



# PROMPTING

## CHARACTERISTICS OVERVIEW CHART

Verbal Skills	Grade Levels	Cognitive Level	Areas Addressed
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonverbal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mixed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	(Pre)Academic/Cognitive/Academic
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verbal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle/High	Functioning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Behavior/Daily Living
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Behavior
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication/Speech
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Emotional

## BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Prompting is extensively used in behavior shaping and skill acquisition. It provides learners with assistance to increase the probability that a desired behavior will occur. Successful performance of a desired behavior elicits positive reinforcement, therefore reinforcing learning. Prompts vary from most to least intrusive. Prompting should be faded to avoid prompt dependency.

## DESCRIPTION

Prompting is a means to induce an individual with added stimuli (prompts) to perform a desired behavior. A prompt is like a cue or support to encourage a desired behavior that otherwise does not occur. In other words, a prompt is an antecedent that is provided when an ordinary antecedent is ineffective. Prompts are often categorized into a hierarchy from most intrusive to least intrusive. Types of prompts (from most intrusive to least intrusive), their descriptions, and examples are as follows:

- *Full physical assistance.* The teacher uses “hand-over-hand” support to aid the child in completing a task (e.g., when teaching the child to pick up a cup, the teacher takes the child’s hand and guides him to pick it up).



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- *Partial physical assistance.* The teacher provides partial physical assistance to help the child complete a task (e.g., when teaching the child to pick up the cup, the teacher guides the child's hand to the cup by tapping his elbow).
- *Full model.* The teacher models the desired behavior (e.g., when teaching the child how to clap, the teacher claps while telling the child to clap).
- *Partial model.* The teacher models only part of the desired behavior (e.g., when teaching the child how to clap, the teacher puts his hands in front of himself, but does not actually clap).
- *Full verbal prompts.* The teacher verbally models the desired behavior (e.g., when teaching the child to expressively label "car," the teacher asks, "What is it? Say car.").
- *Partial verbal model.* The teacher verbally models only part of the desired behavior (e.g., when teaching the child to expressively label "car," the teacher asks, "What is it? Say c\_\_\_").
- *Gestural prompt.* The teacher utilizes a physical gesture to encourage the desired behavior (e.g., when teaching the function of an object, the teacher says, "What do you drink with?" while holding his hand to his mouth shaping it like a cup).
- *Positional prompt.* The teacher places the target item in a location that is closer to the child (e.g., when teaching the child to label "toy," the teacher places the toy closest to the child).
- *Time-delay or prompt-delay techniques* (Walker, 2008). This instructional procedure is proven to be effective, especially for children with AU. When teaching a novel task, time delay is used to transfer the stimulus control from a controlling prompt to a natural prompt by placing varying amounts of time between a controlling prompt and a natural prompt. Given different lengths of time delay, time delay strategies are categorized into constant time delay (CTD) and progressive time delay (PTD). CTD indicates that there is a standard time delay whereas PTD has a graduated delay. The procedures of time delay strategy begin with a zero-second (0-s) delay trial, meaning the controlling prompt is presented with task instruction at the same time without any delay in between. Gradually, to fade the prompt, time delay is increased between the natural prompt (task direction) and the controlling prompt.



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Not all prompts in the hierarchy need to be used when teaching a skill. Prompts should be chosen based on which ones are most effective for a particular child. Prompts should be faded systematically and as quickly as possible to avoid prompt dependency. Overall, the goal of using prompts is to help the child independently perform the desired behavior.

### STEPS

1. *Identify the least intrusive prompt.* Choose a prompt that is necessary for a correct response to occur.
2. *Give differential reinforcement.* After a correct response, give appropriate reinforcement that is equivalent to the level of performance independency.
3. *Fade prompt.* After the child masters a skill, gradually move prompt away or replace with least intrusive prompt.

### BRIEF EXAMPLE

Josh was learning to match objects with names. The teacher started with verbal and gestural prompts. She said, "It is time for drawing, and we need some crayons to draw with." She looked at the crayons on the table and pointed at them, saying, "These are crayons." Then she pointed at the crayons and asked Josh, "What are these?" After Josh responded "Crayons," the teacher nodded her head and said, "These are crayons! Good job, Josh!"

To fade prompts, the teacher gradually moved from verbal and gestural prompts to only positional prompts. For example, the next time the teacher placed the crayons on the table near Josh, she said, "We need some crayons to draw with. Josh, show me the crayons." Josh pointed to the crayons correctly and received a point on his token board.