AFIRM
for Paraeducators

PPIP

Resource Packet:
Prompting: Introduction & Practice

UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules for Paraeducators
Sam, A., Savage, M., Steinbrenner, J., Chin, J., Morgan, W., & AFIRM for Paras Team, Updated 2024

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Overview of Content

What is Prompting: A quick summary of salient features of Prompting, including what it is, who it can be used with, what skills it has been used with, and settings for instruction. **3**

Instructional Domains & Target Skills: Use these examples of target skills for a specific instructional domain to develop target goals that Prompting can be used for with a learner. **4**

Planning Guide & Examples: This guide details the steps for planning for Prompting, including what prerequisite learning of practices are needed, collecting baseline data of the interfering behavior if needed, and what materials/resources are needed. **6**

Other Resources: Other resources may include decision trees, checklists, and/or template forms that will support the use of Prompting. **15**

Step-by-Step Guide: Use this guide as an outline for how to plan for, use, and monitor Prompting. Each step includes a brief description as a helpful reminder while learning the process. **18**

Implementation Checklists: Use these checklists to determine if Prompting is being implemented as intended. **21**

Companion Guide for Families: The AFIRM for Paras modules were developed for paraeducators at elementary schools. However, Prompting can be helpful for families to use at home and can be used with a variety of ages. This companion guide is designed to offer a brief description of steps for Prompting and provides some ideas of how families might use it in their home. **23**

Glossary: This glossary contains key terms that apply specifically to Prompting. **32**

PROMPTING: INTRODUCTION & PRACTICE

WHAT IS PROMPTING?

Prompting is a foundational practice that is used with other evidence-based practices (such as, Time Delay and Reinforcement) and as part of the protocols for evidence-based practices (such as Discrete Trial Training, Naturalistic Interventions, and Video Modeling). Prompting includes any help given to a learner that assists the learner in using a specific skill or behavior. Sometimes referred to as an errorless learning method, prompting reduces incorrect responding as learners acquire new skills. Prompts can be verbal, gestural, physical, visual, or a model.

Prompting can be used to address many different skills and target behaviors for elementary students. Research supports the use of prompting for target skills and behaviors in the following domains: social, communication, joint attention, behavior, school readiness, play, motor, adaptive, and academic.

Prompting hierarchy is the order and types of prompts to give a learner to assist with performing the target skill or behavior. The hierarchy can be different depending on the needs of the student and the type of goal. Refer to the Prompt Hierarchy Examples document for examples of prompt hierarchies by target skill/behavior.

Least-to-most prompting is a prompt hierarchy with at least three levels used to teach new skills. At the first level, the learner is given the opportunity to respond without prompts. The remaining levels include prompts that proceed from least to most amounts of assistance. The last level is the controlling prompt.

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Target Skill Examples

Prompting can be used to address many different skills and target behaviors for elementary students. Research supports the use of Prompting for target skills and behaviors in the following domains: social, communication, joint attention, behavior, school readiness, play, cognitive, motor, adaptive, and academic. Below are examples of possible target skills or behaviors that can be used for Prompting.

Academic

- Accurately answering reading comprehension questions
- Counting objects or up to 10/20/100
- Increasing sight words
- Memorizing math facts
- Use a visual reminder to check off the steps of the editing process during English Language Arts
- Writing several sentences about a topic
- Writing an essay on a given topic
- Mastering spelling words
- Matching/sorting objects
- Accurately answering reading comprehension questions
- Memorizing math facts

Behavior

- Follow calm down routine
- Keep hands to self
- Follow teacher directions
- Follow teacher request
- Use coping strategies (count backwards from 10, breathe deeply 3 times)
- Use coping strategies for self regulation
- Redirecting and/or replacing repetitive behaviors that impact their performance in the classroom

Adaptive

- Washing hands
- Using the bathroom (toileting)
- Opening items at snack/lunch (e.g., milk carton, lunch box, chip bag, etc.)
- Putting on jacket
- Putting on or tying shoes

Cognitive

No research for this domain yet.

