

SAMPLE WRITE-UP FOR CONTEMPORARY BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH PRESENTATION

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Title: The Use of Random Extra Credit Quizzes to Increase Student Attendance

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Hypothesis: It was hypothesized that administering random extra credit quizzes would increase student attendance in an undergraduate psychology course.

IV: Quizzes

DV: Percentage of students in attendance at each class meeting.

Subjects: 32 students in a psychology of learning undergraduate course at a private university. The class met three times per week.

Procedures: A reversal (B-A-B) design was used. During the first phase (B), which was six weeks in length, the extra credit quizzes were in place. A two-week baseline phase (A) followed in which the extra credit quizzes were removed. Finally, the quizzes resumed during the final phase (second B). Students were made aware of the initiation and removal of the quizzes. The reason for the removal of the quizzes was not disclosed to the students. During the experimental phases (B), students were informed that multiple quizzes could be given in the same week. Quizzes were simple two-point quizzes. One point was given simply for being present and putting your name on the quiz. The second point was based on an answer to one question that was easily answered if the student had done the assigned reading. Student attendance was measured by having a teacher assistant count the number of students in attendance at the beginning of each class. For 75% of the classes, a second observer also counted to ensure accuracy. Inter-observer agreement was 98%. At the end of the semester, students completed a course evaluation form that included questions about their impressions of the quizzes, e.g. whether they liked them, whether they felt they helped them keep up with their reading, etc.

Results: The results supported the hypothesis; the quizzes did result in a statistically significant increase in student attendance by 10%. Although it was not the focus of the study, the researchers also compared student attendance to course performance and found a positive correlation.

Critique: I chose this article because it provided a simple explanation of research design to use as a class example. It also provided a simple example of how positive reinforcement (extra credit points) resulted in an increase in a behavior (attendance). Although it does not specifically mirror our classroom policy (i.e. our quizzes are not extra credit), it provides some rationale for our classroom procedures.