



### **What is a Prompt?**

A prompt is an extra cue to help a person perform a particular behaviour or skill.

### **Types of Prompts**

- Physical or co-active: Taking child's hand to help him perform task, touching his arms
- Visual: Compic, photograph, drawing or real object
- Gestural: pointing, signing, gesturing
- Verbal: asking child to do something

### **How to Prompt**

Initially you may need to use 3 or 4 prompts to ensure the child achieves the desired behaviour. For example you may need to use a physical, visual and a verbal prompt.

Try not use more prompts than you need. Don't help the child physically if he can perform the task with gestural and verbal prompts only.

### **Use of Physical Prompts**

Physical prompts are sometimes necessary to help a child get started on an activity, or to give the child the opportunity to find out how it feels to be doing a particular activity.

### **Use of Visual Prompts**

Objects, photos, drawings, parts of the real object and Compics (or other symbolic drawings / representations) can be used as a prompt. Some children like to hold the Compic.

Visual prompts can be used in situations such as:

- To show an activity you want the child to do next
- To show a desired / appropriate behaviour e.g. show 'sitting' Compic at group time or 'quiet' Compic if the child's voice level is a problem.

### **Use of Gestures**

Gestures can be signing - Makaton, Auslan as well as natural gestures.

Gestures help to reinforce a verbal or visual prompt. For example, you can sign 'sit down' as well as say 'sit down'.

Show the Compic for 'eat', sign 'eat' and give verbal prompt 'eat'.

### **Verbal Prompts**

Verbal prompts can be key words or phrases that the child has learned. Be careful not to use too many words. Keep language simple. For example 'Hang up bag', 'sit down', 'fruit time', 'group time'

### **Fading the Prompts**

Fading is the gradual removal of a prompt. For example, fading a physical prompt from guiding child's hands, to holding on wrists, to touching wrists/hands lightly, to touching forearm or elbow, to withdrawing physical contact altogether.

Gradually fade the physical prompts, then the gestural prompts until only verbal / visual prompts are left. Then reduce these so that the child will eventually do the task independently.

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## An example of a prompting program to teach a child to “come” when called

Initially this will require two people.

STEP	PROMPT	EXAMPLE
1	Verbal + Gestural + Physical	“John, come here” Natural arm movement for “come” Adult (2) brings child by hand
2	Verbal + Gestural + Physical	“John come here” Natural gesture Adult (2) hand on child’s arm
3	Verbal + Gestural+ Reduce Physical	“John come here” Natural gesture Adult (2) walks alongside child
4	Verbal Reduce Gesture No Physical	“John come here” Natural gesture for come
5	Verbal Reduce Gesture No Physical	“John come here” Smaller arm movement
6	Verbal No Gesture No Physical	“John come here”

Many prompting programs will incorporate the use of Compics or other visual cues.

Reinforce each success a child has, regardless of how many prompts are used.

Practice often.

Ensure each step has been successfully achieved often before moving to the next.

Begin by being only a few feet from child and **gradually** increase distance at each step.