



## COMPANION GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Use the Companion Guide for Families to assist with using time delay in your home.

The AFIRM for Paras modules were developed for paraprofessionals at elementary schools. But, the practices from the modules may also be helpful for families to use at home. The practices can be used with children of all ages. This companion guide describes the steps for using time delay and provides some ideas of how you might try it at home.

## WHAT IS TIME DELAY?



Time delay is an evidence-based practice that starts with a higher level of support (prompts) to help a child to learn or do a certain skill, and then reduces the prompts. Time delay uses prompting, so it would be helpful to review the **Prompting** module and the **Home Companion Guide for Prompting** first. Time delay can be especially helpful for reducing the number of prompts and supports your child needs to complete a task.

**Target cue** - Words and/or actions that let your child know to start the task/behavior.

**Controlling prompt** - Words and/or actions that will make sure that your child successfully does the skill/behavior as they are learning a new skill. It can be a gestural, verbal, visual, model, or physical prompt (see definitions below and/or the Prompting module for more detailed information).

**Zero-second delay** - Using the controlling prompt right after giving the target cue. The 0-second delay is used when the child is first practicing the skill.

**Constant time delay** - Using the same amount of wait time between giving the target cue and using the controlling prompt (usually 3-5 seconds). The constant time delay can be used after the child is regularly successful with the 0-second delay.



**Progressive time delay** - Using gradually longer amounts of wait time between giving the target cue and providing the controlling prompt. The progressive time delay can be used after the child is regularly successful with the 0-second delay. You can increase the time when the child is regularly successful at the previous delay time.

**Types of prompts** (Note: The list below is alphabetical. See the **Prompting** module for more information.)

- *Gestural prompt* – A movement that provides the child with information about how to perform the target skill/behavior (for example, pointing to the top of the paper to remind the child to write their name).
- *Model prompt* – Showing the child the correct way to perform a skill/behavior (for example, demonstrating how to put toys away in the basket to show the child how to pick up toys).
- *Physical prompt* – Hands-on assistance given to a child to successfully perform a skill or behavior.
- *Verbal prompt* – Any words said to the child to help them perform a skill correctly.
- *Visual prompt* – A picture, icon, or object used to give the child information about how to perform a skill or behavior.



## What are the steps for using time delay?

### 1. Identify the behavior or task

Choose the behavior that you will focus on while using time delay with your child. Think about what you want the child to do, how you would like them to demonstrate the behavior, and when this behavior or task would be performed.

WHAT	HOW	WHEN
Completing chores	Doing steps of a chore from a list (washing dishes, putting toys away, making bed, laundry)	At least 1 time per day
Entering and exiting the car	Buckling and unbuckling the seatbelt	Every car ride
Greeting others	Waving and or saying hello/goodbye	When family members leave/return home
Getting dressed	Put on coat	Before going outside
Eating with a fork or spoon	Sitting at the table during	At mealtime



Complete homework activity	meals Identify colors, recall math facts, spelling words, etc.	Each afternoon/evening
<i>TIP:</i> Start by selecting a one-step behavior or skill that you can quickly help your child complete successfully.		
<b>2. Determine the target cue and controlling prompt</b>		
Choose the words, pictures, or actions that you will use to let your child know it is time to use the task (target cue) and the words and/or actions to make sure your child will be successful with completing the task (controlling prompt).		
<i>EXAMPLE:</i> If you are helping your child learn to say goodbye to a family member, your target cue could be saying, “Wave bye” and your controlling prompt could be taking the child’s hand and waving it at the family member.		
<i>TIP:</i> Use the same target cue for each attempt so that your child knows exactly what is expected.		
<i>TIP:</i> For the controlling prompt, try to use the prompt with the least amount of support that still makes sure that your child will be successful with the task or behavior every time.		
<b>3. Decide which time delay procedure and wait time to use</b>		
Choose if you will use constant time delay (same amount of wait time) or progressive time delay (gradually increasing wait time). Decide how much time to wait for your child to respond before repeating the target cue and giving the controlling prompt.		
<i>TIP:</i> Everyone processes information at a different rate. The amount of time needed can be different depending on the task. Think about how long it generally takes your child to respond to a request or direction.		
<i>TIP:</i> If you are using time delay for the first time, it might be easiest to start with a constant time delay.		
<b>4. Choose the rewards (reinforcers)</b>		
Choose rewards that will be motivating to your child. These can be a variety of things such as a specific item, time to do a preferred activity, or special praise from you and/or other members of your household.		
<i>TIP:</i> See the <b>Home Companion Guide for Reinforcement</b> for more information about reinforcement.		