Communication

- Ask for help when help is needed
- Request a preferred item
- Ask peers questions during group work
- Verbally requesting wants/needs
- Utilize communication device
- Express feelings or emotions verbally

Play

- Initiating play with peers
- Engaging in cooperative play with peers
- Participating in games

Joint attention

- Use a 3-point gaze (1. Look at object, 2. Look at communication partner, and 3. Look back at object) for joint attention
- Look at an object when it is shown to the learner

School-readiness

- Walk in line in the hallway
- Write name on paper
- Initiate work on assignments
- Participate in circle time or large group instruction activities
- Organize notes or homework
- Fill out homework planner/agenda

Motor

- Use scissors
- Complete an obstacle course
- Safely navigating stairs
- Use legible handwriting

Social

- Take turns when playing a game
- Initiate/Continue conversation with a peer
- Initiate/Respond to adult/peer greetings
- Comment on topic
- Give compliments
- Ask a peer a question
- Participate in group work

Planning Guide

General Planning:

WHO:

WHEN:
DATE:
TIME:

WHERE:

WHAT (TARGET SKILL):

HOW TO USE:

Target Cue or Task Directive:

Types of Prompts:

Check off the types of prompts to use. Consider both task and student characteristics as well as the time available to work on the task.

❑ Gestural		
❑ Verbal	☐ Less restrictive	☐ More restrictive
❑ Visual		
❑ Model	☐ Partial model	☐ Full model
❑ Physical	☐ Partial physical	☐ Full physical

Choose Order of Prompts:

Sequence prompts from least-to-most assistance.	Describe how the prompt will be used.
Level 1: Independent	
Level 2:	
Level 3:	
Level 4:	

Response Interval

Determine the response interval to give between directives and prompting levels. Consider both student and task characteristics.

Reinforcers to Use with Student:

Select reinforcers that will increase the student's use of the target skill or behavior in the future.

How to Measure:

Use the area below for data collection or use a provided form in AFIRM Resources.

Planning Guide: Dante

General Planning:

WHO:
Dante

WHEN:
DATE: 3/2/19
TIME: 11:30AM

WHERE:
General education classroom

WHAT (TARGET SKILL):
Take turns playing a game with peers

HOW TO USE:
Least-to-most prompting

Target Cue or Task Directive:

"Dante, time to play with friends."
The cue is "Your turn."

Types of Prompts:

Check off the types of prompts to use. Consider both task and student characteristics as well as the time available to work on the task.

☑ Gestural		
☐ Verbal	☐ Less restrictive	☐ More restrictive
☑ Visual		
☐ Model	☐ Partial model	☐ Full model
☑ Physical	☐ Partial physical	☑ Full physical

Choose Order of Prompts:

Sequence prompts from least-to-most assistance.	Describe how the prompt will be used.
Level 1: Independent	Dante takes a turn with no additional prompt
Level 2: Gestural	Point to the "Your turn" visual on the table
Level 3: Visual + verbal	Show Dante a picture of the "Your turn" card and provide a verbal prompt by repeating the task directive, "Dante, take a turn playing."
Level 4: Full physical	Provide hand-over-hand assistance for Dante to take his turn playing the game.

Response Interval

Determine the response interval to give between directives and prompting levels. Consider both student and task characteristics.

5 seconds

Reinforcers to Use with Student:

- Lego pieces
- Bubbles
- Stickers

How to Measure:

Use the area below for data collection or use a provided form in AFIRM Resources.

Date	Level 1: Independent	Level 2: Gestural	Level 3: Visual + Verbal	Level 4: Full Physical
3/2				✓
3/3				✓
3/4			✓	
3/5			✓	
3/6		✓		

Planning Guide: Darius

General Planning:

WHO:
Dante

WHEN:
DATE: 12/3/19
TIME: 8:30AM

WHERE:
Morning meeting

WHAT (TARGET SKILL):
Using PECS

HOW TO USE:
Least-to-most prompting

Target Cue or Task Directive:

Darius will use PECS to answer questions in morning meeting and request his free time activity for the end of the day.

Types of Prompts:

Check off the types of prompts to use. Consider both task and student characteristics as well as the time available to work on the task.

☐ Gestural		
☐ Verbal	☐ Less restrictive	☐ More restrictive
☐ Visual		
☑ Model	☐ Partial model	☑ Full model
☑ Physical	☑ Partial physical	☑ Full physical

Choose Order of Prompts:

Sequence prompts from L2M assistance.	Describe how the prompt will be used.
Level 1: Independent	Darius will initiate use of PECS in response to questions with no assistance
Level 2: Full model	Para/TA will remove a PECS card and place it on the Velcro strip
Level 3: Partial physical	Para/TA will assist Darius in removing PECS card; Para/TA will guide Darius's elbow toward the PECS card
Level 4: Full physical	Para/TA will assist Darius in removing PECS card, placing on Velcro strip and handing strip to communication partner with hand-over-hand assistance

Response Interval

Determine the response interval to give between directives and prompting levels. Consider both student and task characteristics.

5 seconds

Reinforcers to Use with Student:

- Fist bumps
- Pats on the back
- Thumbs up
- High-fives

How to Measure:

Use the area below for data collection or use a provided form in AFIRM Resources.

