My first thought when I saw this assignment posted, was that I would never be able to learn how to juggle. I know, based on our discussions in class, that juggling is a continuous skill, however, the more I start to think about how I would go about learning, the more I begin to realize that it might not be as hard as initially expected. This feeling of confidence spurred my desire to grab three softballs and being to learn how to juggle. This is my experience from start to finish on how I taught myself how to juggle.

The first thing I did was to think about my experience with juggling and try to visualize what I saw the last time I observed a juggling sequence. This I relate to our class as being the accessing of background knowledge. Following this, I made the transition into gathering three softballs and attempted the skill based on my prior knowledge. After a few minutes of practicing the skill using a whole practice approach, I realized that I did not fully have a true understanding of what the skill was supposed to look like. This realization drove me to go on YouTube to look up instructional videos that demonstrated the skill (observational learning conducted). This entire process reflects the first stage (cognitive stage) of Fitts’ stages of learning. I had to figure out what to be aware of in the environment and generate an appropriate movement attempts/concepts cognitively prior to actually getting more practice attempts completed. After doing this, I realized that the best way to go about actually learning the skill would be to break the whole skill down into parts and practice them progressively. By this I mean that I would practice the initial toss, the catch, the cyclical motion of the arms, and the timing of each throw. After proficiency of each part was attained, I introduced the next part of the skill and built on each part until I was practicing the entire skill as a whole. In doing this I created specific goal markers that I would work toward as focusing on the entire skill at once proved to be just too confusing for me. This took me quite some time, as I did all my practice attempts in a massed practice style that saw an increase in the amount of trials that I was able to complete but also increased my fatigue levels considerably at the same time. I preferred using a hybrid schedule practice method of organization for the practice sessions that I had. By this I mean that I spent a significant amount of time on each part of the skill but did not only practice one part for an entire practice session. My initial thought behind why I practiced as much as I did was because of the idea that is expressed in our textbook that says “learning results from practice or experience” and that what is learned depends largely on what you practice (specificity of practice). Mental practice was also another thing that I incorporated during this learning process and although it did not necessarily lead to an increase in learning, it tremendously helped me to think through my errors after each trial and, if nothing else, gave me an opportunity to identify sources of error.

After getting to a point where I was performing the skill at a consistently decent level without getting any better with practice, I realized that the *law of practice* that we discussed in class as being a rapid improvement of skills early on in the practice process and a slow rate of improvement later in the practice process. Some of the modifications I made in the learning process was to adjust the number of balls that I was practicing with at a time. I found it difficult to practice with three balls from the start, so I started learning how to master one ball toss and catch and moved into progressively increasing the number of balls that I used. The hardest part of the juggling process was figuring out the order of tosses and incorporating the catching at the same time. This problem I realized occurred because of my limited attentional capacity and the level of interference that occurs when I have to catch and throw at the same time. The way I managed this was by simply focusing on the skill’s external parts and reacting to the environment as opposed to focusing on what I could be doing better in the moment (i.e. I switched my focus from being internal to being external) to improve the performance of the skill. That is how I learned to juggle.

In the event that I was asked to create a training plan for a person that already has an idea of what juggling is, this would be my response. The first step is to attempt the skill. After seeing their level of performance, I will be better able to individualize the training program. Without that baseline, however, I believe the best thing to do is to do is to create a hybrid schedule of practice where progressive part practice could be capitalized upon. The practice time would also be distributed so as to allow for rest periods, where the individual would have mental practice time where he/she would be able to reflect on their progress and determine where in the juggling sequence they needed improvement. Early on in the process of learning I would use larger balls (such as softballs) as it makes the process much easier as it has more weight to it and is larger than other items typically used for juggling (such as tennis balls). Due to my recent experience, I would plan for the individual to start with less manipulatives and increase the number of items as skill mastery was approached. I would set specific goals for them to aim at achieving and ensure that those goals are realistic for them to achieve. These “goals” that I would be setting would be based on the steps that I took to learn in my experience as described earlier. These steps/goals would be the parts that I broke up the whole skill into (the toss, catch, motion, and timing) when I did my part practice. One example of a goal would simply be to work on tossing the first of the two balls being held by the dominant hand to begin with and, as soon as that ball reaches its peak, to throw the second ball in the dominant hand while tracking the now falling first ball and complete the catch. In direct relation to my practice method, I would have the individual progress when appropriate levels of acquisition were reached.

One of the things I would also plan for, is to include a slight juggling warm up to the practice session routine, as I realized in my own time practicing that the warm-up decrement can be a truly unmotivating factor when learning how to juggle. In the event that the individual is having trouble with the juggling process, I would include mini-activities (such as partner toss and catch) to the training to give them a skill that is somewhat similar to that of juggling in the attempt to encourage skill transfer. Those are all some of the methods that I would use to teach a person to juggle.