

Consistency With Cues

Strategies To Increase Desired Behaviours & Outcomes

(It is recommended that school teams consult with their local therapists when considering any of these suggestions.)

Prompts are often used by caregivers to help students partially participate. When using prompt routines, all team members need to be consistent in their wording and expectations. The first key to success is to obtain your student's attention to engage him/her in the activity. Select activities that are most motivating for your student. Be selective about how often you prompt your student, (e.g., in the number of activities; how often prompts are used during the activity).

Many students with severe multiple disabilities, typically have a lengthy delay in responding to cues. It is important to our students to allow enough time to respond before we repeat a request or change the prompt level. **Count slowly in your head to 15 to make sure you allow enough time for the response.**

The following is an example...

a) Give the **verbal cue** along with a look of expectancy, (e.g., "John, let's go to the lunch room".)

b) Repeat the **verbal cue paired with a tangible cue**. To assist in gaining your student's attention, tap on an object which s/he will use within the activity, (e.g. side of the walker or wheelchair, lunch container, etc.).

c) Use **gestures and pointing**.

d) Repeat the **verbal cue. Engage the student physically** by...

- giving a prompt at the elbow
- tapping on the top of the hand
- picking up the hand and lightly guiding it to the object.

e) **Model** the desired behaviour

f) Repeat the **verbal cue**. Do a short amount of the activity **hand over hand** for partial physical cue, (e.g., placing his/her hand on the wheel and wheeling, picking up the container and pouring, modeling the sign, picking up the stamp and stamping one or two daily planners). **Stop to see if the student will continue** on his/her own.

g) Provide **full physical** assistance to complete the activity.

If there is physical resistance, or any signs of **frustration or distress**, try to meet your student "half way", (e.g., "John, I'll help you get started wheeling, and then it will be your turn"). Repeat the prompt sequence for this activity when the student is more motivated, (e.g., more motivated to wheel after s/he has seen the destination such as a computer).

Cueing Students When Learning To Use A Switch

Everyone should use the same sequence of prompts when a student is working on learning to use a switch. This gives consistency between the people who are working with him/her. Use clear and simple language, (e.g., "Hit the switch"). The following is an example...

- Tell your student what the expectations are each time the appliance goes off. What is your **student's job** in the activity? (e.g. "John , Karen needs her pencil sharpened. Please hit the switch.") Wait 10 seconds for the student to hit the switch, with a look of expectation.
- If no response, repeat the verbal cue along with pointing out an **environmental cue**. (e.g., Show John the pencil and the pencil shapener.)
- If no response, **model** the expected behaviour (e.g., Put the pencil in the sharpener and operate the switch to sharpen it).
- If no response, give a **partial physical prompt** (e.g., Tap the John's hand).
- Repeat the verbal cue & **physically prompt** the student, from the elbow, to bring his arm forward. Wait 10 seconds for him to touch the switch.
- Repeat the verbal cue and fully **assist the student** to hit the switch hand over hand.

(Note: As you see your student responding more often without physical prompts, add an extra verbal prompt and delay moving into physical assistance.)

- Tell your student what the expectations are each time the appliance turns off, (e.g., "We need more music. Hit the switch.") Wait 10 seconds for your student to hit the switch on his/her own.
- Repeat the verbal cue. Wait for 10 seconds; repeat the verbal cue along with the physical prompt from the elbow if s/he does not respond on his/her own.