Date/Trial	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12/3	3	3	3	3	2	-	-
12/4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
12/5	3	4	3	4	3	3	3
12/6	3	2	2	2	2	-	-
12/7	2	2	3	3	2	2	2

Key: 1: Independent; 2: Full model; 3: Partial physical; 4: Full physical

Planning Guide: Ellis

General Planning:

WHO:
Ellis

WHEN:
DATE: 10/19/19
TIME: 12:00PM

WHERE:
Cafeteria

WHAT (TARGET SKILL):
Choose from the lunch menu each day

HOW TO USE:
Least-to-most prompting

Target Cue or Task Directive:

"Ellis, what do you want for lunch?"

Types of Prompts:

Check off the types of prompts to use. Consider both task and student characteristics as well as the time available to work on the task.

❑ Gestural		
☑ Verbal	☑ Less restrictive	☑ More restrictive
☑ Visual		
❑ Model	☐ Partial model	☐ Full model
❑ Physical	☐ Partial physical	☐ Full physical

Choose Order of Prompts:

Sequence prompts from L2M assistance.	Describe how the prompt will be used.
Level 1: Independent	Ellis will independently make a choice from the lunch menu
Level 2: Visual	Show Ellis a visual prompt with menu choices
Level 3: Less Verbal	Ask Ellis, “What do you want for lunch today?”
Level 4: More Verbal	Tell Ellis, “Ellis, order your lunch.”

Response Interval

Determine the response interval to give between directives and prompting levels. Consider both student and task characteristics.

10 seconds

Reinforcers to Use with Student:

- Social praise
- Thumbs up

How to Measure:

Use the area below for data collection or use a provided form in AFIRM Resources.

Date	Level 1: Independent	Level 2: Visual	Level 3: Less Verbal	Level 4: More Verbal
10/30	0	0	0	0
10/31	0	0	✓	-
11/1	0	✓	-	-
11/2	0	✓	-	-
11/3	0	✓	-	-

Classroom Planning Guide

WHO	WHEN	WHERE	WHAT	HOW TO USE		
				❑ Gestural ❑ Verbal ❑ Visual ❑ Model ❑ Physical	❑Less ❑Partial ❑Partial	❑More ❑Full ❑Full

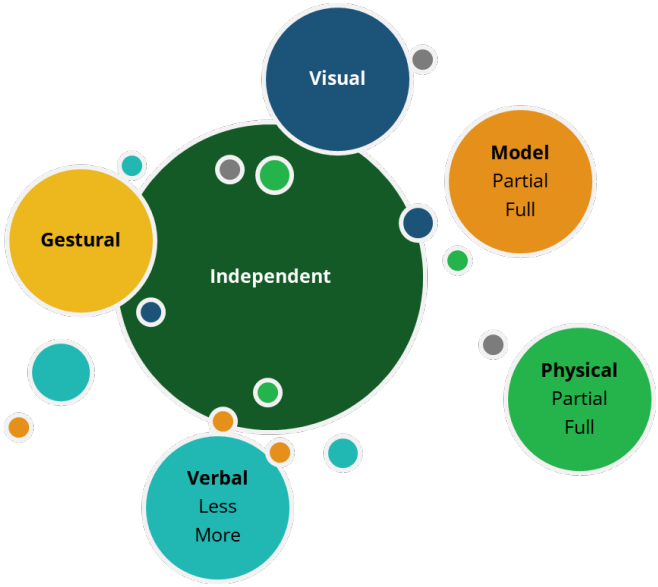
PROMPT LEVELS & SHORT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE INTERVAL	REINFORCERS	NOTES
❑ Level 1: Independent_____ ❑ Level 2: _____ ❑ Level 3: _____ ❑ Level 4: _____ ❑ Level 5: _____			

WHO	WHEN	WHERE	WHAT	HOW TO USE		
				❑ Gestural ❑ Verbal ❑ Visual ❑ Model ❑ Physical	❑Less ❑Partial ❑Partial	❑More ❑Full ❑Full

PROMPT LEVELS & SHORT DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE INTERVAL	REINFORCERS	NOTES
❑ Level 1: Independent_____ ❑ Level 2: _____ ❑ Level 3: _____ ❑ Level 4: _____ ❑ Level 5: _____			

Prompting Hierarchy Examples

Prompting can be used to address many different skills and target behaviors for elementary students. Research supports the use of prompting for target skills and behaviors in the following domains: social, communication, joint attention, behavior, school readiness, play, motor, adaptive, and academic. To reduce dependency, prompting should be used from least-to-most. However, the order of prompting levels, or what is the least-to-most hierarchy, is not always the same due to differences in student needs and/or the type of target skill/behavior. See the target skills/behaviors below for examples of how prompting levels can vary depending on student needs and/or the target skill/behavior.



