
Products – DT Trainer – Pre-Sale FAQ

Pre-sale and Product Information FAQ

What does the “DT” in “DT Trainer” stand for?

DT stands for Discrete Trial, which is the primary teaching method in a number of behaviorally-based interventions used in teaching children with autism. Discrete Trial Training is used with Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapies.

In DT Training, tasks are broken down into short, simple tasks. A discrete trial is a single cycle of the instructional program. A particular trial may be repeated multiple times, sometimes in succession, several times during the learning session until the item is mastered.

Using the DT Trainer, a learner is able to work independently and target skills selected for her specific needs. The DT Trainer is an affordable, very effective learning tool that allows a child to learn needed skills without an adult's direct assistance.

Is the DT Trainer based on Research?

Yes! The DT Trainer (DTT) is based on methods evolved by research and practice over decades. Computers are now powerful and cheap enough to make what has been done in labs accessible for parents and educators. From those foundations, the DT Trainer is being evolved by feedback from researchers, academics, ABA professionals, speech & language pathologists, teachers, and parents. Computers are a natural fit for ABA methods since computers can deliver fantastic reinforcement, are great at collecting and calculating data, can modify behavior based on settings and data, are tireless, and have infinite patience. Computers can mimic various styles of ABA, and can be adjusted for teaching preferences and learning needs. Since ABA methods use data to determine progress and adjust teaching accordingly, there is a record of progress when implemented by people or computers. By simply looking at the data, the teacher can easily determine if each specific student is progressing with the program. The benefits for the student can be initial learning, increased fluency, generalization, and maintenance.

The preliminary results show the DTT not only doing what we expected but in some cases even doing much better than expected. For example we would not expect the DTT to teach a student faster than 1-on-1 ABA with a trained person and we would not expect the DTT to teach a student where 1-on-1 ABA therapy had failed. We now believe that these results happen when a student is uncooperative or inhibited when working with a person but does not have the same barriers to learning when working with the computer even if both are using similar methods. Users have also seen initially untrainable topics by people, taught on the DTT, and then using the images from the DTT to transfer the knowledge to performance with people.

There are various research projects seeking to quantify the observed benefits of the program. Some of the results from the first studies should be presented and published in 2005.

For the research foundations of the DT Trainer, see our Supporting Research page.

My computer skills are not good. Will I be able to use the DT Trainer?

Yes! The DT Trainer was designed to be easy to learn. There are some adjustments available that allow the system to be configured for a large range of students and for some students that have very specific learning needs. To help you, there are descriptions in the administration to teach you about the buttons and other controls. Also most settings have a default so you do not need to change them unless there is a specific reason for that student. We have a great manual, but since most people are not much for reading manuals, we have digital videos that also show you the DT Trainer.

The DT Trainer is not hard to learn, and for the relatively small amount of time you will spend on learning the product, the DT Trainer will pay back that time by being a virtual teacher for a large amount of content. Most students, even very low functioning ones, can learn to use the program independently so you will generally not have to sit with a student while he is using the program.

Also, should you need help, you can call or email AES for support.

I have installed the Discrete Trial Trainer. Now what do I do?

The best way to get started is to view our training videos. These videos are accessed from a desktop icon (from recent installation CDs) or from our web site at www.dttrainer.com/files/video/trainingvideos. The videos total about 1 hour, range from 30 seconds to 7 minutes, and have a browse menu and VCR style controls to allow you to skip around, pause, and play the videos. The videos will provide you with the background on the methods used and show you how to view all the content programs and reinforcers and how to create a student. Some users find the DT Trainer so easy to use that they did not need the training videos, but viewing the videos will quickly get you more proficient at using the software.

Once you have viewed the training videos, you will then use the DT Trainer administration to preview content programs and reinforcers and then create students. Once students are created on the system, then those students will be able to use the DT Trainer.

Do I need a touch screen?

