

The Principles of Motor Learning

In order to make lasting changes, speech therapy will incorporate the Principles of Motor Learning for the best chance at lasting change.

The Principles of Motor Learning [PML] are factors that have been shown to positively impact retention of muscle change. They help transfer what is learned in therapy to everyday life. For motor speech disorders, the goal of speech therapy is for real life communication to improve. Here are examples of the PML that may be incorporated into your speech therapy treatment:

| Principle: | Example of explaining to a client: |
|---------------------------|--|
| Knowledge of Task | “It’s important that you know what the purpose of the task is, and what a correct response is.” |
| Motivation | “We want to practice words and sounds that matter for your communication.” |
| External Attention | “It’s important that you focus your attention on external results - how your practice sounded. ” |
| Distributed Practice | “It’s best to spread out practice to help the results “stick.” So, short practices 5x/week are better than 1 long practice in a week.” |
| Low-Frequency Feedback | “Your SLP will not give feedback every time, because it’s more important that you learn to evaluate yourself.” |
| Large Amounts of Practice | “More practice = your muscles will better “remember” what to do. Speech Therapy sessions should include lots of practice opportunities.” |

*Reference: Bislick, L. P., Weir, P.C., et al. (2012). Do principles of motor learning enhance retention and transfer of speech skills? A systematic review. *Aphasiology*, 26(5), 709-728.*

*Maas, E., et al. (2008). Principles of motor learning in treatment of motor speech disorders. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 17, 277-298.*

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