Target Skill/Behavior:	Sight word identification
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue, "What word?" provide response time with no additional prompt
Level 2: Gestural	Point to the word on flash card
Level 3: Less Verbal	Tell the learner the first sound of word on flashcard
Level 4: More Verbal	Tell the learner the sight word on flashcard

Target Skill/Behavior:	Zipping up coat
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue "Zip jacket," provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Partial Physical	Place the learner's hands on the zipper
Level 3: Full Physical	Provide the learner hand-over-hand assistance to zip jacket

Target Skill/Behavior:	Raising hand to ask for help
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (asking the class a question), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Visual	Show the learner a picture of a person raising their hand
Level 3: Gestural	Point to the picture of a person raising their hand
Level 4: Partial Physical	Tap the learner's elbow to prompt to raising their hand

Target Skill/Behavior:	Asking for help (Learner using an 'I need help.' card to communicate)
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (giving student a task or assignment where help is needed), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Gestural	Point to the "I need help." card
Level 3: Verbal	Ask the learner, "Do you need help?"

Target Skill/Behavior:	Sitting on carpet during group time
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (telling class it is time for morning meeting), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Gestural	Point to the learner's designated space on carpet
Level 3: Visual	Show the learner a picture of a person sitting
Level 4: Verbal	Tell the learner to "Sit down, please."
Level 5: Partial Physical	Take the learner's hand to guide them to designated space

Target Skill/Behavior:	Responding to a greeting
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (adult or peer greats learner), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Visual	Show learner a card that says, "Good morning."
Level 3: Less Verbal	Ask learner, "What do you say?"
Level 4: More Verbal	Tell learner to say, "Good morning."

Target Skill/Behavior:	Taking turns
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue, provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Visual	Show the learner a card that says, "Your turn."
Level 3: Gestural	Point to the card that says, "Your turn."
Level 4: Verbal	Tell the learner, "It's your turn to go."
Level 5: Full Physical	Take the learner's hand to guide them in playing the game

Target Skill/Behavior:	Drawing a circle
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (tell student time to draw a circle), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Visual	Show the learner a picture of a circle
Level 3: Partial Model	Show learner how to draw half of a circle
Level 4: Full Model	Show learner how to draw a full circle
Level 5: Full Physical	Provide the learner hand-over-hand assistance to draw a circle

Step-by-Step Guide

This step-by-step practice guide outlines how to plan for, use, and monitor Prompting.

Prompting can be used to address many different skills and target behaviors for elementary students. Research supports the use of prompting for target skills and behaviors in the following domains: social, communication, joint attention, behavior, school readiness, play, motor, adaptive, and academic.

PLAN

1. **Know the cue or task directions**
   - Review the planning guide and make note of the cue or task directions you will use.
2. **Know what type of prompts to use**
   - Review the planning guide for the type of prompts to use if the student does not respond or responds incorrectly.
3. **Know the order of prompts**
   - Review the planning guide for the order of prompts so you know the order of prompts to use with the student.
4. **Know the length of the response interval**
   - Review the planning guide so you know how long to wait for the student to respond after each prompt.
5. **Know what reinforcement to use**
   - Review the planning guide so that you know appropriate reinforcers to use with the student.
6. **Know what data to collect**
   - Review the planning guide so that you know appropriate reinforcers to use with the student.
   - Review any prepared data sheets with your teacher to understand how the data should be collected.
   - Remember to collect data on the target skill and the prompt level used as identified on the planning guide.
   - If you have any additional questions about data collection, be sure to ask your supervising teacher.

USE

1. **Have needed materials ready**
   - Materials should include resources you need for the lesson, reinforcers, and a data sheet.
   - If the student has a variety of reinforcers listed on the planning guide, consider having a basket of the items close by so that you can easily access the ones you need.
   - You may want a cheat sheet (or the planning guide) to remember the order and types of prompts for the task.
2. **Get the student's attention**
   - Prepare the student for what they will be working on before giving them the task direction. This could include providing an overview of the task or expectations for the session.
   - Make sure that the student is focused on you before you give directions.
3. **Give student the cue or task direction**
   - Give the student the task direction identified on the planning guide.
   - **Note:** The task direction is sometimes called a target cue/stimulus, which means any words or actions that cue or prompt the student for a response or the target skill/behavior

