Teaching Techniques
Guided Practice

Purpose
Learning is more valuable when learners are given opportunities to apply and practice what they know, with the direction of the instructor. This encourages more active learning on the part of the learner. Practice "speeds up learning, aids long-term retention, and facilitates recall" (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 293).

Goal
There are three important principles of guided practice, which include (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 293):
1. Opportunities for practice must encourage learners to actively participate and perform the activity.
2. Practice should occur immediately following the presentation of new content—as it provides an opportunity for learners to practice and apply knowledge that is fresh in their minds.
3. Opportunities for practice must occur regularly so that the student learns how to apply and further understand the content.

Strengths
Working actively with the content/material during practice gives learners the opportunity to produce fluency and transfer use. Allowing learners to practice actively, helps them to "recall and use information effortlessly so that they can exert their mental energies not on recall, but on expanding their understanding" (Svinicki, 2004, 31–32). Practice is also valuable when tasks are complex or contain several pieces of information. When tasks are complex or involve many components, it is helpful to break down the task into several steps, and have learners practice on each of the steps as part of solving the whole problem (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 294).

Practice that is ordered in a sequence and with decreasing guidance can help learners perform a task independently. The goal is for learners to increase their confidence and knowledge level while practicing with increasing independence and decreasing teacher guidance. There are several types of guided practice including (Svinicki, 2004, 32, 66–67):
1. In **narrated modeling** learners are presented with the process made observable. "Example: Modeling in a math solution. The instructor chooses problems to work on that are real examples, or the instructor can begin the demonstration by showing how what is being modeled will be used in future problems or real-world uses. Working a concrete example alongside the general process helps learners to see how the process plays out in real life" (Svinicki, 2004, 66).
2. In **recognition practice** "learners select a correct answer from two or more options" (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 294).
3. In **editing practice** "learners are shown an incorrect performance and asked to correct it" (Svinicki, 2004, 66).
4. In **production practice or coached and scaffolded practice** "learners may receive guidance to produce a correct performance" (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 294). The instructor scaffolds the learners' attempt of the skill "by providing support and

encouragement" and "coaches the learners by asking questions and giving hints and feedback on their progress." "Example: Modeling in a math solution. […] Having completed one or two sample problems, the instructor poses another very similar problem for the learners to try. The instructor suggests that the learners work in pairs and help one another think through their solutions. The instructor circulates and makes comments and observations about each pair's work. Because the learners are working together, they don't need constant monitoring by the instructor but, rather, can provide feedback to one another" (Svinicki, 2004, 67).

5. **Articulation of the process**, done after sufficient practice, allows learners "to describe the process step by step," which solidifies their understanding. "Example: Modeling in a math solution. […] After practicing with several problems of varying degrees of difficulty, the learner pairs are instructed to write on a separate sheet of paper the sequence of steps they need to go through when they encounter a problem of this type. The steps are then read aloud by the instructor and checked against the learners' lists" (Svinicki, 2004, 67).

6. In **criterion practice** learners are required to produce a correct performance (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 294).

During the early phases of practice, **feedback** plays a crucial role in minimizing errors. The following is Seels' list of rules for giving feedback (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 296):

- **Complete:** Provide the complete correct answer. Instructors need to explain to learners where they went wrong.
- **Specific:** Indentify errors in learner performance and provide specific information about where the errors were made.
- **Corrective:** Provide an explanation and elaborate on the correct response.
- **Immediate:** Provide the answer after every practice session.
- **Reinforcing:** Provide praise or recognition following a correct response—this reinforces learner behavior.

Weaknesses / Suggestions for Improvement

- Instruction is most effective when practice is immediate rather than delayed (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 293).
- Do not overload the practice session with several components—make sure practice is broken down into steps if it is a large activity (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 294).
- Reinforce the principles of the practice session after the session has been completed, so as to keep the information fresh in learners' minds (Seels & Glasgow, 1998, 294).
- The teacher should know all elements of the practice so that they are able to track the progress of the learners.

References

Seels, B., & Glasgow, Z. (1998). *Making Instructional Design Decisions*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill.

Svinicki, M. D. (2004). *Learning and Motivation in the Postsecondary Classroom*. Bolton, MA: Anker Pub. Co.