



# **B.F. SKINNER'S CONTRIBUTION TO INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

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# Skinner on Instruction

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“*Education is what survives  
when what has been taught is  
forgotten.*”

-B.F. Skinner

# Teaching Machine

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- 1950s and 1960s:
  - Poor education at all levels
  - Skinner and his students devised a Teaching Machine



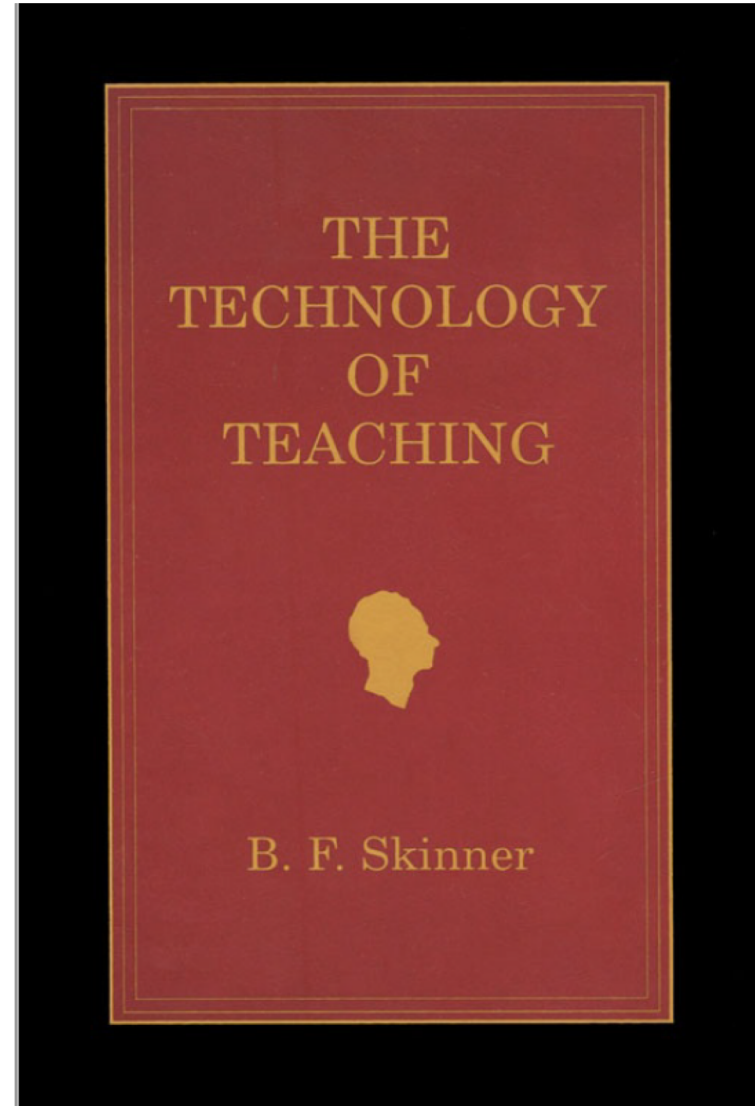
Skinner (1968)

# Programmed Instruction

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- Interactive, student-controlled pace, with R+ for each mastery

Skinner (1968)



# Programmed Instruction

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1. Instruction builds in complexity.
2. Active response are required.
3. Learners can't proceed until they've mastered a step.
4. Feedback (+ or - ) is provided for each response.
5. Learners progress at their own pace.

# From 1950s to Today

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- Passive learning is still the norm today.



# Discussion

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*Do you and/or your employees  
have similar experiences with  
passive learning designs?*

# Activity: Apply Programmed Instruction

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## Part 1:

- Partner with a person sitting near you.
- Both partners select a topic they're an expert in and their partner is not.
- Independently create 5 flashcards that are progressively more challenging.
- Be prepared to teach your partner.



# Example: Teach language

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**Instruction:** On one side, write the word or phrase in the learner's native language. On the other side, write the same word or phrase in the new language.

- Card 1. "Hello"
- Card 2. "Hello, my name is Barbara."
- Card 3. "Hello, my name is Barbara. What is your name?"

# Example: Teach language

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- Card 4. “Hello, my name is Barbara. What is your name? Nice to meet you.”
- Card 5. “Hello, my name is Barbara. What is your name? Nice to meet you. Have a good day.”

# Activity: Apply Programmed Instruction

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## Part 2:

- Person A teaches Person B with their deck of flashcards
  - A confirms that B has mastered flashcard 1 prior to moving to flashcard 2, etc. until B has mastered the entire sequence
- Person B teaches Person A with their deck of flashcards using the same approach

# Discussion

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*What did you learn during the activity? How can you apply it?*