REPEAT USE STEPS 4 AND 5 UNTIL THE STUDENT RESPONDS CORRECTLY

4. **Wait for the student to respond**
   - Remember to allow your student time to respond.
   - Use the wait time identified on the planning guide.
   - Be consistent – for each prompting level, provide the student with the same amount of wait time.
5. **Provide the next level prompt (only if student does not respond or responds incorrectly).**
   - Remember to follow the sequence of least-to-most prompts that are identified on the planning guide for the student.
   - Follow the same prompting level each time the student works on the target/skill behavior.
   - Use a cheat sheet for the order and types of prompts to use for each goal somewhere that you can refer to quickly, if needed.
6. **Provide reinforcement when the student responds correctly**
   - Provide the reinforcement immediately when the student responds correctly.
   - Use the reinforcers identified on the student's planning guide.
   - Remember to have a variety of reinforcers available and to vary the reinforcers used with each student.
   - Instead of saying, "Good job" try including specific feedback that identifies the key behavior. For example, "Great job completing all of your spelling words;" or "I like how you were taking turns in centers."

MONITOR

1. **Take data on target behavior/skill**
   - Collect data on the target skill during the session.
   - Make notes about anything that is going well or not going well.
2. **Take data on prompts**
   - Remember to take data on the prompt level used with the student.
   - Data collected on the prompt level is an important part of monitoring student progress and independence.
3. **Check in with teacher about next steps at least weekly.**
   - Plan a time to check in with your teacher each week about:
     - Your progress using the practice (review the Prompting checklist)
     - The student's progress (review the data you collected)
     - Any necessary adjustments to the planning guide (if needed)

Implementation Checklist

General Planning:

WHO:

WHEN:
DATE:
TIME:

WHERE:

WHAT (TARGET SKILL):

HOW TO USE:

HOW TO MEASURE:

	Date:	
	Observer's Initials:	
	PLAN	
1.1	Know cue or task directions	
1.2	Know types of prompts to use	
1.3	Know the order of prompts	
1.4	Know the length of response interval	
1.5	Know what reinforcement to use	
1.6	Know what data to collect	
	USE	
2.1	Have needed materials ready	
2.2	Get student's attention	
2.3	Give student the cue or task direction	
2.4	Wait for student to respond	
2.5	Provide the next level prompt (only if student does not respond or responds incorrectly)	
Repeat using steps 4 and 5 until the student responds correctly		
2.6	Provide reinforcement when the student responds correctly	
	MONITOR	
3.1	Collect data on target skill/behavior	
3.2	Collect data on prompt level used	
3.3	Check in with teacher about next steps at least weekly	

Implementation Checklist: Multi-Use

	Observation:	1	2	3	4	5
	Date:					
	Observer's Initials:					
	PLAN					
1.1	Know cue or task directions					
1.2	Know types of prompts to use					
1.3	Know the order of prompts					
1.4	Know the length of response interval					
1.5	Know what reinforcement to use					
1.6	Know what data to collect					
	USE					
2.1	Have needed materials ready					
2.2	Get student's attention					
2.3	Give student the cue or task direction					
2.4	Wait for student to respond					
2.5	Provide the next level prompt (only if student does not respond or responds incorrectly)					
Repeat using steps 4 and 5 until the student responds correctly						
2.6	Provide reinforcement when the student responds correctly					
	MONITOR					
3.1	Collect data on target skill/behavior					
3.2	Collect data on prompt level used					
3.3	Check in with teacher about next steps at least weekly					

COMPANION GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Prompting is a cue or signal provided to guide and assist a child with performing a specific skill or behavior. Prompts can be verbal, gestural, physical, visual, or a model.

Least-to-most prompting: Gradually providing prompts to help the child be as independent as possible is key when using least-to-most prompting. At least three different levels of prompts are used to teach new skills. At the first level (usually the independent level), the child is given the opportunity to respond without prompts. The remaining levels include prompts that proceed from least to most amounts of assistance until the child responds correctly.

Types of prompts: (Note: The list below is alphabetical and does not represent a least-to-most order)

- **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 PROMPTING?

1. Identify the behavior or task

- Choose the behavior that you will focus on while using prompting 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	Choosing a chore from a list (washing dishes, putting toys away, making bed, laundry)	At least 1 time per day
Brushing teeth	Follow steps to brush teeth at bathroom sink (may need visual or list of steps)	Each morning & evening
Completing homework math problem	At the table with help from family if needed	Late afternoons

WHAT	HOW	WHEN
Getting dressed	Put on coat	Before going outside
Feeding a pet	Provide food and water to pet (may need a visual or list of steps)	Each morning
Taking turns	Play a game with parent, sibling, or friend	Family game night or play date
Joining a remote learning meeting	Logging in to the remote learning session	At the beginning of remote learning meetings for school

- **TIP:** Start by selecting a behavior or skill that your child needs help with to start or complete.

