about how TAGteach can be used to help reinforce math and science concepts.

Identify the Activity and Break it Down

Use TAGteach as a way to help solidify math and science concepts in a positive way that allows the learner to self-assess performance. The first step is to identify the activities that the learner needs to work on. The next step is to break each activity down into discrete parts that can be tackled one at a time.

A Math Example

Learning math facts provides a good opportunity to apply the concepts of TAGteach. Let's take the common activity of learning to carry during addition. Provide exercise sheets at first that have a small empty square in the position where the carried number should be recorded. The tag point is "carry to the square".

A Science Example

TAGteach can be used effectively with older learners as well and is particularly useful for teaching laboratory skills that require precision.

The lesson is: Consider the activity of preparing a wet mount microscope slide. There are several steps involved, the most error prone of which is applying the cover slip so as not to introduce air bubbles. The key to doing this successfully is to introduce the cover slip at an angle, releasing it only once the liquid on the slide has become attracted to the edge of the cover slip where it contacts the slide.

The directions are: "hold the cover slip between thumb and forefinger, place it against the slide at a 45 degree angle, slide it along until it contacts the liquid and the liquid is attracted under the edge of the cover slip, then release the cover slip gently to trap the liquid under it".

The tag point is: cover slip at 45 degrees.

Once the learner hears the tag he can then proceed to slide the cover slip to the liquid droplet on the slide and then release it. Ideally the teacher would demonstrate the procedure and have the learner tag at the appropriate point so that it is clear that the learner understands the process and the tag point. If it becomes apparent that the learner is having difficulty with other steps in the

procedure, these could be used as tag points in subsequent trials until the whole process is mastered. Older learners often do not need tangible reinforcers. They find that getting the precise and clear information without any negative feedback and seeing themselves improve is reinforcement enough.

Next time we will talk about using TAGteach to help teach language and music concepts.

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Article #12: Using TAGteach for Physical Movement

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

Here we talk about how TAGteach can be used to help teach physical skills.

Identify the Activity and Break it Down

TAGteach was first used with physical skills and this is a very powerful application that can have dramatic results in a very short time. As a coach, you first identify the critical steps involved in the skill you wish to teach and then identify your learner's point of success to give you a starting point.

Point of Success

The point of success is something the learner can already do and where he is guaranteed to earn a tag. For example a T-ball player can stand with his feet on each of two marks that you have put on the ground. This is the point of success since you know for sure he can do this. The first tag point is "feet on the markers". After a few tries you will no longer need the markers and the tag point is "feet in ready position". The point of success is a place to return to if the athlete is having trouble with more difficult tag points.

The Three Try Rule

You give an athlete three tries (or fewer) at a new tag point and if she cannot earn a tag, then you redesign the tag point to improve her chances of success. For example, you are teaching a two-foot take off for a spike shot in volleyball.

The directions are: at the start of a spike shot, jump off two feet.

The tag point: "two feet on ground".

The athlete continues to run and take off one foot three times in a row. Rather than reminding (dare we say nagging) to get the desired result, a solution is to take the jump out of the skill. Have the athlete stand on the ground. The tag point is "rise on toes". This is a point of success since you know she can do this. After a few tags for rising on toes, the next step is to jump in place (no run up). At the start of the jump the tag point is: two feet on ground. When this has been tagged a few times the athlete can take one step and then jump of two feet and then two steps etc until the run has been put back into the skill and the athlete is consistently jumping off two feet. The tag point is still the same, but the skill is becoming more complex. If there are three failures in a row, you simply return to the most recent point of success.

Build on Success

Your athletes can build skills rapidly using the above approach without needing constant reminders. Develop each part of the skill individually with tag points

designed to maximize each athlete's success. Note and save off-point errors for latter tag point so that the athlete can focus on the current tag point. For example, The directions are: Before the spike have two feet on the ground. The tag point is: two feet on ground.

