

# PROMPTING AND PROMPT FADING

**Definition:** A prompt is defined as the assistance provided to the learner after the presentation of the instructional stimulus but before the response to assure a correct response.

**Prompt fading is defined as the systematic reduction of a prompt until it is eliminated or redefined as an integrated part of the task.**

## CONSIDERATIONS IN CHOOSING PROMPTS

- A. What prompt is most effective in acquisition?
- B. What prompt is most easily faded?
- C. Which prompt is less stigmatizing?
- D. Which prompt is practical to use in different environments?
- E. How do these considerations vary for different individuals?

## HOW TO SELECT THE PROMPT

- Take a good baseline of the person's present way of doing the task.
- Be aware of individual's learning style.
- Choose from visual, spatial, auditory, physical, within-stimulus or some combination of prompts
- Try to select the type of prompt that suits the type of task.
- Consider what the learner must attend to in order to complete the task.

## **HOW TO FADE THE PROMPT**

- Fade to what? To the natural cue.
- Rule: Know how to fade the prompt before you put in the prompt.
- Be systematic.
- Be flexible.
- Monitor carefully.
- Communicate level of fade to other people working on the same skill.
- Generalization of the skill: to other people, places, times, situations
- Probe. Occasionally take out the prompt to see how the individual is doing.
- Always individualize.

## **TYPES OF PROMPT/FADING TECHNIQUES**

### **Verbal Prompts**

- Use for tasks which are usually performed with verbal direction.
- Verbal prompt may be direct or indirect: said to the individual or to a group.
- Be sure language used in the prompt is understood by learner!
- Hard to fade verbal prompts. Can decrease in length, volume, intensity, or directness. Easy for learners to become dependent on verbal prompts.

### **Physical Prompts**

- Direct hand-over-hand or similar guidance.
- Use for tasks which should ultimately be done independently.
- Prompt should be directive enough to generate correct response and be faded gradually.
- Fading should be performance-based, not time-determined.
- Fade by decreasing amount of assistance provided, in an individualized and flexible manner.
- Communicate level of fade to others teaching the same skill.

## **Visual Prompts**

- May include gestures, pictures, print, demonstrations or modeling, and proximity cues.
- Gestures are more easily faded by decreasing intensity of movement and position of gestures.
- Pictures: use for learners with low language ability or sequencing problems. Fade by decreasing use or use as a permanent adaptation.
- Print: may work better than pictures/drawings for many learners. Easy to produce by others. Teaches reading skills at the same time. Less stigmatizing than pictures for older learners.
- Demonstrations: Use with learners with good imitation skills and social awareness, may require exaggerated cues. Fade to indirect verbal prompts or gestures.
- Proximity: Use with learners who depend on visual and spatial information. Sometimes physical proximity of the staff to learner may be an inadvertent prompt. True independence can occur only when staff has been completely faded out of situation.

## **Within-Stimulus Prompts**

- Part of task exaggerated on critical dimension, initially.
- May be proximity.
- May be color or shape.
- Can be labels or word cues that are made a part of the task.
- May be words or letters.
- Can use drawings or outlines of shapes of items to show the learner where to put an item.
- Fade to original task stimuli or to reasonable adaptation.
- May be approximated.

Note: Self-made, targeted, video tapes are an excellent teaching strategy. Make simple videos of someone doing the task or activity you want the learner to perform. Videos teach with rote memory and visual skills, strengths for many special learners. They reduce the need for prompting from another person by clarifying the task for the learner.