2. Choose types of prompts to use

- Select two or three different prompts to use with your child while you are helping them learn a skill or behavior. Consider the type(s) of prompts you are currently providing your child to learn a similar skill or behavior.
- **TIP:** Think about what types of prompts will work best for your child and for the specific task to maximize your child's independence. It is easy to rely on verbal prompts but consider using visual or gestural prompts that may be easier to remove as your child gains independence.
- **TIP:** You can use different levels of verbal or physical prompts, partial or full prompts. A partial verbal provides a spoken clue or giving a part of the answer while a partial physical would be to touch the child to help them start the task.
- **EXAMPLE:** Here are examples of full and partial prompts that could be used when helping your child learn to brush their teeth:
  - Partial verbal prompt: Say: "What do you do next?"
  - Full verbal prompt: Say: "Put the toothpaste on the toothbrush."
  - Partial physical: Tapping your child's hand or elbow to get them to pick up the toothpaste.
  - Full physical prompt: Helping your child brush their teeth by putting your hands over their hands to pick up their toothpaste.

3. Put prompts in least-to-most order

- Think about how to use the prompts in a least-to-most sequence (independent little assistance little more assistance full assistance).
- **TIP:** See Home Companion Prompting Hierarchy Examples for more examples for home settings.
- **TIP:** Try using the least amount of assistance for your first prompt. For example, if you are helping your child learn to brush their teeth independently, after the instruction is given, a picture (visual) or a gesture (pointing to toothbrush) would be less intrusive than telling them to brush their teeth (verbal); a verbal prompt would then be considered less intrusive than using hand over hand to help them brush their teeth (physical).

- **TIP:** Add gradual amounts of support between each of the prompt levels. If the prompt levels make too big of a leap at one time you may have to adjust the prompts to provide more support.
- **TIP:** The final prompt should provide enough support that your child is consistently successful with completing the task.
- **EXAMPLE:**

Target Skill/Behavior:	Clean room by picking up toys
Independent	Give direction: Say "Clean up your room, please." Child picks up toys without help.
1st Prompt: Gestural	Point to toys
2nd Prompt: Verbal	Say "Pick up your toys"
3rd Prompt: Full Physical	Hand over hand to help child pick up the toys

4. Determine wait time

- Determine how much time to wait for your child to respond before giving the next prompt.
- **TIP:** 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.
- **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.

5. Choose rewards/reinforcers that will be motivating to your child

- 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.

Social

- Tickles
- Hugs
- Praise ("Good job finishing homework," "I love how you helped your sister clear the table")
- High-fives
- Clapping
- Cheering
- Tight squeezes

Activities/Items

- Computer game
- Time to play outside
- Favorite game
- Pokémon© cards
- Legos
- Drawing
- Movie
- Swinging on a swing
- Preferred snack
- Tokens for token reinforcer

- **TIP:** See Companion Guide for Families for Reinforcement for more information about reinforcement.
- **TIP:** For rewards that are activities/items, try to avoid using rewards that your child can use at any time.

6. **Give your child a direction and wait for a response**
   - **PROMPTING RESPONSE:**

Child Responds Correctly	Child Responds Incorrectly	Child Does Not Respond
• Give child a reward	• Interrupt incorrect response • Give first prompt in sequence (wait) • Continue with next two prompts (wait between each one) until child responds correctly • Give child a reward	• Give first prompt in sequence (wait) • Continue with next two prompts (wait between each one) until child responds correctly • Give child a reward

   - **TIP:** Give each prompt only one time. Too many prompts can cause you and your child to become frustrated.
   - **TIP:** Remember to use the same wait time (usually 3-5 seconds) between each of the prompts.
7. **Give reinforcement**
   - Each time your child uses the behavior or skill, remember to give the reward even if prompts were 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 PROMPTING?

1. **Start small**
   - Choose one task, activity, or behavior to focus on when starting with prompting. Wait until your child has shown success with that behavior before using prompting with other activities or tasks.
2. **Be patient**
   - Remember learning a skill or changing a behavior takes time. Once you start using prompting, 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. **Try not to over prompt**
   - If you constantly prompt your child for all tasks, your child may develop prompt dependency (the need for prompting for tasks that your child has shown they know how to do). It is easy to rely on verbal prompts but try to use less intrusive prompts such as visual or gestural prompts to help build independence with a skill.
4. **Give enough time to respond**
   - 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.
6. **Time to fade**
   - When your child can consistently perform a task with the prompt order that you have in place, at least three different times, it is time to gradually fade support. You can fade support by using less intrusive prompts, and eventually fading prompting entirely. When fading support, check your child's performance. If prompts are removed too quickly, your child may begin to make more errors. If this happens, go back to using the same prompt order that your child was successful with for a longer period of time before fading.