Don't comment on other aspects of the skill such as arm position during this tag point. Later you can give a tag point (or series of tag points - one at a time) to help focus on arm position. Return to the jumping tag points if you notice any deterioration in these, but usually previously tagged aspects of a skill are retained, or regained easily in one or two tries. Athletes describe the tagged skill elements as "photographs" in their minds to which they can easily return. Visit www.tagteach.com to see a video of high jump taught with the techniques described here.

Next time we will talk about the Point of Success in more detail.

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Article #13: The Point of Success

By Joan Orr, M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

Here we talk about the Point of Success, how to identify it and make it work for you.

What is the Point of Success?

The point of success is something the learner can already do and where he is guaranteed to earn a tag. For example a kindergarten student can certainly pick up a pencil with her writing hand. The first tag point in teaching letter formation could be "pencil in writing hand". Starting with the point of success ensures success on the first try and provides a rewarding introduction to the lesson. The point of success will gradually change as the learner gains competency. The point of success is a place to return to if the learner is having trouble with more difficult tag points.

Finding the Point of Success

In some cases the point of success is obvious. For example "stand with arms at side" or "sit at the desk" are things that it is reasonable to expect that most learners are able to do at least for a moment or two. If you are a coach or teacher that has been working already with your learners you probably have a good idea of what each learner can easily do. With new learners or a new task, you need to evaluate their current status with the skill or behavior you are trying to teach. Ask them to attempt the skill and just observe without comment. Find something they are already doing correctly or something that is very easily accomplished and make this the first tag point. For example in teaching a learner to play the piano the point of success may be to sit at the keyboard with middle C and belly button lined up.

Sometimes the point of success is more difficult to find. If you are teaching a complex skill and the learner seems to be doing many parts of it incorrectly or is missing a key aspect, finding a point of success may be more of a challenge. For example, you are teaching an athlete to high jump using the Fosbury flop method. This requires the back to be arched while clearing the bar, but the athlete is going over in more of a sitting position without the proper arch. Where is the point of success when the main component, the arch, is nowhere to be seen? In this case in order to find a point of success, you must make the task easier. Have the athlete lie on his stomach and push up with his hands while his hips remain on the ground. In this position it is easy for him to achieve the tag point "arch back". He could also achieve this position lying on his back on the crash mat with either his upper or his lower body hanging over the edge of the mat. Isolating an element from the skill in this manner allows the athlete to experience the feeling of the position and have it be solidified by hearing the tag without having to try to do all the other complex

parts of the skill. After a few repetitions of “arch back” isolated from the skill, move on to putting this back into the skill. To ensure the best chance of success, give the athlete as few other components to think about as possible. Remove the bar and ask him to jump from a standstill backwards onto the crash mat with the tag point “arch back”. This removes many other variables and gives him the opportunity to put all his focus into the one key element. Gradually add one step then two steps, then the full run and finally replace the bar. If the athlete begins having trouble, go back to the most recent point of success and build up again from there. Start each new session with a point of success identified from the previous session.

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Article #14: Tag Don't Nag

By Theresa McKeon

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

Here we talk about how to use TAGteach to eliminate the least effective of the coaching tools...nagging!

"This is the hundredth time I've told you...and last time I am going to say it..." Ah nagging, the most beloved teaching tool in the world. Just keep at 'em until they fix it, do it, drop it or stop it. In fact, experienced coaches, teachers and parents often use a highly advanced system called, multi-nagging. Hit them with multiple corrections every turn. One of them may stick. This leads us to the question... How do you amplify the critical feedback athletes need, while reducing the amount of language that accompanies it? TAGteach provides a way.

Work on One Thing at a Time

A gymnast must learn the basic skill of keeping good form while performing a handstand. Instead of repetitive requests that bear a considerable resemblance to nagging, such as "get your feet together", the coach establishes a 'tag point'. A tag point is something the coach wants, phrased in a way that can be answered yes or no, for example "the tag point is...feet together in handstand". If the athlete puts her feet together in the handstand, the coach marks the exact moment her feet come together with a tag. If she hears the tag, she hears success. If the athlete doesn't hear a tag, she must self assess. No tag? She thinks, "The tag point was... feet together. Mine must still be apart." The athlete decides on a corrective action, pulls her feet together and receives the tag. Changes are considered and made by the athlete through self-assessment before further feedback from the coach is given. Now the athlete is in charge of her progress with minimal intervention from the coach. This fosters accountability and reduces the need for immediate and constant verbal corrections (nagging).

