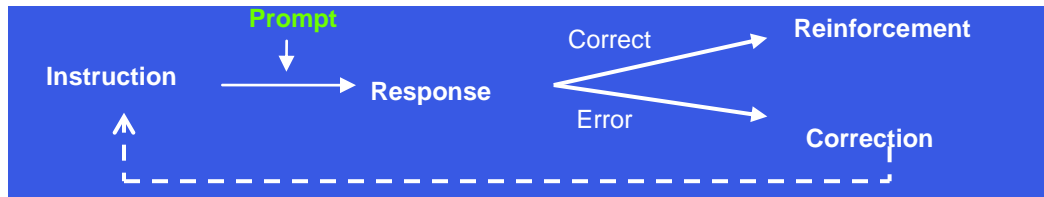# Prompting and Fading

Definition:

Prompts are used to increase the likelihood that a student will provide a desired response.

Fading is gradually reducing the prompt.

(Alberto & Troutman, 2003)

Also Known As:

- Cues
- Hints
- Checklists
- Hand over hand
- Scaffolding

You're already doing it by…

- Providing a class schedule
- Reviewing checklists for essay writing
- Modeling how to shoot a basketball
- Showing samples of completed work
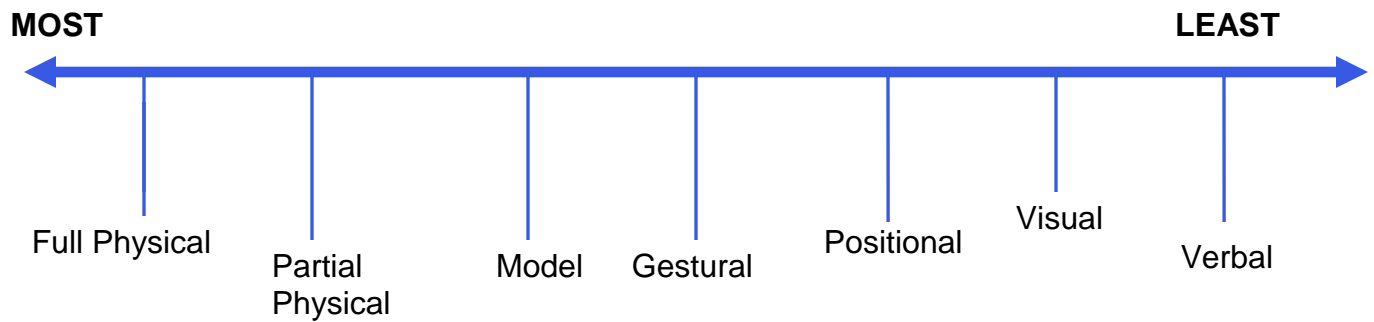- Positioning a pencil beside a worksheet

Types of Prompts

- **Physical**: Physically guiding the student to perform a skill
- **Verbal**: Verbal cues which give information to help the student to respond correctly
- **Model**: When an educator or peer demonstrates the desired skill
- **Gestural**: Using gestures, such as pointing, to guide the student to the correct response
- **Visual**: Visuals such as pictures, symbols and text that can assist a student to respond correctly
- **Positional**: Placing materials in a location or sequence that ensures successful completion of an activity

(Alberto & Troutman, 2003)

Consider this if/when deciding to prompt...

- Assess/gather information to determine the student's current abilities.
- The type of prompt used will depend on the skill being taught and the student.
- All prompts need to be faded over time or when the student is successful to prevent prompt dependency.
- If prompts are faded too quickly, errors may be made by the learner.
- Verbal prompts can be the most difficult to fade.

ERINOAKKiDS
Centre for Treatment and Development

ABA for Educators

Prompts can be classified from most intrusive to least intrusive:

MOST   **LEAST**

Full Physical

Partial
Physical

Model   Gestural

Positional

Visual

Verbal

**Verbal Prompts: Although they are the least intrusive, they may be the hardest to fade and should only be used when necessary.

Rules for prompting:

- Avoid unintentional prompts such as positioning of materials, voice inflection, facial expressions and not changing the order of concepts or instructions.

- If it is not possible to prompt simultaneously with the instruction, prompt IMMEDIATELY following the instruction.

- Reinforce prompted responses less than unprompted.

- Do not allow the student to fail repeatedly.

- Fade prompts gradually.

- Make the prompts less intrusive (e.g. move from full physical to partial physical).

- As prompts are faded, remember to reinforce more independent responses.

- Provide more/longer access to reinforcers for unprompted skill responses.

REMEMBER: Highly reinforce all unprompted correct responses!

