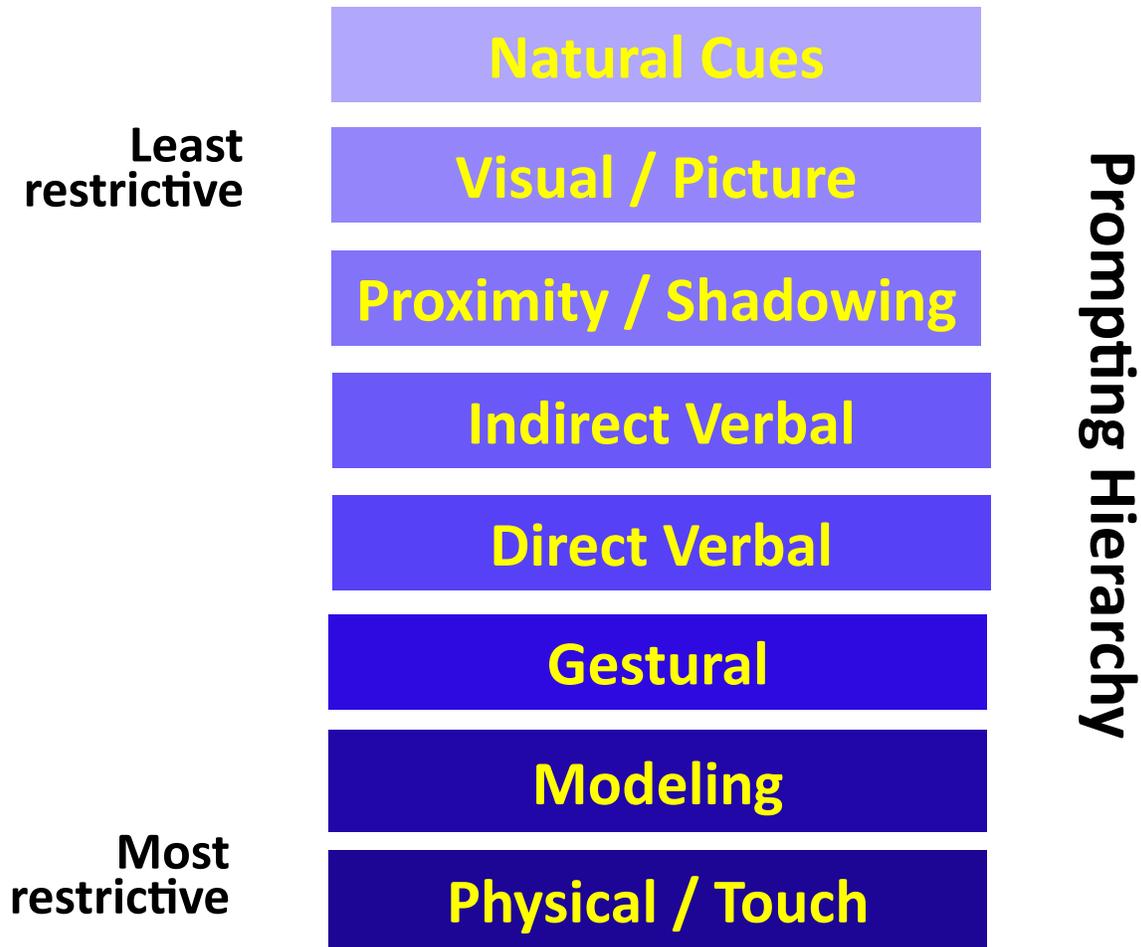


A large yellow folder graphic with a white label in the center. The folder has a tab on the left side and a shadow effect.

Instructional Techniques in Job Coaching



This diagram provides a visual representation of prompts going from least restrictive, less direct contact with the trainee, to most restrictive, most direct contact and involvement with the trainee. When an individual that you are working with becomes stabilized on the job, the prompts that are used should be as high up on this hierarchy as possible for a trainee and the task. Not every prompt on the hierarchy needs to be used when teaching a skill. Prompts should be chosen based on which are most effective for a particular trainee and appropriate for the task being learned. Whichever prompts are used they need to be faded as quickly as possible to avoid prompt dependency. Now we will review one-by-one each of the prompts identified on the hierarchy above.

Natural Cues

When the temperature reads 160 degrees, the burgers are done



Definition:

A **natural cue** is the stimuli in a setting that lets the trainee know that a particular behavior or activity needs to occur. These may also be called environmental cues. Whenever possible, the job coach should identify and associate a task with the natural cue in the environment that lets the employee know it's time to complete a task.