The Three Try Rule

The coach using the TAGteach methodology sets the learner up for success by increasing criteria in manageable increments and limiting unsuccessful attempts. If the athlete does not receive a tag within three tries, it is the coach's responsibility to create a tag point that is within the skill level of the athlete. In all cases, tag points are addressed one at a time and the learner does not receive commentary on other errors such as bent legs or arched back. These errors will be addressed in future tag points.

Break it Down

The coach can also decrease nagging and boost the athlete's chance for success by breaking skills down and working in individual components. The athlete can only truly focus on improving one aspect of a skill at a time, particularly if it is a new skill. When they receive multiple corrections it's a coin toss. Legs straight? Back straight? Legs together? Toes pointed? Which correction is the most important to the coach? Even if the athlete does make a correction, there seems to be a "better, but" that lands them in the "you aren't concentrating" hole again. With TAGteach, the coach chooses and tags for the point that is sequentially most important to the make-up of the skill. Because the criterion for success is the attainment of the single tag point and not the completed, perfected skill, the athlete and coach can learn to appreciate incremental successes on that never ending road to perfection.

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Article #15: Creating a Climate for Success

By Joan Orr M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance.

Here we talk about a fundamental aspect of TAGteach, how to create a climate for success.

TAGteach differs from the kind of teaching and coaching that most of us knew growing up. With TAGteach we look for what is right and work to increase it rather than looking for mistakes and correcting them. This may seem like a small thing, but this change in perspective can make a huge difference for the learner. No longer does the learner need to worry about all the many things that could be going wrong, he only needs to focus on doing one thing right. This eliminates a lot of stress and anxiety and sets the stage for gradual successes leading to a final goal.

Find the Right Thing

It can be a bit tricky at first to find something the learner is doing right and for the time being, ignore all the things he is doing wrong. The best way to approach a TAGteach session is to start with a point of success. We discussed this in a previous article. Start with something easy that the learner can already do so that he is guaranteed a tag on the first try. Then make it slightly more difficult to earn the tag, but be sure the goal is still within the realm of the learner's ability. After 10 repetitions (more or less depending on the fluency needed) on one tag point, switch to a different one, again starting from the point of success and building to more difficult skills. Building incrementally on success and not pointing out mistakes helps promote a bond of trust and mutual satisfaction between teacher and learner and helps create a climate that breeds further success.

Use Positive Phrasing

Using positive phrasing is another component of TAGteach that supports a climate of success. This is not to say that we give false praise or are flush with compliments. Positive phrasing in terms of TAGteach means that you state the goal in terms of what you do want, as opposed to what you don't want. For example if you want the learner to stop poking his neighbor, you say "The tag point is: hands folded on desk". You don't give attention to the behavior you want to stop, you teach the behavior that you want to happen, define criteria for success and provide reinforcement when the learner succeeds.

Give Learners a Role

Foster an environment of cooperation by offering learners the opportunity to help choose tag points, help plan the next steps, choose the tangible reinforcers and tag each other. Learners become very engaged in their own learning and empathetic toward their peers when allowed to participate in decisions and provide feedback to each other in a positive way.

Create a climate of success by focusing on that which is correct and increasing it, noting off-point errors and shelving them for another time, starting from a point of success, using positive phrasing and expecting learners to play an active role in their own learning and that of their peers.

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Article #16: Tagging on the Fly

By Theresa McKeon

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance. The basics of TAGteach are covered in articles 1-15.

The next series of articles will cover more advanced TAG techniques. Here we discuss Tagging on the Fly – or how to come up with tag points on the spot when you see a need to improve performance.

Tagging on the Fly

'Tagging on the fly', is the process of changing tag points quickly or without a pre-determined plan. It is useful for those times when you aren't sure of your learners' capabilities or how fast they will advance.

For example (basketball basics)

The directions are: when bouncing the ball, use your fingertips.

