TECHNICAL NOTES

DISPENSING LIQUID REINFORCERS¹

With young children and retardates, liquids such as fruit juices and soda pop are potentially powerful reinforcers if they can be delivered contingently and in small amounts. A commercially available squirt bottle has been used successfully to dispense various liquids as reinforcement to retardates (Figure 1).

Fig. 1. A handy apparatus for dispensing liquid reinforcers to people.

The use of a trigger-type squirt bottle such as the one shown makes it possible to give a relatively uniform and small amount of liquid (approximately 1 cc per squirt) by squirting directly into the open mouth of the subject. Aiming the squirt bottle toward a subject is easy to establish as a discriminative stimulus for mouth opening.

The greatest advantage of a squirt bottle over a drinking cup in delivering liquids as reinforcers is one of convenience. A squirt bottle similar to that shown in Figure 1 is available for \$1.09 from Skylark Industries, Division of Goodwin Company, 1806 Marengo, Los Angeles, California 90033. We have also purchased them from automotive supply stores and variety stores.

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¹The opinions and conclusions stated in this paper are those of the authors and are not to be construed as official or as necessarily reflecting the policy of the Department of Mental Hygiene.

DISPENSING LIQUID REINFORCERS²

Liquids such as soft drinks and fruit juices may be powerful reinforcers for young children. This is especially likely if they are used alternately with the customary dry cereals and candies. Dispensing liquid reinforcers can be a nuisance, however, due to the clumsiness of most containers, which make the frequent dispensing of small quantities inconvenient.

The Nalgene wash bottle makes the dispensing of liquids a simple, unencumbered task. This squeezable bottle is made of polypropylene in a single piece

Nalgene wash bottle.

and includes a tapered tip that may be cut back to increase the flow rate. Small quantities of liquid may be dispensed directly into the child's mouth or into a small cup. The bottles are inexpensive, easy to clean, nearly indestructible, and may be refrigerated. They may be obtained from the manufacturer³ in 125, 250, 500, and 1000 ml sizes. We have found the 500 ml size to be the most generally useful.

Teachers in several projects have been using these bottles to dispense liquids to young, emotionally disturbed and retarded children during the past 3 yr. No apparatus failures have occurred during that time.

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³Nalgene Labware Division, 75 Panorama Creek Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14625