Implementing and associating natural cues:

Associating tasks with natural cues will promote independence and allow the coach to fade from the task more quickly. For example, dirty dishes on a restaurant table after customers have left would be a natural cue for a bus person to come clear the table and then wipe it down. A rack full of dirty dishes would be a natural cue for a dish room worker to run them through the dish machine. Natural cues are never things that are created or contrived in the work environment and do not need a fade plan.

Visual and Picture Cues

Definition:

A visual prompt is an object that has been visually altered or added to stand out so that the attention of a trainee will be drawn to it. Visual prompts, such as photographs, can be used to number the steps of a task for an employee or to demonstrate what the end state should look like. For example: a finished pot sticker, a correctly made bed or a place setting at a table.





Implementation:

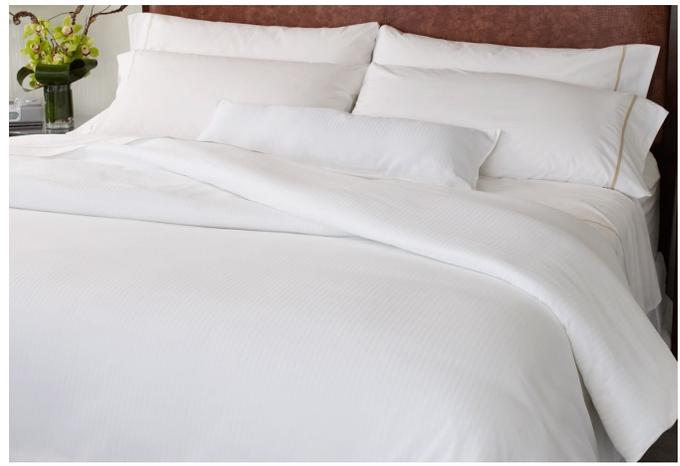
Examples of visual prompts can include: post-it notes, color-coded items or using colored tape on items to identify them. Photographs, diagrams, written lists, and drawings could also be used. Be aware that too many visual prompts can create clutter which will cause them to lose effectiveness. In a work environment, inform co-workers of the purpose of the visual cue and ask that it not be removed during training. Also, be sure to keep visual prompts up to date with new information, task changes or sequence changes.



Visual and Picture Cues

Fading visual and picture cues:

Unlike the other prompts, visual and picture cues can be easily transferred to a permanent adaptation instead of a prompt and therefore do not require fading and can be considered a modification or an accommodation.



Shadowing and Proximity

Definition:

Shadowing refers to a trainee being observed by a job coach who is near enough to intervene only when needed. This technique is often used when fading has started for a task. Generally, there is no intervention but the job coach is available in case any difficulty or questions arise. Shadowing allows the trainee to perform the job on their own but with support close by.

Proximity can refer to the distance between the coach and the trainee, but can also refer to the distance between the trainee and an object or cue in the environment that let's a person know it's time to do a job.

Example of using proximity of an object and fading:

Bob's job is to mop the floors at the end of each shift. When first learning his job, Bob forgets this task. To remind Bob to mop after each shift, the coach removes the equipment from the closet, places the mop bucket and mop in the room where it can be easily seen. As Bob learns the routine of his job, the coach will continually move the bucket and mop closer to the closet, where it should typically be kept, eventually placing the mop and bucket in the closet.

Each time the coach prompts Bob to mop the floor, he associates doing this task with the time, which is the natural cue in the environment that let's Bob know it's time to mop the floor.



Shadowing and Proximity

Fading:

Shadowing is most often used when fading has occurred from the job tasks. As the job coach is able to observe independence on the job, they should be able to gradually increase their distance from the trainee until they do not need to be present on the job site. A job coach will begin by moving further away, while continuing to observe. As the trainee continues to demonstrate ongoing independence, the job coach will continue to increase their distance, moving to areas where they are not able to observe, but will return periodically to ensure the trainee is not having any problems.

It is important while fading from the job site to communicate this process to the trainee, supervisor, co-workers and natural supports. When this process is not well communicated, it may have the appearance that the coach is not focused on the trainee and they are not doing their job.

Bob, you are doing very well, I've noticed that you are able to ask for help, set up your station, and move the materials. I am going to stand back here and just observe you working for a while.



Indirect Verbal Prompts

Definition:

An indirect verbal prompt cues the trainee to perform a desired task, but does not make an explicit statement of what to do. Another way to describe an indirect verbal prompt would be to ask an open-ended question.

What do you do to bring the fork-lift to a complete stop?

How do you add soap to the dish machine before you start it?



