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Shaping

Yvonne Yap
BCBA & Founder of Be Me Services

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What is shaping

- **Shaping is when you reward successive approximations to a final desired behavior until the behavior is performed**

- **The desired behavior is shaped gradually, step by step**

  - Example: "Hot and Cold" game which uses shaping to guide the player to find the "treasure".

Components of shaping technique

Reward (reinforcement)

- We differentially reinforce every approximation to a target behavior
- Using positive reinforcement is important and effective

Successive approximations

- We gradually change the criterion for rewarding during shaping
- Each approximation is closer to the target behavior
- Already learned steps are no longer rewarded

Why and when to use shaping

Shaping is used to teach novel behaviors, which the learner did not perform before

Shaping uses positive approach as it involves frequent rewards and positive interactions

Shaping can be combined with other approaches (chaining)

Aspects of behavior subject to shaping
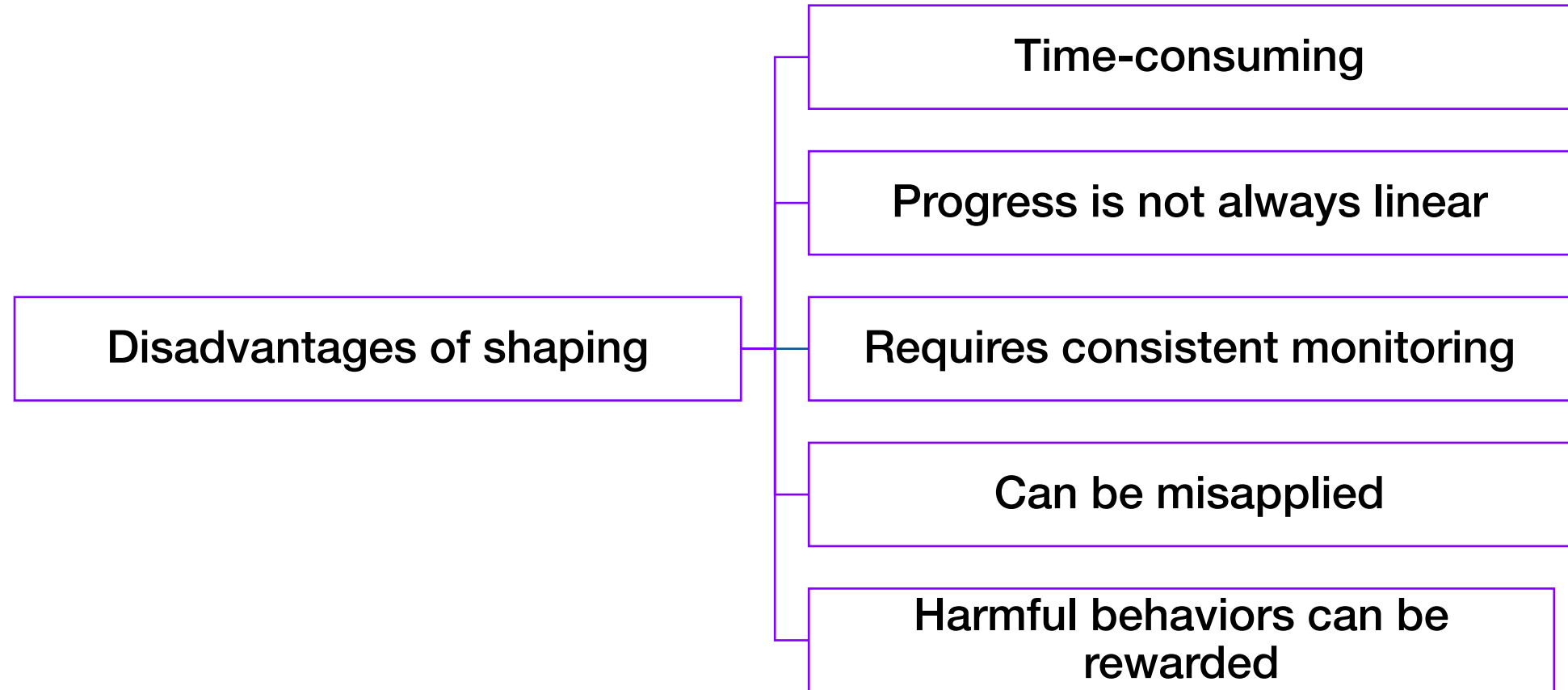
We can shape

- Physical form
- Intensity
- Frequency
- Latency

Examples of behaviors that can be shaped

- Saying words – starting from imitating one sound, two sounds then a word

- Tennis serve

- Sleeping alone

- Eating independently

- Remaining seated in the classroom

- Public speaking

- Crying/ tantrums

Limitations of shaping

Disadvantages of shaping

Time-consuming

Progress is not always linear

Requires consistent monitoring

Can be misapplied

Harmful behaviors can be rewarded

Interactive break

Can you think of example of a
behavior that can be shaped?