The tag point is: "finger tips."

During this 'finger tips' tag session, you notice several of the players are standing with stiff straight legs. You think, "Legs should be slightly bent and soft, ready for movement". You mentally decide *on the fly* that 'soft knees' will be the next tag point.

The players finish earning 20 'finger tip' tags and are eager for the next challenge.

"Great! Let's keep playing!

The Lesson is: while dribbling the ball with your finger tips, your knees should be slightly bent, ready to move in any direction. We'll call this, 'soft knees'.

The direction is: bounce the ball 20 times with your finger tips and keep 'soft knees'

The tag point is: 'soft knees'."

Now the players earn tags for the current tag point, 'soft knees', whether or not they remember to bouncing the ball with 'finger tips'.

During this 'soft knees' tag session, you notice the learner's eyes are glued to the ball. You want their eyes focused on where they are going. *On the fly*, you make the decision that, 'eyes on the hoop' will be the next tag point.

"You earned all 20 tags? Good job! Let's do some more!

The lesson is: When dribbling the ball down the court with finger tips and soft knees, you want to see where you're going, right? So, when you are bouncing the ball, look at the basketball hoop.

The directions are: bounce the ball 20 times with your finger tips and soft knees. Each time you bounce the ball look at the hoop.

The tag point is: 'eyes on hoop'."

During this 'eyes on hoop' tag session, you notice some learners are starting to use a flat hand again instead of finger tips to bounce the ball. Instead of being frustrated, you understand this is important feedback for you. "These points are not yet solidified in the players' repertoire. I'll float between the tag points, 'finger tip', 'soft knees' and if necessary, 'eyes on hoop' until they become more confident."

As with any TAGteach application, remember to

- Tag only one point at a time
- Tag for what you want to happen
- Quit tagging while they still want more

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Article # 17: Learner Self-Assessment with TAGteach

By Theresa McKeon

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance. The basics of TAGteach are covered in articles 1-15.

This series of articles covers more advanced TAG techniques. Here we discuss how TAGteach encourages self-assessment by learners and athletes.

Reinforce the Process

Feedback from the coach is imperative, but an athlete who can self-assess will ultimately decrease her dependency on an instructor and increase her desire to look inward for answers. The process of handing over the reins to the learner may take a bit of time. At first athletes may be stymied by the prospect of being part of their own coaching staff. They have been programmed to take corrections directly from their coach, not to look inward and design their own. Coaches may initially fear wasting practice time while athletes find their 'coach within', but the results are very motivating.

Step 1 – Make Self-Assessment Reinforcing

Success is motivational so athlete and coach need to find immediate reinforcement opportunities. The techniques used in the TAGteach methodology are very helpful in providing organized opportunities for reinforcement in combination with self assessment and can be valuable in this transition.

Consider the example of learning to bend the knee while balancing on a skate board. The directions are: step onto the board with bent knees.

The tag point is: bent knee.

If the learner does not hear a tag she uses this information to self-assess...

If I hear the tag it means I did it right!

I didn't hear a tag.

What was the tag point?

It was...bent knee.

I must have stepped on with a straight leg.

Ok, I'll try it again.

The act of self-assessing has been made reinforcing for the athlete. The sound of the tag is associated with success which is reinforcing and fewer verbal corrections is reinforcing and acquiring a skill in less time is very reinforcing.

Step 2 – Allow the Learner to Define the Problem

Tagging gently introduces problem solving to the athlete. The final answer can always be found in the clearly stated tag point.

“I didn’t receive a tag...why?” “The tag point was...toes touching in the handstand”
“If I’m not getting tagged it must be because my toes are apart.” “I’ll put my toes together” (athlete hears the tag) “yep, that’s what it was!”

Step 3 – Encourage Discussion and Learner Input

Say an athlete attempts a tag point three times and does not succeed. Instead of automatically giving an easier tag point the coach may ask the athlete, “this is what we are trying to accomplish, what you think the new tag point should be?”