WHAT ARE COMMON CHALLENGES WHEN USING PROMPTING?

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

Your child will wait until prompted to do a task.

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
   - fade prompting – once your child starts to make progress, begin fading the prompts

You have to give multiple verbal prompts for your child to do a task

A. **Try different types of prompts.** Verbal prompts can be difficult to fade. Using a different type of prompt at the beginning, such as visual or gestural prompt, may help your child become more independent with the skill. If this does not work, you could also try using a verbal and visual or gestural prompt together – then gradually move to visual or gestural only.
B. When using least to most prompting, remember to give each prompt only one time.

Your child will not perform the task when prompted

A. **Try to determine the cause.** Some possibilities are:

Cause	Suggestion
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
Prompts do not provide the level of assistance needed	Change your final prompt to provide the type of assistance your child needs to perform the task successfully (e.g. full physical such as hand over hand or a model prompt).

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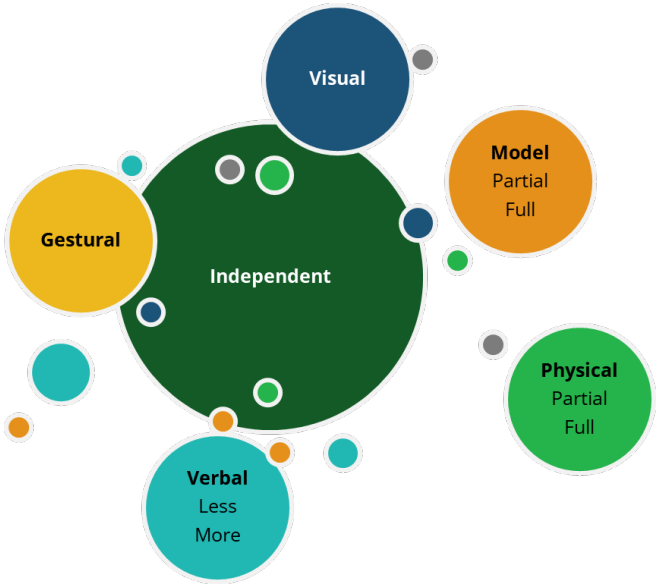
Prompting Hierarchy Examples: Home

Prompting can be used to address many different skills and target behaviors for elementary students. Research supports the use of prompting for target skills and behaviors in the following domains: social, communication, joint attention, behavior, school readiness, play, motor, adaptive, and academic. To reduce dependency, prompting should be used from least-to-most. However, the order of prompting levels, or what is the least-to-most hierarchy, is not always the same due to differences in student needs and/or the type of target skill/behavior. See the target skills/behaviors below for examples of how prompting levels can vary depending on student needs and/or the target skill/behavior.



Target Skill/Behavior:	Sight word identification during book reading
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue, "What word?" provide response time with no additional prompt
Level 2: Gestural	Point to the word in the book (or write it on a notecard or sticky note and point to it)
Level 3: Less Verbal	Tell child the first sound of word
Level 4: More Verbal	Tell child the sight word

Target Skill/Behavior:	Zipping up coat
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue "Zip jacket," provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Partial Physical	Place child's hands on the zipper
Level 3: Full Physical	Provide the child hand-over-hand assistance to zip jacket

Target Skill/Behavior:	Cleaning up toys after an activity
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue ("it's time to clean up"), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Gestural	Point to the container where the toys should go
Level 3: Partial Model	Show child how to put one of the toys in the container
Level 4: Partial Physical	Hand child one of the toys
Level 5: Verbal	Tell child, "put the toy in the basket"

Target Skill/Behavior:	Asking for help (Learner using an 'I need help.' card to communicate)
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (giving student a task or assignment where help is needed), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Gestural	Point to the "I need help." card
Level 3: Verbal	Ask the learner, "Do you need help?"

Target Skill/Behavior:	Sitting in seat for mealtime
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (telling child it is time for snack/meal), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Gestural	Point to child's designated seat at the table
Level 3: Visual	Show child a picture of a person sitting at the table (could be a picture on your phone of the child seated for meals)
Level 4: Verbal	Tell child to "Sit down, please."
Level 5: Partial Physical	Take the child's hand to guide them to designated space

Target Skill/Behavior:	Responding to a greeting
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (someone greets child), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Visual	Show child a card that says, "Good morning."
Level 3: Less Verbal	Ask child, "What do you say?"
Level 4: More Verbal	Tell child to say, "Good morning."

