

Prompt Fading

General Terminology

Prompt – “something that increases the likelihood of a desired response” (also known as hints, tips, or cues); prompts prevent a client from failing repeatedly

Least intrusive prompting – only using the amount/type of prompting required, no more

Fading – gradually reducing the intrusiveness of the prompts in order to increase client independence. Prompts should be faded (reduced / minimized) when the client can reliably respond correctly. One way to fade prompts is to wait longer and longer intervals before providing assistance via prompt. This can involve waiting silently without acting for what feels like long periods of time – fifteen seconds, or more!

Least to Most Prompt Fading – an approach in which prompts are faded by starting out with the least intrusive prompt and then adding in additional prompts only as needed; this requires waiting after offering each prompt before moving to a more intrusive prompt. When this procedure is used, notate the prompt level used.

Most to Least Prompt Fading, also called Errorless Learning or Errorless Teaching – providing the most intrusive prompts and then fading them out in order to prevent errors. This can allow the client to be successful at every step of the learning process.

- ✓ Errorless Teaching involves providing the prompting needed to complete the skill PRIOR to the student having a chance to make an error. Errorless Teaching can be useful for helping a client acquire new skills without experiencing failure or mistakes; however it can also lead to prompt dependence.
- ✓ Set mastery criteria for each prompt level – for example, after a certain number of successful days, the prompt is reduced.

Prompt dependence – when a client becomes dependent on prompting, when a client learns to expect the therapist / teacher will always prompt the right answer and they begin to wait for the prompt instead of attempting the task more independently

Prompt hierarchy – a list or description of successively less intrusive prompting needed for a skill, an outline of each step of the prompt fading process

Types of Prompts

Physical – physically guiding the client through touch, physical prompts can be further broken down into *full physical prompts* and *partial physical prompts*.

Full Physical (FP) – also known as hand-over-hand, this is the most intrusive prompt possible and should be used only with careful consideration, as it requires the therapist to touch the client and move their body for them, and this can be experienced by the client as a loss of their bodily autonomy – something that is potentially traumatic. Taking a child's arm and hand, lifting and moving it in a waving motion is a full physical prompt.

Partial Physical (PP) – a less intrusive physical prompt, this involves prompting the client through physical touch but without performing the entire action for the client. Prompting a child to wave by supporting their elbow, tapping on their hand or arm, or helping their fingers move could be a partial physical prompt.

Modeling (M) – demonstrating the desired skill

Verbal (VB) – using spoken language, often considered the least intrusive prompt and the most difficult to fade, verbal prompts can be further broken down into *full verbal* and *partial verbal* prompts. Verbal prompts are different from giving spoken instructions – they are additional hints or cues that help the client determine the correct response. Repeating an instruction is a verbal prompt.

Full Verbal (FVB) – this is the maximum prompt or most intrusive verbal prompt, and can entail stating the full answer or telling the client completely what they should say. Asking, “where do you sleep?” then answering yourself by saying “in a bed” is a full verbal prompt. Showing a student an object or picture and asking, “what is this?” and then answering “cat” is a full verbal prompt.

Partial Verbal (PVB) – this is a less intrusive verbal prompt. Asking, “where do you sleep?” then giving a partial answer such as “in a _____” or providing the first sound of a word (“b__”) is a partial verbal prompt. Indirect verbal statements can also be considered a partial verbal prompt, such as “you can tell me to stop” or “you can ask for more.”

Gestural (G) – using gestures and hand movements such as pointing, tapping, or touching an object or picture; gestural prompts can be made more intrusive by pairing them with other types of prompts. Pointing to a chair silently while looking at the student is a gestural prompt. If the student does not respond, a VB/G (verbal / gestural) prompt could be to point while saying “sit down.”

Visual (VIS) – using written words, pictures, diagrams, checklists, color-coding or other prompts that rely on visual stimuli. Facial expressions can also be visual prompts!

Positional (POS) – arranging materials in a sequence or specific position in order to increase correct responses, or asking questions / doing tasks in the same order. Placing the correct picture very close to a student and incorrect responses farther away can be a positional prompt. Positional prompts are often but not always a form of visual prompting.

Tips

- ✓ Prompt fading must be planned ahead, when the goals are first introduced.
- ✓ Determining the prompt level needed should be determined when you take your baseline or initial assessment.
- ✓ Different types of prompts can be combined to be more intrusive.
- ✓ Avoid unintentional prompts (positioning of materials, vocal inflection, eye gaze, facial expression, doing things in the same order).
- ✓ Try to avoid verbal prompts in the form of repeated instructions, especially using a client's name repeatedly to verbally prompt. "Find letter H ... Jessica, Find H.... Jessica, look over here, ... Pay attention, Jessica, Find H...."
- ✓ Before moving to a different type of prompting, fade the magnitude of the prompt (decisive pointing is more intrusive or has a higher "magnitude" than a gesture made by turning your head to look at an object, full physical prompting has a higher magnitude than partial physical prompting, moving someone's forearm to wave has a higher magnitude than providing support to the elbow).
- ✓ If prompts are faded too quickly the client may begin to make mistakes. If this happens, increase the prompt level until they are successful.
- ✓ "Reinforce unprompted (spontaneous) responses more than prompted responses."

e.g. respect what people communicate to you "independently," (ie if someone asks you for something, if the rules and circumstances allow, give it to them). If they tell you about something, listen to them. (Use this information to help meet their needs).
- ✓ Taking data is integral to being able to fade prompts and avoid prompt dependence
- ✓ When no additional prompts are needed, the client is said to perform the skill *independently*.