Depending on the athlete’s age and skill level, the coach can quickly shepherd the athlete to a new tag point or allow a more extended dialogue. For example,

Coach: The tag point was: racket parallel to ground. You didn’t receive a tag on the last three swings. Do you know why?

Athlete: No! I understand the tag point but I really felt like I was swinging the racket parallel.

Coach: Ok, what should we do?

Athlete: First we should find out if we mean the same thing by ‘parallel’.

Coach: Great idea. Show me what parallel feels like to you?

Athlete: Athlete demonstrates

Coach: Aha! There is the problem. The racket head needs to be tilted farther forward. (Athlete adjust racket until it is in the correct spot and the coach marks it with a tag)

Athlete: Ok, that’s different from what I thought the tag point was. Can we tag this position a few more times without the swing so I can get use to it?

(Coach tags the corrected racket placement and the athlete feels more successful and confident)

Athlete: Ok, I am ready to put it back into the full swing.”

This scenario illustrates the validity of athlete input. With a little guidance, athletes can solve problems and ultimately shorten learning time. If the coach had simply kept repeating, “Parallel...the racket needs to be parallel...why are you ignoring the correction?” both parties could have become frustrated and progress stalled. By creating a concentrated formula for delivering information (the audible tag), the TAGteach methodology reduces the time spent on external feedback, allowing for increased attention to internal feedback. Now it is possible for athletes to be part of the process, to take a cognitive role in their journey to accomplishment.

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Article #18: Student Can Be the Teacher with TAGteach

By Theresa McKeon

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance. The basics of TAGteach are covered in articles 1-15.

This series of articles covers more advanced TAG techniques. Here we discuss how TAGteach allows the student to be the teacher.

A New Tool

Give the tagger to the student and let them tag you! This gives a new perspective to both student and teacher and can be a valuable tool for gaining student buy-in.

From an Expert

Suzann Scheimer, **Ph.D.**, is a nationally-recognized expert in assessing student learning in physical education and the author of, *Assessment Strategies for Elementary Physical Education*. "This (TAGteach) is one of the most important developments in the teaching of physical education. When I'm TAGteaching, I know exactly when my students have learned the skill and, just as importantly, so do they!" She went on to explain, "There is exceptional power in giving the tagger to the student. If I am not sure the learner fully understands the directions for a particular skill, I can create a tag point; 'bounce ball with finger tips', and have them tag me. If the student tags me correctly I know they have at least a visual understanding of the directions and we can continue from there."

Benefits of Student Tagging Teacher

There are many benefits of surrendering the tagger to the learner. Forever being on the receiving end of wisdom is educational but not always fulfilling. Being the 'teacher' can develop a strong sense of self-worth as described by these fourth grade cheerleaders after they 'taught' their teachers and other teammates using tag. "It's like a little kid can be a teacher and help others get better" and "It makes you feel good that you're helping others".

When you turn the tables and bestow leadership and responsibility to those formerly without, you set the stage for your learner to live up to those qualities. Have your child (or spouse) tag you in one of the following examples:

1. Child tags a parent for circling the final answer as the parent demonstrates how to do a math problem.
The child says to the parent-
"The directions are: work through the math problem and circle the final answer
The tag point is: circle answer"

This tag point allows the student to focus on learning from the parent but still has a bit of 'teacher power' at the end.

2. A child tags the swim teacher for putting her face underwater.
The child says to the swim teacher-
"The directions are: on the count of three put your face in the water and blow bubbles.
The tag point is: blow bubbles"
3. A gymnast tags the coach for toes together in the handstand-
The gymnast says to the coach-
"The directions are: put big toes together when you kick up to the handstand.
The tag point is: big toes together.
4. A child tags a parent for putting on their seatbelt
The child says to the parent-
"The directions are: click in seatbelt before starting car.
The tag point is: click it."

Handing the physical tagger over to the learner sets the stage for growth of character, develops focus on the part of the student (for now he/she is the teacher) and creates a fun, game-like atmosphere. Next time you are stuck in a lesson, hand it over!

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Article #19: Creating Creative Cues with TAGteach

By Joan Orr M.Sc.

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance. The basics of TAGteach are covered in articles 1-15.