Target Skill/Behavior:	Taking turns
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue (starting a turn-taking activity like kicking a ball, driving a car down a ramp, etc.), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Visual	Show the child a card that says, "Your turn."
Level 3: Gestural	Point to the card that says, "Your turn."
Level 4: Verbal	Tell the child, "It's your turn to go."
Level 5: Full Physical	Take the child's hand to guide them in playing the game

Target Skill/Behavior:	Walking on the sidewalk
Level 1: Independent	After task directive/cue ("We're going on a walk"), provide response time with no additional prompt.
Level 2: Visual	Show child a picture of a person walking on the sidewalk (can be a phone picture of the child doing the activity on the sidewalk)
Level 3: Less Verbal	Tell child, "Stay on the sidewalk"
Level 4: Full Physical	Take child's hand and guide them physically onto the sidewalk

GLOSSARY

Fidelity: How well and how often the implementation steps for an evidence-based practice are followed.

Gestural prompt: A movement that provides the learner with information about how to perform the target skill/behavior (e.g., pointing to the top of the paper to remind the student to write their name).

Implementation checklist: The specific steps needed to accurately follow an evidence-based practice.

Independent: A student is able to use a behavior or skill without assistance or support from an adult or peer.

Least-to-most prompting: A prompt hierarchy with at least three levels used to teach new skills. At the first level, the learner is given the opportunity to respond without prompts. The remaining levels include prompts that proceed from least to most amounts of assistance. The last level is the controlling prompt.

Model prompt: Demonstrating the correct way to perform the target skill/behavior for the learner. Useful when verbal or visual prompts are not sufficient to help the learner perform the target skill correctly.

- **Partial model:** Show the learner a portion of what you want them to do to complete the target skill/behavior (e.g., showing the learner how to write the first line to write the M)
- **Full model:** Show the learner what you want them to do to complete the target skill/behavior (e.g., showing the learner how to write the letter M)

Physical prompt: Hands on assistance given to a learner to successfully perform the target skill or behavior. It is generally used when the learner does not respond to less restrictive prompts. Useful when teaching adaptive or motor skills.

- **Partial physical:** Light touch or minimal physical guidance to assist learner with performing target skill (e.g., touching the learner's elbow to guide their hand toward jacket zipper to zip up)
- **Full physical:** Hand-over-hand or complete physical assistance with performing target skill (e.g., hand over hand assistance given to the learner to zip their jacket)

Positive reinforcement: Feedback provided to the learner (e.g., praise or reward) after the learner performs the target skill or behavior.

Prompt: Assistance given to help the learner perform a specific (target) skill or behavior. Prompts can be verbal, gestural, physical, visual, or a model.

Prompting hierarchy: The order and types of prompts to give a learner to assist with performing the target skill or behavior. The hierarchy can be different depending on the needs of the student and the type of goal. Refer to the Prompt Hierarchy Examples document for examples of prompt hierarchies by target skill/behavior.

Reinforcer: Motivating attention, activity, or material provided to a learner immediately after completing the target skill/behavior to increase the likelihood the target skill/behavior will be used again in the future. Must be age-appropriate and meaningful to the learner.

Response interval: The amount of time the instructor waits without providing additional assistance to allow the learner to respond to the direction or prompt.

Target cue/stimulus: Words and/or actions to let learner know to perform the target skill (e.g., asking "What word?" when you want a student to read a word or placing a block in a student's hand during a color matching activity).

Token economy: A specific type of positive reinforcement system in which after a learner has successfully completed the target skill or behavior, a token is provided. After earning a certain number of tokens, the learner earns a more desirable reinforcer after earning a predetermined number of tokens. Examples of tokens are checks on a checklist, play money, cards, stickers, tickets, etc. After earning tokens, the learner gets 5 minutes of iPad time, drawing, playing with Legos, etc.

Verbal prompt: Includes any spoken words directed to learners to help them perform a target skill correctly. Verbal prompts range in intensity level from least to most restrictive.

- **Less restrictive:** Provide a tip or suggestion to student to use skill or behavior (for example, saying the first sound of a word when reading; saying 'hand' when prompting student to raise hand to ask a question)
- **More restrictive:** State specifically what student should do to perform skill or behavior (for example, saying the entire word when reading; saying, "raise your hand" when prompting student to raise hand to ask a question)

Visual prompt: A picture, icon or object used to provide learners with information about how to perform the target skill or behavior.