

## **Exercise Description: Block Commander**

Block Commander presents a board with rows of colored shapes. The participant clicks the sound button to hear instructions, such as "Touch the red square and the blue circle." The participant must follow those instructions.

### **Block Commander's Goals**

The goals of Block Commander are to:

- Improve the participant's ability to hold instructions in memory (working memory)
- Improve the participant's understanding of the relationship between words, grammar, and meaning (language structures)
- Increase the speed at which the participant identifies and understands rapid, successive changes in sound (listening accuracy)

### **How Block Commander Accomplishes Its Goals**

Block Commander improves working memory and develops an understanding of language structures by helping the participant learn to hold many components of an instruction in mind while following the instruction. As the participant progresses, Block Commander presents increasingly complex directions that the participant must attend to and understand in order to follow and execute them.

Block Commander accomplishes this goal by presenting a range of instructions, from "Touch the red square" to more complex instructions that require the participant to hold more complex information in memory, such as "Touch the white circle and the blue square," "Touch the small white circle and the large yellow square," and "Put the green square behind the white circle."

Block Commander also helps the participant develop listening accuracy by first presenting highly stretched and emphasized words where the duration of each phoneme has been increased (for example, red is initially presented as rrrreddd) and where the intensity of each rapidly changing sound (such as the /b/ in ba) has been enhanced relative to the vowel sound. As the participant progresses through the exercise, Block Commander decreases the amount of stretch and emphasis, and eventually presents the words in natural speech.

### **How Scores Are Calculated for Block Commander**

The score for Block Commander is based on how far the participant advances through the instructions, which are divided into five levels of cognitive difficulty within each speech level, and on how far the participant progresses through the five speech levels (degrees of modification for listening accuracy). The aggregate score for Block Commander and Language Comprehension Builder determines the language structures score. The aggregate score for Block Commander and Phonic Match determines the working memory score.

### **How Block Commander's Language Structures Goals Relate to Your School's Goals**

Because Block Commander helps participants learn to understand standard sentence structures, it prepares participants to master more advanced skills related to language structures. These advanced skills, which are involved in the curriculum goals for participants, include:

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- Understanding the different meanings conveyed by different sentence structures in order to master pre-reading, early reading, and early writing skills
- Understanding how different grammatical markers (such as plurals) create distinctions in meaning, which enables participants to master early learning of reading and writing

## **How Block Commander's Working Memory Goals Relate to Your School's Goals**

Because Block Commander helps participants learn to hold multiple pieces of information in mind while following an increasingly complex set of instructions, Block Commander prepares participants to master more advanced cognitive skills. These advanced skills, which are components of state curriculum goals, include:

- Understanding word meaning and syntax and building a vocabulary
- Attending to class discussions, stories, and presentations and analyzing text
- Following directions
- Developing reasoning skills