AFIRM

Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules



UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules Griffin, W., & AFIRM Team, Updated 2025

> The National Professional Development Center on Autism



FRANK PORTER GRAHAM CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



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SCRIPTING

WHAT IS SC?

Scripting (SC) is a type of visual support. It is a spoken or written description that shows what to say or do in a certain situation. Scripts help teach a specific skill and give the learner an example to follow. The learner usually practices the script many times before using the skill in real life to start or keep a conversation with others.

EVIDENCE-BASE:

Based upon the 2020 systematic review conducted by the National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (NCAEP), Scripting is a specific type of Visual Support that meets the evidence-based practice criteria.

For more information on Visual Supports (VS), please visit the AFIRM module.

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STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

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

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

Each of the following points is important to address so that you can be sure Scripting is likely to address the target goal/behavior/skill of your learner on the spectrum.

HAVE YOU FOUND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ...?

- □ Identifying the behavior...?
- □ Collecting baseline data through direct observation...?
- Establishing a target goal or outcome that clearly states when the behavior will occur, what the target goal or outcome is, and how team members and/or observers will know when the skill is mastered...?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'No,' review the process of how to select an appropriate EBP (https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/selecting-EBP).

For more information about Scripting and Visual Supports, please visit https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/ .



SC

Keep in mind that **Scripting** can be used to increase and generalize communication skills.

STEP 1: PLANNING FOR SC

The planning step details the initial steps and considerations involved to prepare for using Scripting with a learner on the spectrum.

1. Determine the type and length of the script

- The learner's expressive and receptive skills must be considered to ensure that the learner will understand the script in the form it is presented and taught (for example, written form, verbal form, with or without picture cues, with or without reading it aloud) and will be able to eventually produce the communicative behavior independently.
- Note: Consider consulting with a speech language pathologist to ensure that the script appropriately addresses and supports the language skills of the learner.

2. Develop the script

Using what is known about the learner's communication skills, a script can be developed to support the learner in interacting with another person. The script may include words/cues for the learner or words/cues for both the learner and the communication partner.







3. Identify additional evidence-based practices

The two evidence-based practices that are most important to consider in a script intervention are:

- 1. reinforcement of the use of the script, and
- 2. the use of visual supports as needed to cue the learner to use the script or support the learner while using the script

4. Gather and organize supporting materials

This process may include gathering or making script-specific materials as well as gathering any other supporting materials (such as toys, visual timers, etc.) that may be needed relevant to the communicative interaction.

5. Teach the learner prerequisite skills

Prerequisite skills that might be targeted prior to a script intervention include specific vocabulary used in the context of the script and other interaction skills related to the social communication context of the script (such as gaining the attention of the communication partner, orienting to the communication partner, etc.).

6. Identify and train communication partners

Any people who will be interacting with the learner need to understand what to expect in advance. They may need to be familiar with the script and anticipated responses, and they may also need to understand any communication differences that the learner may display that could be unusual or unexpected.

STEP 2: USING SC

This step details the process of implementing Scripting with a learner on the spectrum.

1. Teach script to learner

The teaching process may vary based on the skills of the learner and the format of the script, but will generally consist of the following:

- Initial instruction in script elements
- Prompting and guidance, starting at a high level, and gradually fading
- Reinforcement of use of the script

Other strategies that may be used in the teaching process include modeling and role-play. The script may be taught initially in a separate teaching area or may be taught in the context of the intended communicative interaction.

2. Use script with identified communication partners

If the script is taught in a separate setting and then introduced with the intended communication partner, the teaching process will need to specifically target this step. Strategies may include holding up the script behind the communication partner, prompting use of the script physically and/or verbally, and modeling appropriate responses.







3. Fade prompts, if any, needed to read the script

Prompting of use of the script should gradually be faded until the learner is able to use the script independently.

