

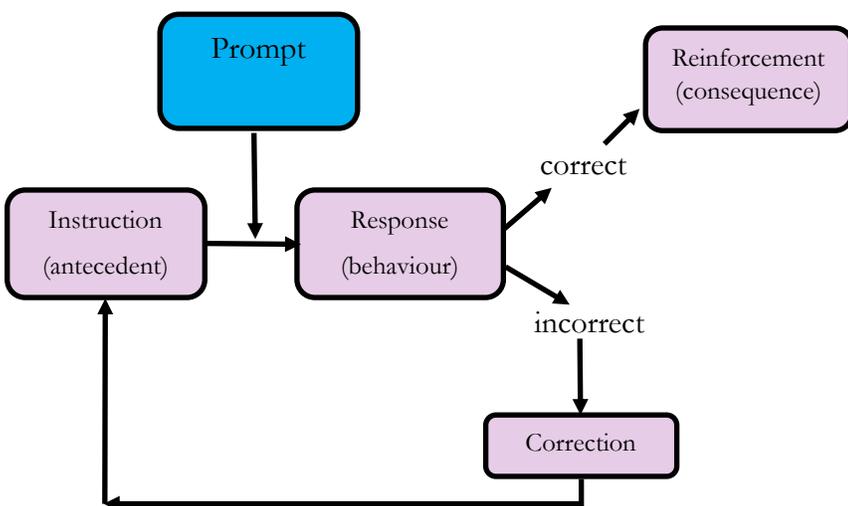
ABA in the Classroom

Prompting and Prompt Fading

When teaching new skills to students, or when students are not independently producing correct responses to instructions, prompting may be required. Prompting is the addition of cues with an instruction that increases the likelihood that the student will respond correctly and receive reinforcement (tangible or praise) for doing so. The more times that the student can access reinforcement for responding correctly, the more likely they are to provide that response again.

There are several different types of prompts and they vary in their level of intrusiveness on the prompt hierarchy (pg. 2). The prompt selected should be based upon what the student requires to be successful, while being the least intrusive as possible. When teaching new skills, most-to-least prompting is most beneficial. Most-to-least prompting begins with the most intrusive level of prompt required for student success. When reviewing mastered (learned) skills, least-to-most prompting can be used. Least-to-most prompting is where minimal assistance is initially provided and increased if necessary for the student to respond correctly.

All prompts should be reduced (faded) as soon as they are no longer required, as prompt dependency can occur if the student has learned to give the correct response only when a prompt is provided.

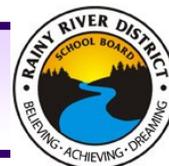


CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PROMPTING

- **Ensure the student is attending before presenting an instruction.**
- **Individualized Support**
 - The type of prompt used will depend on the skill being taught, as well as the student's current skill set.
- **Inadvertent Prompts**
 - Avoid unintentional prompts such as positioning of materials, voice inflection, facial expressions, and/or eye gaze.
- **Differential Reinforcement**
 - Provide greater levels of reinforcement for independent responses over prompted responses.
- **Plan to Fade Prompts**
 - Fade prompts as quickly as possible while still allowing the student to be successful.
- **Monitor Student Success**
 - Ensure the student is meeting success.
- **Consider Your Prompt**
 - Ensure that the prompt you choose focuses the student's attention on the instruction and does not distract from it.
 - Begin with the least intrusive prompt you can.
 - Verbal prompts are the least intrusive; however, they are the most difficult prompt to fade.
- **Least to Most prompting is ideal for practicing mastered skills.**
- **Most to least prompting is ideal for teaching new skills.**

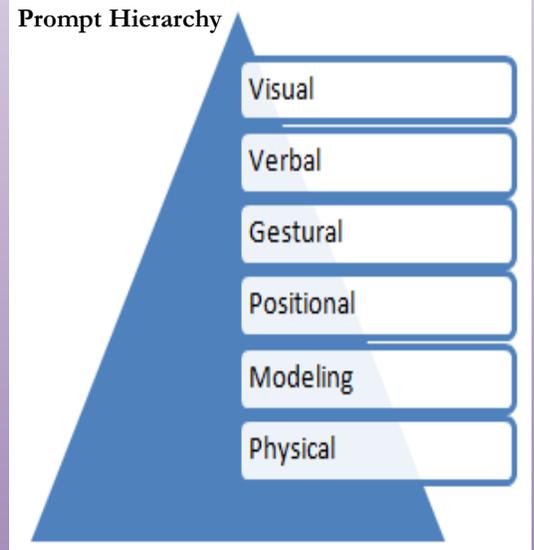
"They [prompts] help behaviour occur so that the teacher can provide reinforcement."

-Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 1987



TYPES OF PROMPTS

- **Physical:** Physically guiding the student to perform a skill (e.g. staff guides hand to select three counters).
- **Model:** A demonstration of the target skill by another person (e.g. staff demonstrates how to clap hands).
- **Positional:** Placing materials in a location or sequence that ensures successful completion of an activity (e.g. placing a target item (scissors) closest to student when asking the student to pass the scissors).
- **Gestural:** A physical movement or gesture by another person that leads to the student producing the correct response (e.g. staff points to a receptive target).
- **Visual:** Includes pictures, text, and symbols that can assist the student in producing the correct response (e.g. a picture of a cup can be shown when asking the student what they drink from).
- **Verbal:** Verbal cues which give information to help the student respond correctly.



**Full prompts require maximum assistance with the behaviour. Partial prompts provide varying levels of staff assistance such as a gentle tap on the elbow, a “w” sound for the correct response “water”, or the first three letters of text of the desired response.*

***Physical, visual and verbal prompts can each be delivered fully or partially.*

PROMPT FADING

Prompt fading is the process of systematically reducing and removing prompts that have been paired with an instruction, allowing the student to independently respond correctly. Prompt fading requires being able to fade a prompt quickly enough that the student does not become dependent on that prompt, but slowly enough that the student remains successful.

There are three elements to fading out prompts: physical, time delay and proximity to the student.

1. **Physical:** This includes fading a full physical prompt to a partial physical prompt, as well as decreasing the level of intrusiveness following the prompt hierarchy using most-to-least prompting. For example, if modeling the correct response (touching a named province on a map) was a successful prompt, one could plan to fade to a less physically intrusive prompt of using a gesture (pointing to a named province on a map).
2. **Time Delay:** This fades the use of prompts by gradually increasing the length of time between the instruction and the delivery of a prompt.
3. **Proximity to the Student:** Systematically changing spatial position in relation to the student (see Fading Prompts by Proximity image).

Fading Prompts by Proximity

Step:	Procedure:
1	Staff sit across from student
2	Staff sit next to student
3	Staff sit just behind student’s shoulder
4	Staff sit directly behind student

References:

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