(Alberto & Troutman, 2003)

With-in Stimulus Prompting

Another type of visual prompt is called a 'within stimulus' prompt. This is where a prompt is embedded into the target item to make it more noticeable or distinguishable. For example, to assist a student learning to pronounce the 'bbb' sound when shown the letter B, a picture of a bird is superimposed over the letter and later faded out.

O for open   u for umbrella   c for cat   b for bird   m for mitt

F.A.Q.

What is the difference between a verbal prompt and an instruction?

Verbal prompts are verbal hints or clues provided in order to guide the student to perform a skill. An initial instruction is often necessary in order to let the student know what he/she is required to do. However, all added instructions after the initial instruction are considered verbal prompts. (Alberto & Troutman, 2003)

e.g. A teacher tells the class "It's time for lunch" (instruction). Ms. Mason, an Educational Assistant for Alex, reminds him of each step along the way saying "go to your cubby" (verbal prompt) then "get your lunch bag" (verbal prompt) then "take it to your seat" (verbal prompt) and so on.

When should visual prompts be faded?

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are often described as "visual thinkers" (Grandin, 2006), which means they can be more successful at processing information that is presented visually rather than verbally. Providing a student with visual prompts can reduce anxiety and confusion. As such, some student may always require the use of visual prompts.

Some visual prompts may NEVER be eliminated but can be modified.

How do I ensure my student doesn't become prompt dependent?

Prompt dependency occurs when too many prompts are in place or are not being faded quickly enough.

When the desired skill is occurring reliably with the prompts given, it is time to gradually fade the support. When fading support, it is crucial to monitor the student's performance carefully to determine whether supports are being withdrawn too quickly or not quickly enough.

If prompts are removed too quickly the student may begin to make errors. If this occurs, return to the prompt level that the student was successful with for a while longer then try fading the prompts again. (Alberto & Troutman, 2003)

Math Class Checklist

- [ ] pencil
- [ ] eraser/ruler
- [ ] textbook
- [ ] notebook
- [ ] calculator
- [ ] agenda
- [ ] homework

How do I teach my student to come prepared to class without constantly telling him what to bring?

Verbal prompts are one of the most difficult prompts to fade. By replacing verbal cues with a different type of prompt (visual, gestural, positional), assistance can be removed more easily as the skill is acquired.

Some students may benefit from a visual checklist, similar to the one on the left, which can help encourage independence and reduce the need for verbal reminders.

Steps in Fading

Force: *How much help is being provided.* For example, you may begin by using full physical prompting (hand over hand) and as the student becomes successful reduce the prompt to guiding the forearm, then the elbow, etc.

Time: *Between instruction and prompt.* For example, you may immediately prompt the student to respond correctly and as he learns the task you wait for gradually longer periods of time before prompting.

Space: *Between the student and educator.* For example, you may begin teaching sitting in front of the student then move behind, gradually increasing distance over time.

Force	Low	←	High
Timing	Delayed	←	Immediate
Spatial Distance	Behind & Away	←	Beside
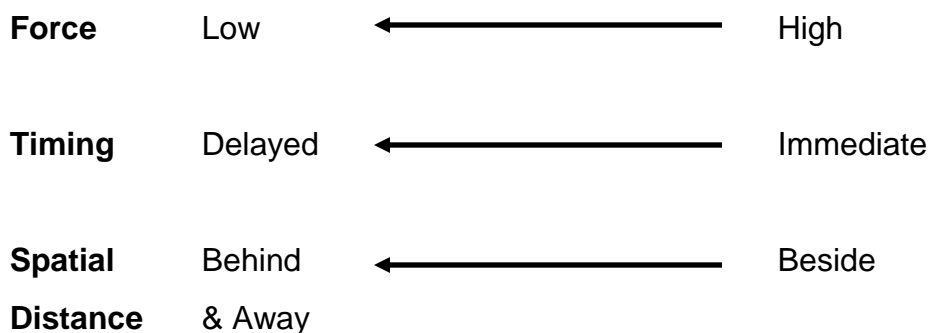
It is important to think about fading your prompts along these three dimensions!

(Earles, Carlson, & Bock, 1998)

The most important aspect of prompt fading is monitoring student progress/performance. Carefully monitor the progress of the student to ensure the pace is right . A sample data collection method to track prompting for putting on a coat might be:

Date	Prompt	Target Reached
Sept. 2, 2006	Yes	Yes
Sept. 2. 2006	No	Yes
Sept. 3, 2006	No	Yes

References:

Alberto, A.A., & Troutman, A.C. (2003). *Applied behaviour analysis for teacher.* (6th edition). NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Earles, T., Carlson, J., & Bock, S.J. (1998). Instructional strategies to facilitate successful learning outcomes for students with autism. Educating Children and Youth with Autism. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Grandin, T. (2006). Thinking in pictures: My life with autism. Knopf Publishing Group.