Practical equipment skills in a competitive learning environment

**Aim:** To improve the amount and level of practical equipment knowledge gained by student Occupational Therapists during their pre-registration education.

Learning how to safely use and effectively prescribe equipment is a vital Occupational Therapy skill. However, like all practical skills, this takes time and repetition, which may not be available during placement. The increasing diversity of practice placements, whilst broadening students experience and leading to diverse practice opportunities, reduces conformity in the experiences that all students will encounter (Glenn and Gilbert, 2012). This can risk limiting the new graduates’ confidence and competence in undertaking some core skills such as raising a bed or providing the appropriate toilet equipment.

**Challenge:** How to replicate practical learning in a classroom environment

Setting up appropriate classroom learning to meet this need can be challenging. Whilst the benefits of experiential learning approaches are widely recognised, these require significant time to set up appropriately and can add to the student’s feelings that theory and practice do not interact, as they can lead students to overlook the theory base and focus solely on the practical skills (Laurillard, 2010).

**Solution:** Goose Chase

GooseChase is a freely available scavenger hunt app for smartphones. It was used to design an interactive workshop using game-based theory (Crocco, Offenholley and Hernandez, 2016) which, once established, can be repeated for subsequent student groups and be used to challenge the students theoretical knowledge, as well as practical skills.

After registering online, the tutor creates “missions” based around the available equipment or specific learning outcomes. Students are challenged to complete a number of missions and to support these with theory to gain maximum points. Missions can take the form of photo, video or text submissions.

Integrating theory with the practical tasks is key to ensuring learning takes place and replicates professional reasoning required in practice. Manufacturers instructions are available for ALL equipment for students to use if they wish.

**Game-based theory allows for the potential of play to support learning. Adult students still enjoy playing with new equipment to learn about its properties and uses.**

Students are free to spend time practicing using the equipment before submitting their final photograph. Tutor support is available as required but the absence of the lecturer in the room appeared to improve students willingness to “have a go” and enables them to develop the required skills in a safe environment, encouraging peer and social learning.

**Game manager reviews all submissions (in real time or after the session) and adds or removes points. In this image, points have been added because students had debated & considered the appropriateness of the equipment available to them. Points were also deducted from this submission for incorrect fitting. This makes feedback more tangible.**

**Errors such as this are easy to miss in real time without standing over students, but can be easily spotted when reviewing submissions and looking for points deductions.**

**The workshop led to extremely high (and competitive) student engagement, thus providing students with ample opportunity to enhance their equipment knowledge. This teaching technique could be applied to any practical task in order to increase student skill & confidence.**

**For evaluation of student learning experience see:**


**Acknowledgments:**

With thanks to the creators of GooseChase and to the team for their permission to use logos and images belonging to www.goosechase.com

All photographs authors own with permission of student participants

References:

