

**Diagnostic Center, Southern California
California Department of Education**

PROMPTING

by

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Individuals with significant disabilities frequently require additional prompting to engage in desired behaviors as part of their instructional program. Assessment to determine the least intrusive prompt for an activity can be essential to avoid overuse of prompts which interferes with development of independence. "Prompt dependence" occurs when either excessively intrusive prompts or a high frequency of prompts predominates. An analysis of an individual's need for prompts in various activities is an important component of the assessment process for many individuals with moderate to severe disabilities. This analysis helps teaching staff understand how to better achieve partial participation. Students with disabilities may need more or less prompting across activities, times of day or days during the week. On-going monitoring and record keeping is essential. This record keeping can be helpful in identifying trends such as progress which has been made, or identifying a need for instructional changes.

Prompting Hierarchy

A. Definition:

A range of instruction stimuli provided in order to direct an individual toward the performance of a desired response.

B. Levels:

Prompts range from the least to the most intrusive. The amount of assistance increases with each level in the hierarchy.

1. *Natural Cue:*

Behavior independently occurs as a result of a natural cue to a stimulus in the environment. The individual performs the behavior without any assistance.

Example: John stands up to sing when he sees his friends stand up.

2. *Gestural Prompt:*

Physical gestures that may include pointing, beckoning, or shaking one's head to indicate approval or disapproval.

Example: Mrs. Brown points to the yellow square to signal time for yellow reading group.

Mr. Jones holds up two fingers to signal "quiet now."

3. *Indirect Verbal Prompt:*
The instructor uses words to imply that some behavior needs to occur.

Example: Mrs. Brown says, "Children, what time is it?" Students understand it is time to quiet down and open their books.
4. *Modeling:*
Performing the desired behavior in order to encourage the initiation of that behavior by the individual.

Example: Mrs. Brown sits up tall in her seat with her hands folded on top of the desk as students come to a reading group. She waits until they copy her behavior.
5. *Symbolic (Pictorial or Written) Prompt:*
Symbols (pictures or words) are presented to guide behavior. Often a sequence of pictures or a lists of words are used, combined with the gestural prompt of pointing to the symbol of the desired behavior for that moment in time.

Example: Michael has 4 pictures of how to make a pizza which he uses in sequence to prepare a snack. When he appears confused, his teacher gesturally redirects him to the correct picture.
6. *Direct Verbal Prompt:*
The instructor explicitly state, the behavior that needs to occur.

Example: "Boys and girls, please stand up now."
7. *Minimal Physical Prompt:*
Slight physical contact that guides the individual toward the behavior.

Example: When Phil does not open the door when verbally told to do so, Mrs. Jones lightly touches his elbow. *Note, depending on the situation, a minimal physical prompt may be less intrusive and facilitate more independence than a direct verbal prompt.
8. *Partial Physical Prompt:*
The instructor physically starts the individual on the desired behavior, and then ceases the physical assistance so the individual may complete the behavior independently.

Example: When Phil does not open the door after being lightly touched on his elbow, Mr. Wright gently nudges his arm upward until the knob is touched and then he releases contact.
9. *Full Physical Prompt:*
The instructor physically guides the individual through the entire behavior.

Example: John's mother physically positions his finger on the tape player eject button, provides a downward push motion, then moves his hand to grasp the tape.

EXAMPLES OF TASK ANALYSIS WITH PROMPTING RECORDING

Task analysis can be essential in identifying which steps an individual can perform independently and which steps will require some degree of cueing or prompting. The following examples are given to illustrate the process. Many task analysis sequences have been published that are useful in teaching individuals with significant disabilities.