Although a touch screen is not required for use with the DT Trainer, it is an excellent enabling device for people above the switch level but below a mouse. The most cost effective touch screen is one for a 15 inch monitor. You can get one for in the \$160 or \$180 range. We recommend the touch screens from KeyTec due to their superior (will not fall off) design and competitive price. Go to <http://www.magictouch.com/> and look at their resellers for the best price (look at the bottom of their page... "Where to Buy"). You need to get the "Add on kit".

We are not doing a DT or ABA program. Can the DT Trainer help?

Yes! The DT Trainer (DTT) can be used for lead teaching, practice, generalization, or maintenance. For autistic individuals, the DTT has successfully been integrated into traditional ABA/DT, VB, TEACCH, and eclectic educational programs. In school districts, the DT Trainer is also used widely outside the autism spectrum with trainable, educable, and cognitively impaired students. There has also been some use with typically developing but young children.

We have made the DT Trainer configurable to accommodate the needs of a wide range of autistic children. We have extended that approach by incorporating universal design principles to support the low functioning child to a high functioning but young child.

Can the DTT help my non-verbal child?

Usually! The child or student does not have to have expressive language (speech) to use the DT Trainer. In fact the child does not have to have much receptive language either. The lower content programs specifically work on basic labeling and simple instructions. The DT Trainer primarily works on receptive language, early academics, and life skills. None of these program areas require expressive language.

Of course receptive language is needed for expressive language to develop and we do model a lot of spoken language through the DT Trainer. Occasionally, although not designed to initiate speech, some children will even speak when working with the DT Trainer. This behavior is probably because the trainer is not threatening to many children, whereas they find working with people intimidating.

As you know, however, every child is different and not all will respond to our software. This is part of the reason we offer the 30 day trial – so that you can try the software – the full software – with your child to verify he will benefit.

Do I need to register for the evaluation period?

The full DT Trainer will automatically run for 30 days without registration. You only need to register if you purchase the DT Trainer or need an extended evaluation period. If you need an extended amount of time to evaluate the product, please call AES at (803) 233-0541 and let us know how much more time you need. After the 30 day period, the product will continue to run except for direct instruction (version 2.0.6.4 or later). You will be able to use unregistered (un-purchased) installations to learn the program or for support or assessment purposes.

When I purchase, will I get another CD?

The “trial” CD is a complete version so you do not need another CD. You will get 1 year of Maintenance and Updates so you will receive access to additional content programs, reinforcers, and features. You should periodically update to the latest release from www.dttrainer.com/updates.html.

Can more than one child use the home version?

The home version does not limit the number of students/children. There are usually one or sometimes two target children, but many parents let their other young children use the DTT. The program can be configured to benefit the siblings and they provide roll models for our target children. The home version license limits use to within the family and is not for situations like a group home.

What do I do after the trial period if I'm not interested?

If the DT Trainer is not currently appropriate for your child or students, please pass the CD on to someone you know who might benefit from using the DTT. The CD will install and run an unlimited number of 30 day trials on different computers.

If the DT Trainer did not meet your current needs, please feel free to provide us with feedback. For example, let us know if you need higher level content (give age or grade range), specific content, other features, and so on.

What is a “Bundle”?

We offer several bundles like the “Standard Institutional Bundle” and the “Standard Home Bundle”. A bundle consists of the software, accompanying printed and electronic materials, a license, upgrades, and support. For more details see the Home and Institutional Pricing pages.

Can I run the Discrete Trial Trainer on a Mac?

Currently the DT Trainer is only available for IBM compatibles. Fortunately, Macs and IBMs are no longer 2 or 3 thousand dollars and a box can be purchased for as little as \$400 – \$500. Businesses are currently buying 3 Gigahertz computers and giving away their old 600+ Megahertz systems (a good computer for our software). If these options are not viable, we recommend looking into VirtualPC, which is a software package that allows you to install the Windows operating system on top of the Mac OS. More information about this software can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/virtualpc/>.

Our revenues will dictate how quickly we will be able to do a Mac version. For now, school districts are generally running IBM compatibles, or are mixed. Some districts are strictly MAC but many are in the process of incorporating both.

To keep our prices low, we develop for the systems that most of the market have. The volume of potential customers with PCs allows us to charge just \$149 for home and \$349 for a school computer.