4. Fade script

This procedure will vary based on the format of the script, but usually should involve a gradual fading of the content of the script. For example, a script using full written sentences might be faded by gradually removing a word or two at a time until all that is left is the paper or card on which the script was originally written; this remaining visual cue should also be faded until the learner is independently producing the content from the script without any cues.

5. Test for generalization and revisit script as needed

The goal of a script intervention is not actually to promote use of the script, but instead to increase the targeted communication skills of the learner. Guiding questions to consider regarding generalization include:

- Is the learner initiating with a variety of peers?
- Is the learner initiating with peers in a variety of settings or activities?
- Is the learner using any topics or language to initiate with peers that is different than what was originally taught in the script?

If prompting of use and the script has been faded but a learner has not generalized the targeted skill, then it might be valuable to re-introduce the script in the new context, with adaptations as needed, to support generalization.

STEP 3: MONITORING SC

The following step details how to monitor the use of Scripting with a learner on the spectrum and how to determine next steps based on the data.

1. Collect and analyze data

Data collection may initially focus on use of the script, but ultimately should shift to the skill that the script intervention is intended to target, such as initiating interactions, making comments, asking a peer relevant questions, engaging in sociodramatic play, etc.

🖹 Use the SC Data Collection: Training form to collect data script training.

🖹 Use the SC Data Collection: Target Skill form to collect data on the learner's use of the target skill.

2. Determine if the script needs to be retaught or faded based on collected data

Review progress monitoring data to determine if the learner is generalizing the use of the script, and most importantly, the target skill, across communication partners and settings. If the learner is using the script effectively in one context but has not generalized use of the script, then the script may need to be reintroduced and subsequently faded in the new context.









3. Determine next steps based on learner progress

Collecting data will help team members decide about the effectiveness of using Scripting and whether the learner on the spectrum is making progress. If a learner is making progress based upon data collected, team members should continue to use the selected strategies.

If team members determine that the learner is not making progress, consider the following:

- Is the target skill or behavior well defined?
- Is the target skill or behavior measurable and observable?
- Can the learner demonstrate needed perquisite skills?
- Was SC used with fidelity? (Use the SC Implementation Checklist to determine fidelity.)
- Are the scripts appropriate to the learner's developmental level and level of language skills?
- If needed, were additional evidence-based practices identified?
- Are reinforcers used that are motivating to the learner?

If these issues have been addressed and the learner on the spectrum continues not to show progress, consider selecting a different evidence-based practice to use with the learner on the spectrum.









IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

BEFORE YOU START, HAVE YOU...?

□ Identifying the target goal/behavior/skill...?

□ Collecting baseline data through direct observation...?

Establishing a target goal or outcome that clearly states when the behavior will occur, what the target goal or outcome is, and how team members and/or observers will know when the skill is mastered...?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'No,' review the process of how to select an appropriate EBP (https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/selecting-EBP).

| Observation: | | | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| | Date: | | | | | |
| | Observer's Initials: | | | | | |
| | STEP 1: PLANNING | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Determine the type and length of the script | | | | | |
| 1.2 | Develop the script | | | | | |
| 1.3 | Identify additional evidence-based practices | | | | | |
| 1.4 | Gather and organize supporting materials | | | | | |
| 1.5 | Teach the learner prerequisite skills | | | | | |
| 1.6 | Identify and train communication partners as appropriate | | | | | |
| | STEP 2: USING | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Teach script to learner | | | | | |
| 2.2 | Use script with identified communication partners | | | | | |
| 2.3 | Fade prompts, if any, needed to read the script | | | | | |
| 2.4 | Fade script | | | | | |
| 2.5 | Test for generalization and revisit script as needed | | | | | |
| | STEP 3: MONITORING | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Collect and analyze data | | | | | |
| 3.2 | Determine if the script needs to be retaught or faded based on collected data. | | | | | |
| 3.3 | Determine next steps based on learner progress | | | | | |









Scripting For more information, please visit: <u>https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/</u>

SCRIPT

Learner's Name: _____

Date/Time: _____

Observer(s):

Target Goal/Behavior/Skill:

Directions: Use this template to create a script.