Pedestrian Skills

Observation Dates

ACTIVITY 1 - Walking			
1. Puts one foot in front of the other			
2. Hands down at sides, swinging with walking rhythm (or hands in pocket)			
3. Walks at moderate pace			
ACTIVITY 2 - Safety Execution I (Non-signal Intersections)			
1. Proceeds slowly/cautiously to edge of corner			
2. Stops at corner			
3. Looks for crosswalk			
4. Looks all directions for moving vehicles			
5. Waits for vehicles to pass before crossing			
6. Steps down from curb			
7. Walks within the crosswalk or on correct side of limit line			
8. Walks briskly across street to the other side			
9. Steps up onto curb			

Tape Player Use

OPERATING A TAPE PLAYER			
1. Select a tape			
2. Push eject button			
3. Insert tape			
4. Close door on tape player			
5. Push play button			
6. Adjust volume			
7. Listen			
8. Push stop button			
9. Push eject button			
10. Remove tape			

Individuals with significant disabilities can often "partially participate". They may perform some steps with total independence, while other steps may require either minimal or maximal prompting. A few steps may be so difficult for the individual that he or she may require another person to perform that step.

Key:

Natural Cue.....N	Direct Verbal Prompt DV
Gestural Prompt.....G	Minimal Physical Prompt MP
Indirect Verbal Prompt IV	Partial Physical Prompt PP
Modeling.....M	Full Physical Prompt FP
Symbolic (Pictorial or Written) Prompt S	

STUDENT REPERTOIRE OF BEHAVIORS WITHIN A TASK

After a task analysis of a behavior important in school such as "operating a tape player" or "going to lunch," the assessment team may want to analyze the student's repertoire of behaviors to determine when he or she will need assistance and/or teaching and when independence can be achieved. Prompt dependency occurs when we over-assist students. Partial participation (i.e., allowing performance of steps the student can do) increases the student's independence, self-esteem and motivation to attempt difficult tasks.

Name: Daniel (Daniel has severe cognitive disabilities)

Activity Goal: Operate a Tape Player Independently

Materials: Tape Player, Tape

Skills (Step within the whole task)	Student Inventory (Can he/she perform the skills? Under what conditions?) + = total independence - = needs assistance	Discrepancy Analysis (What is the source of the problem)	Cues and Prompts (What might work to elicit the behavior?) Level of prompt needed.	Instructional Strategies (Plan to achieve partial or full success.)	Adaptations/ Accommodations
Push Eject Button	Never Observed -	Inability To Locate Eject Button	Try verbal prompt to "look", minimal physical to feel if necessary	Guide Daniel Through Activity With Minimal Prompts	Add sand paper sticker on eject button and red sticker
Insert Tape	Can do if tape put in his hand and hand guided to slot -	Inability to scan Does not search for tape recorder opening	Physical prompting to insert tape, may be ready for minimal physical prompt (elbow touching)	Hand tape to Dan and wait, use minimal physical prompt if needed Pat on back and say "nice working"	None
Push Door Closed	+	None	None Needed, Can do	None Needed	None
Etc. 9					

Name: Susan (Susan has autism and difficulty sequencing behaviors)

Activity Goal: Going to Lunch

Materials: **Social Story Book** (for methodology of social story development see: "Social Stories: Improving Responses of Students with Autism with Accurate Social Information" Gray and J. Garand, April 1993, Focus on Autistic Behavior, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 1-10, Copyright by PRO-ED, Inc.

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Get Lunch Box	+	None	None	None	None
Get in Line	Never observed independently -	Currently will not tolerate physical proximity unless teacher present	Symbolic Prompt: Use "Social Story of Going to Lunch Steps"	Teacher reviews story during and after line up; Pat on back and say "nice going"	Use pictures and story sequence of getting in line
Wait Independently	She never, runs away -	Needs teacher present	Use social story, symbolic prompt	Peers review <u>waiting</u> section of social story	Picture story sequence
Walk to Cafeteria in Line	+	None	None	None	None
Select Seat	-	Inability to select without adult guidance	Try social story, a symbolic prompt and peer assistance	Peer review of story during initial teaching phase	Picture story sequence
Sit Down	+	None	None	None	None

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