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Shaping example

Shaping Link's Behavior

Guidelines for implementing shaping

There are specific steps that will help implement shaping effectively

- Considerations
  - Consider the limitations and time
- Selecting the terminal behavior
- Analyze the behavior

Considerations

- Consider all the limitations

- Consider time needed

- Try to estimate the time and the progress

- Use different strategies to enhance shaping whenever possible

Select the terminal behavior

- Final desired behavior should not be in the learner's repertoire

- If there are multiple behaviors to teach and shape, then prioritize

- Ensure that the target behavior will bring reinforcement after it is learned

- Precisely define target behavior

Determine the criterion for success

- Several measures can be applied (frequency, duration, intensity)

- Establish norm for success individually, but at the same time aim to performance of similar peer groups

Analyze the behavior

- The relevant approximations should be defined and analyzed

- For this purpose, we can consult with professionals or perform behavior ourselves to determine all the steps involved

- Learner's performance should dictate when approximation has to be changed

Interactive break

Do you think shaping can be effective
if a person is not aware that their
behavior is being shaped?

Identify the first behavior to reward

- This first step of the target behavior should already occur at some minimum frequency

- Reward the first step until it occurs consistently and frequently

- It can be the first sound in a word or just looking at you
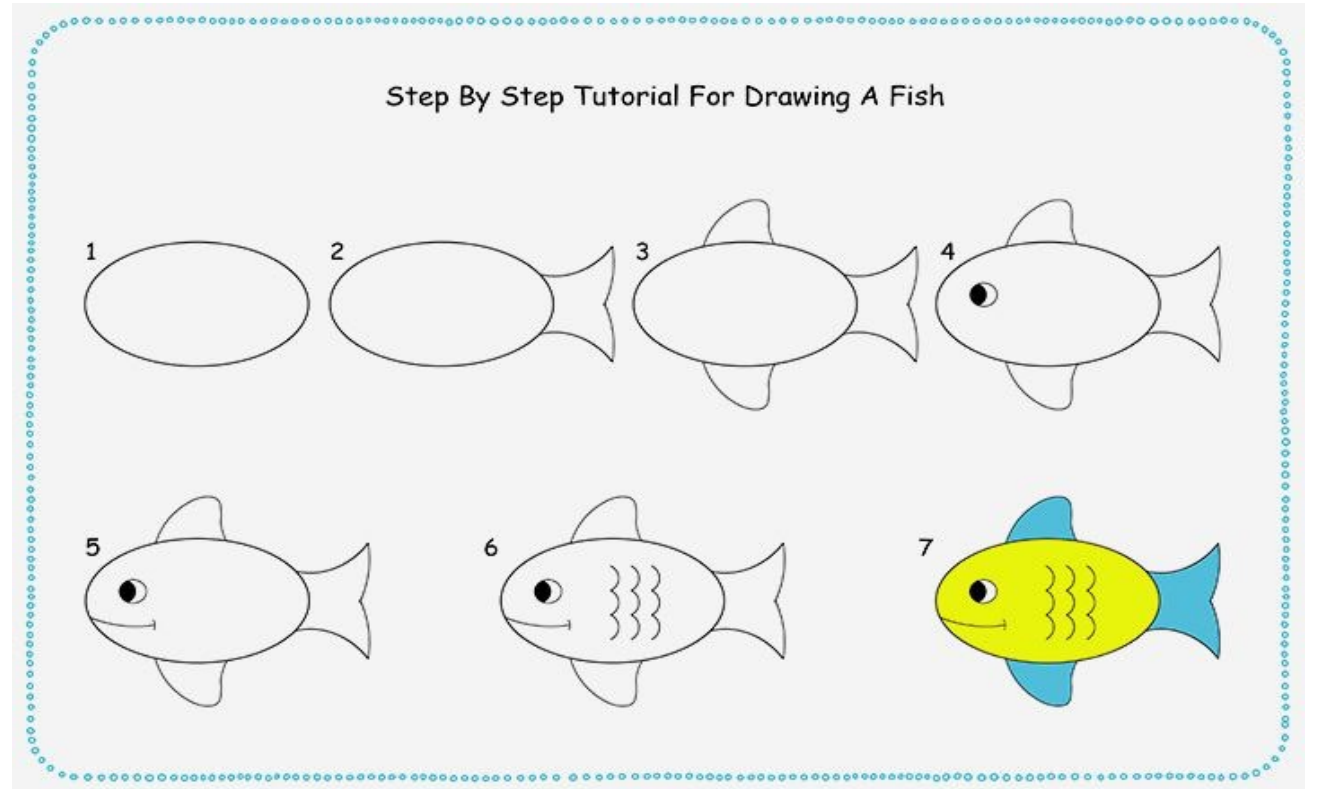
Eliminate distractors

- Minimize all the things that can interfere with the target behavior or influence the result

- Noises, TV, physical discomfort, toys, and objects not related to the target behavior

Proceed in gradual stages

- Reward each successive approximation

- Proceed in small steps

Step By Step Tutorial For Drawing A Fish

Monitor the progress

- Closely monitor the process to not to miss any signs of the next approximation

- If there is no progress to the next approximation for too long, then probably criterion is too high

- In case of stagnation, then shaping is going too slow

Continue to reward desired behavior

- Reward the target behavior even after it is achieved

- Try to find natural reinforcers for this behavior in the environment

- Otherwise the behavior can be lost

- To ensure the behavior is not lost, establish maintenance schedule – check the performance regularly

Increasing the efficiency of shaping

- Using prompts, such as vocal prompts – do this, say this

- Using modeling

- Using priming

- Using physical guidance

- Using imitation training

Questions?

Contacts

Yvonne Yap

Be Me Services
bemeservices.com
yvonne@bemeservices.com
+971568312217

Thank you!

References

- Cooper, J., Heron, T., & Heward, W. (2007) Applied Behavior Analysis (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education