**Social**

Tickles

Hugs

Praise (“Good job finishing homework”, “I love how you helped our sister clear the table”)

High-fives

Clapping

Cheering

Tight squeezes

**Activities/Items**

Pokémon cards

Stickers

Legos (one piece at a time)

Blow bubbles

Quick spin on a chair/stool

Preferred snack

Tokens for token reinforcer

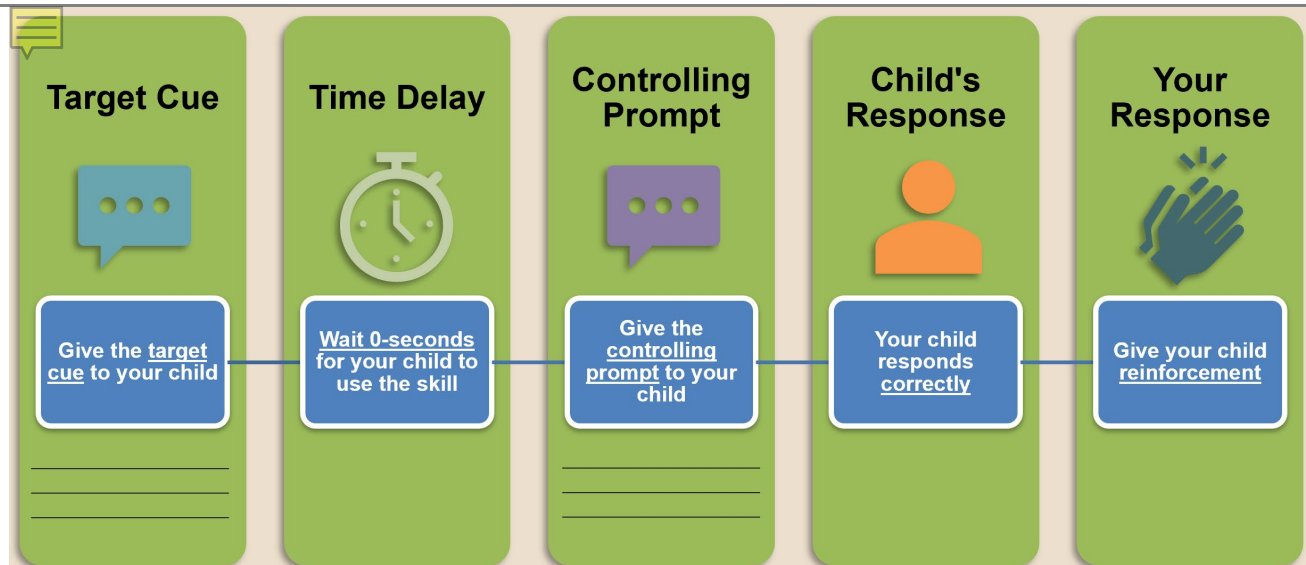
*TIP:* For rewards that are activities/items, try to avoid using rewards that your child can use at any time.

*TIP:* A social reward (like high fives or praise) or a quick/small reward (like a sticker) may work best when using time delay because you will often have the child work on a set of short skills in a row. If bigger rewards work better, consider using a token reinforcement system to work towards earning a big reward.

5. Use 0-second delay

Give your child the target cue and then give the controlling prompt right after. Use the 0-second delay until your child is able to respond correctly at least two times in a row.

EXAMPLE: If you are helping your child learn to say goodbye to a family member, you give the target cue (Say “Wave bye”) and then immediately give the controlling prompt (Take your child’s hand and wave goodbye).

