

# Prompting Hierarchy

Prompting may be necessary when teaching someone how to use a communication device. Although prompting is a valuable teaching tool, it is extremely important that it is used only when necessary and to fade prompting as quickly as possible because we do not want people to become “prompt dependent”. For this reason, it is a good idea to give prompts from their least intrusive form to most intrusive form, otherwise known as a “prompting hierarchy”.

Always start with the least intrusive prompt or if you find this too time consuming, start with the prompt that is one level less intrusive than you usually end up providing.

## Independent

Present the communication situation and wait up to 10 seconds for the child to initiate. If the interaction is completed without prompt, then provide positive feedback (i.e., Great work!) and follow through with the interaction. If it is not completed, then move on to a general verbal prompt.

## General Verbal Prompt

Present the communication situation and ask an open ended question (i.e., what do you want? What should we do next?). Wait up to 10 seconds for a response. If the interaction is completed, follow through and provide positive feedback. If it is not completed, then move on to the specific verbal prompt.

## Specific Verbal Prompt

Present the communication situation and provide a specific verbal prompt (i.e., “If you want the apple, point to the apple”). Wait up to 10 seconds for a response. If the interaction is completed, follow through and provide positive feedback. If not, then move onto a gestural prompt.

## Gestural Prompt

Repeat the verbal prompt while providing a gestural prompt (i.e., point to the symbol for apple while saying “if you want the apple, point to the apple”). Wait up to 10 seconds for a response. If the interaction is completed, follow through and provide positive feedback. If not, move onto a physical prompt.

## Physical Prompt (hand-over-hand)

Repeat the verbal prompt and provide partial or full hand-over-hand assistance. Follow through with the interaction and provide positive feedback.

Keep in mind how motivating the situation is for the child. If the communication interaction is about something that the child really likes or is interested in, you will have more success in fading the prompts.