FADING SCRIPT GUIDE

Once prompting to use the script is faded, the actual script itself can be faded. This procedure may vary based on the format of the script but usually involves a process in which the words are gradually removed from scripted statements until no words are left (this is appropriate for a written or electronically programmed script).

| "Can I play with you?" |
|---|
| "Can I play with |
| "Can I play |
| "Can I |
| "Can |
| |
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DATA COLLECTION: SCRIPT TRAINING

Learner's Name: ____

Date/Time: _

Observer(s):

Date/III

Target Goal/Behavior/Skill:

Directions: Use this form when collecting data on script training. Remember to collect data on the script element completed correctly with prompts and without prompts.

| Script Element | Prompts | Learner Response |
|----------------|---------|---------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Prompt Key: VB = Verbal; VS = Visual Support; G = Gestural; M = Model; FP = Full Physical; PP = Partial Physical; I = No prompts needed/Independent

Response Key: + = performed correctly; - = performed incorrectly; 0 = no response









DATA COLLECTION: TARGET SKILL

Learner's Name: ____

Date/Time: _

Observer(s):

Target Goal/Behavior/Skill:

Directions: The data collected could include a specification regarding if the behavior or language used by the learner is scripted. It may also be important to reflect if the language or behavior is appropriate, as compared to language or behavior that may be off topic, inappropriate, or perseverative in nature.

| | Appropriate Interactions | | Inannronriato |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| | Scripted Response | Unscripted Responses | Interactions |
| Date: | | | |
| Time: | | | |
| Setting: Communication | | | |
| Partner(s): | | | |
| | | | |
| Date: | | | |
| lime: | | | |
| Communication | | | |
| Partner(s): | | | |
| | | | |
| Date: | | | |
| lime: Setting: | | | |
| Communication | | | |
| Partner(s): | | | |
| _ | | | |
| Date: | | | |
| Time: Setting | | | |
| Communication | | | |
| Partner(s): | | | |
| | | | |
| Date: Timo: | | | |
| Setting | | | |
| Communication | | | |
| Partner(s): | | | |
| | | | |









GLOSSARY

- **A-B-C data charts** These charts help the team figure out what happens right before a behavior (this is called the antecedent), what the behavior looks like, and what happens right after the behavior (this is called the consequence).
- **Antecedent** The activities or events that happen right before a behavior.
- Antecedent-Based Interventions (ABI) Changing what happens before an activity or request to help a positive behavior happen more or to reduce problem behaviors.
- **Consequence** What happens after a behavior or the result of the behavior.
- **Duration data** This shows how long a learner does a certain behavior or skill.
- **Event sampling** This means counting how many times a behavior happens each time it occurs.
- **Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)** A careful way to find out why a behavior is happening so that a good plan can be made to help.
- **Hypothesis statement** Part of the FBA. It includes: 1) what happens before and after the behavior, 2) a clear description of the behavior, and 3) the reason the behavior happens (for example, to get something or to avoid something).
- Individual schedule A visual tool that shows the learner's daily activities in order.
- Interfering behavior A behavior that gets in the way of the learner being able to learn.
- **Reinforcement (R)** Giving a consequence after a learner uses a skill or behavior that makes it more likely they will use that skill or behavior again.
- **Room arrangement** A visual support that involves setting up the space in a clear and organized way.
- **Sensory reinforcers** Things that feel, sound, or look a certain way that motivate a learner. These should only be used when the adult can control access to them, when they are okay to use in the setting, and when no other reward works better.
- **Team members** This includes parents, other main caregivers, teachers, therapists, early intervention providers, and any other professionals helping the learner.
- **Visual instructions** A visual support that shows how to do an activity or task step by step.
- **Visual Supports (VS)** Tools that show information in a visual way to help the learner do a behavior or skill without needing extra reminders.







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