

PROMPT ROUTINES

Some of our students require support in initiating and undertaking an activity. We can help them do this by providing assistance through a prompt. A prompt is an additional stimulus that is presented to cue the student to perform specified behaviour.

There are three types of prompts: verbal, gestural, and physical.

- Verbal prompts are no more than a verbal instruction.
- Gestural prompting might include pointing and or tapping to get the student to focus on something.
- Physical prompts involve actual physical contact with someone, for example, physically guiding a student's hand to do something.

If this is the student's first introduction to doing something new, it is important to demonstrate for the student what you would like them to do. You may need to do this several times initially. Be sure that your student is visually attentive to the prompt and 'talk' him/her through the routine.

Others can begin to see your student's progress as various prompts are reduced and eventually eliminated. Work out a step-by-step process involving prompts for all adults **and** peers to use with your student.

Remember, consistency is essential for your student's learning



The prompt for this pencil sharpening activity will be illustrated on the next page.

HOW DOES THE CAREGIVER INITIATE A PROMPT ROUTINE?

1. Prepare all the materials; position your student so that they can easily perform the task.
2. **Verbal** - Tell your student what is going to happen. For example, refer below...
 - “John, it’s time to do pencil sharpening with your switch. Here is the pencil sharpener.” Show John the sharpener.
 - “Here is your switch.” Show John the switch in its proper position.
 - Tell the John to “hit the switch”.
3. Wait 10 seconds to allow your student time to respond to your request/instruction.
4. **Gestural** -If your student does not perform the task requested, then tell them again, what it is you want them to do and at the same time draw their attention to the activity by pointing to the activity or by tapping close to the activity, etc. to give them extra sensory input.
5. Wait 5-10 seconds to allow your student time to respond to your request/instruction.
6. **Physical (partial)** - If your student does not perform the task requested, then increase the prompt by adding some physical component (partial assist).
For example,
 - If your student is reaching to pick up a drink, then prompt them at the elbow as you tell them to “pick up the drink ” or
 - If they are using their head to hit a switch, then gently move their head in the direction of the switch.During this stage of the prompt sequence your focus is to physically move your student in the direction of the task without taking them all the way through it.
7. Wait 5-10 seconds to allow your student time to respond to your request/instruction.
8. **Physical (complete)** - If your student still does not perform the task requested, then increase the prompt by adding more physical input.
This might include:
 - Under the elbow support,
 - Hand-under-hand,
 - Hand-over-hand,
 - Guiding the head or foot completely to complete the task requested.You will need to combine the physical prompt with a verbal prompt (e.g. “push the ball”).
9. Reinforce your student at whichever point on the prompt sequence they are successful. This reinforcement can be verbal, physical and of course the successful completion of the task hopefully will also be motivating to the student.

NOTE:

- **Remember to use consistent language throughout the process.**
- **Try to involve your student’s PEERS in facilitating with a prompt routine**
- **Try developing specific prompts for your student and placing them where everyone can see them (e.g. on the wall, in a book close to your student)**