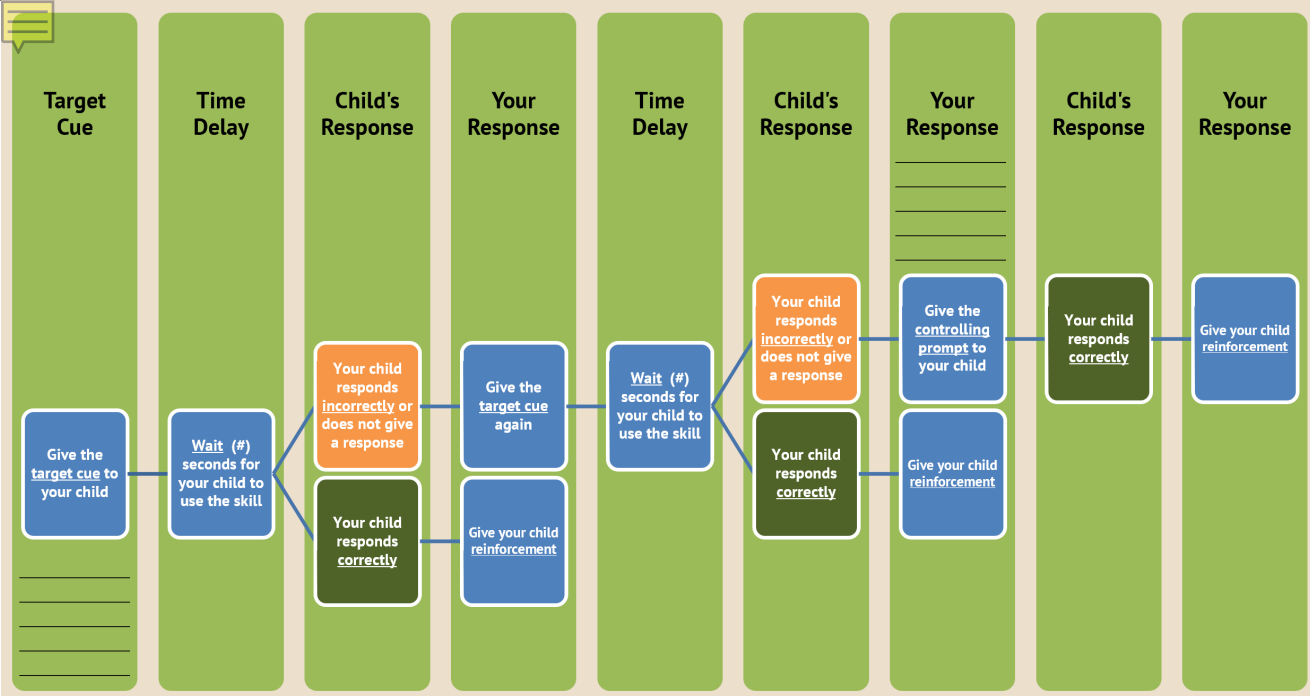




*TIP:* If your child responds incorrectly when given the controlling prompt, you should change the controlling prompt to one that gives more assistance.

6. Use constant or progressive time delay (when your child is ready)

Use the wait time you determined would work best before you give the controlling prompt.



*TIP:* It is best to use constant or progressive time delay after your child has been successful two times in a row when you used a 0-second delay.

*TIP:* After giving a prompt, try counting the number of seconds in your head or tap your fingers while you quietly count to remember to give enough wait time.

*TIP:* If you are using progressive time delay, you may start with 1 or 2 seconds and keep increasing the wait time 1- or 2-seconds at a time up to total of 10 seconds.

7. Give reinforcement (rewards) each time your child shows the desired behavior

Each time your child uses the behavior or skill, remember to give the reward even if the controlling prompt was needed.

*TIP:* Be consistent – if your child sees that you are not following through with the reward, then they may not be motivated do what is expected.



## What are the key points to remember when using time delay?

### 1. Start small

Choose one task, activity, or behavior to focus on when starting with time delay. Wait until your child has shown success with that behavior before using time delay with other activities or tasks.

### 2. Be patient

Remember learning a skill or changing a behavior takes time. Once you start using time delay, it may take time to see the changes. Keep trying and stay consistent and you should see your child use the expected behavior more often.

### 3. Use the 0-second delay until your child can perform the task with the controlling prompt

Once your child can do the task or behavior two times in a row with the 0-second delay, you can move onto using constant or progressive time delay. For example, if your child is learning a certain daily chore, it would mean the child successfully completes all of the steps with the 0-second delay two days in a row. If you are working on a school task, like sorting, it would mean the child successfully sorts all of the pieces with the 0-second delay two sessions in a row.

### 4. Give enough time to respond during attempts when you are using the time delay

Everyone needs a moment to process a request or direction, and children with autism can have slower processing times. Choose a wait time that will help your child be successful not just based on the amount of time you want them to respond. A general starting wait time is at least 3-5 seconds before giving the next prompt. However, some children may need more time (10 seconds or longer).

### 5. Remember to give reinforcement

A reward may help your child be even more motivated to perform the task. It does not need to be a big reward – sometimes social praise is a big motivator.



## What are common challenges when using time delay?

Below are examples of what you can do if time delay is not working exactly the way you expected.

***Your child will not perform the task after the controlling prompt is given even when there is no delay for the controlling prompt (0-second delay).***

a) Try to determine the cause. Some possibilities are:

Cause	Suggestion
Child does not understand that they need to perform the task	When starting a task with time delay, remind your child that they are to do or say what you did after you show them.
The task is too difficult	Break into smaller steps and focus on one step at a time.
Child is not motivated	Change reward and/or give a choice of rewards. Remember to give the reward each time your child does the task.
The controlling prompt does not provide the level of support needed	Change your controlling prompt to provide the level of support your child needs to perform the task successfully (e.g. full physical such as hand over hand or a model prompt).

***Your child will not perform the task until after the controlling prompt is given when you are using the time delay (not the 0-second delay)***

a) When a child knows how to do a task but will only do it when prompted, they may be developing prompt dependency. To reduce prompt dependency, try:

- increasing response wait time – sometimes a little more time to process the directions can help a child start working on the task
- increasing reinforcement for positive behaviors – when your child does what is expected, give some type of motivating reward

b) Another possibility is that moving from the controlling prompt to independently performing the skill is too hard for your child. Least-to-most prompting may work better with helping your child learn this skill. See the **Prompting** module and the **Home Companion Guide for Prompting** for more information.