This series of articles covers more advanced TAG techniques. Here we discuss how to use creative cues to get the most from your learner.

What is a cue?

A cue is like a green light that tells the learner that they have the opportunity to exhibit a behavior and be reinforced. Cues are taught with positive reinforcement by associating them with a specific action and tagging the successful completion of the action. A cue can be a hand signal, a verbal instruction, a light, a sound or anything that the learner can perceive. A red light is a cue to put your foot on the brake, the ding from the microwave is a cue to come and get your food. When you give a tag point, you are giving a cue. For example, "The tag point is: point toes" gives the learner the cue "point toes".

Creative Cues

We have found that learners perform better when they name their own cues. Here is an example from gymnastics: You want your athlete to hold her arms in a certain way for a pose on the balance beam. You teach the athlete how to hold her arms by having her try to find the position and tagging when she gets it right. Then you ask her what word comes into her head to describe that arm position. She says, "It feels like an airplane flying". You ask her what she wants to call the tag point to remind her how to find that exact position again. She says, "The tag point is: airplane arms". Now when you want to practice that position and tag it to make it stronger, you will say "The tag point is: airplane arms" and you will tag when she gets it right. Once the position is solidified in her mind and you want to ask for it when you are not tagging, you can just give the cue "airplane arms" and the athlete will comply.

Learners tell us that they like thinking up creative cues because it helps them to remember what to do when they thought of the cue themselves and they like to have a visual image that goes along with the creative cue.

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Article #20: TAGteach Without the Tagger?

By Theresa McKeon

TAGteach™ (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance) is a method of teaching using positive reinforcement with an audible marker to identify successful performance. The basics of TAGteach are covered in articles 1-15.

This article covers a more advanced TAG technique. Here we discuss how to use the TAGteach approach without using the actual audible marker.

Evidence suggests that the sharp, discernible sound of the audible marker is a powerful tool for learning; but what if the use of a marker is unavailable or inappropriate? Can the TAGteach methodology still be applied? The answer is - you betcha! There are several avenues to take when using the audible marker is not an option.

The Focus Point

The first involves a special phrase that informs the learner that there is a single, specific, well defined goal, but feedback will be verbal and not come from the audible marker.

Preface the desired behavior with, "The focus point is" instead of "The tag point is" and make clear to the learner that you may say "Yes" or "Good" when the goal is met, but the unique sound from audible marker you use to tag is not part of this game.

For example, Sara and her daughter Katie are in a doctor's waiting room and decide to use this time to practice finding sight words in a magazine. Mom holds the magazine open for Katie and tells her, "the focus point is... point to the word, and". Katie scans the page and finds the word, and. Mom says "Yes!". Katie scans again and points to the word, ask. Mom says nothing and waits for Katie to self-asses. Katie looks at the word again. She sees realizes the word she picked is incorrect and moves along the page until she finds and points to the word, and. Mom says, "Yes!"

The criteria for a 'focus point' is the same as a 'tag point'. It is single, clear, appropriate goal that has a yes or no answer and receives quick, positive feedback. The terminology change makes it clear the learner which kind of feedback to expect.

The Virtual Tag

The second option for tagging without the marker is a 'virtual tag'. This is when you pretend to have the marker in your hand and imitate the motion of tagging

while verbally saying “tag”. This style of tagging is most often used to capture appropriate behaviors and is not typically prefaced with “the tag point is”.

For example, six year old Jake takes off his muddy shoes at the door in an obvious effort to keep the floors clean. Mom sees this and immediately mimes the action of tagging and says “tag”. Jake appreciates this acknowledgement of his housekeeping prowess and they both smile.

One parent of a ‘tag-taught’ child told us of memorable virtual tag moment. The four year old was dealing with an annoying sore throat. Mom decided a small dish of ice cream would be soothing, even though it was not ‘ice-cream Saturday’. As she handed over the cold treat, her son managed a smile and said “tag Mommy!”

We invite you to join the TAGteacher discussion group at www.tagteach.com to meet others who are implementing TAGteach in various disciplines and to see the list of upcoming TAGteach seminars.

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