Indirect Verbal Prompts

Implementing indirect verbal prompts:

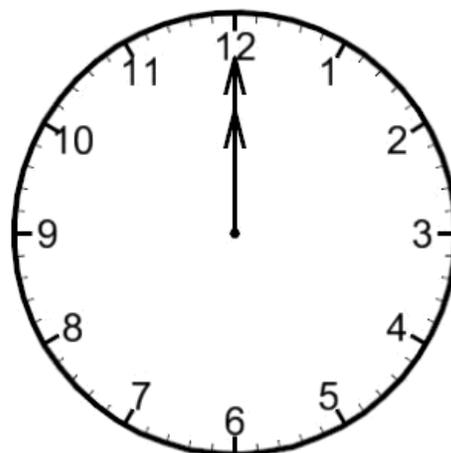
Open-ended questions are questions that do NOT elicit a yes or no answer.

Indirect verbal prompts do not contain instructions to complete the job task but help the trainee to recall the steps or process to perform a task or activity. These prompts lead the learner to engage in or correct their behavior without stating directly the desired behavior. Indirect verbal prompts are also helpful for the trainer to glean understanding as to where the trainee is in their understanding while learning the task.

Indirect verbal prompts will also help the trainee to make connections to natural cues in the environment such as a sound (buzzer, click, or bell), a visual cue (full garbage can, table of dirty dishes) or a length of time (morning break or lunch break). To use a question such as: “What do you do next?” may not be effective without more information or association with a natural cue for reference. Questions such as: “What do you do after you tie up the garbage?” or “How long is your lunch break?” are more useful to a trainee due to context.

Show me how long your lunch break should be...

How will you know when your lunch break is over?



Indirect Verbal Prompts

Fading indirect verbal prompts:

To fade indirect verbal prompts increase the time between the natural cue and/or visual cue in the environment and the prompt, allowing the learner to attempt the behavior independently, and decrease the directness. For example, “what do you put on your hands before you begin work?” could be changed to “you’re beginning work, what do you do first?” then to “you’re beginning work...(pause)” to “you’re beginning...(pause)” and finally to “beginning?” to prompting the trainee to put on gloves.

Caution: Verbal prompts in general are the most common type of prompts used, and are probably used more than they should be. They are the easiest to use and it can be difficult to sit quietly and observe the trainee struggle. Sometimes eagerness to teach by telling lulls the individual into being passive responders; they are encouraged to wait for questions. When coaching, allow the trainee enough time to problem solve as well as to try different approaches as they learn.

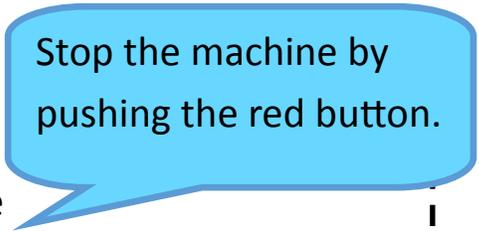
What do you do when the people leave the table?



Direct Verbal Prompts

Definition:

Direct verbal prompts are statements to the trainee that tell them exactly what they need to do on a task.



Stop the machine by pushing the red button.

Implementing direct verbal prompts:

Direct verbal prompts are over used and difficult to extinguish, so plan to fade from this technique as soon as possible to reduce the risk of prompt dependency. Be aware that it is not always *WHAT* you say but *HOW* you say it that is effective. Your tone of voice, clarity of speech, volume and the amount of information you share is equally important. Be clear and concise at all times and use repetition appropriately to help the trainee retain the instructions to memory. Fade from this technique as soon as you are able to illicit the desired response using another prompt.

Fading direct verbal prompts:

Using a direct verbal prompt in conjunction with another prompt, the direct verbal prompt can be faded away while keeping the other prompt in place.

One way to fade a direct verbal prompt is to increase the length of time between the cue and the prompt and/or decrease the directness of the prompt moving toward indirect verbal prompts.

It is important to note here, if you are using 2 prompts simultaneously, you need to have a fading plan for both prompts. It can be tempting to use a different prompt and add a direct verbal prompt for clarity. This can lead to prompt dependency.

Gestural Prompts

Definition:

Gestures are physical movements used to cue the start of, next step, or ending of a task for a trainee.



Implementing gesture prompts:

Gestures are most effective when they are a natural movement and can allow the trainee to keep a low profile on a job. When using gestures, make sure that they are performed within the trainee's visual field. Gestures should never involve making any physical contact with the trainee. Gestures are not only made using your hands, but can also involve movements of the head, the entire body or facial expressions. As you begin to work with someone you may develop different gestures with different meanings. Be sure that the trainee is clear about what you are communicating with a specific gesture.

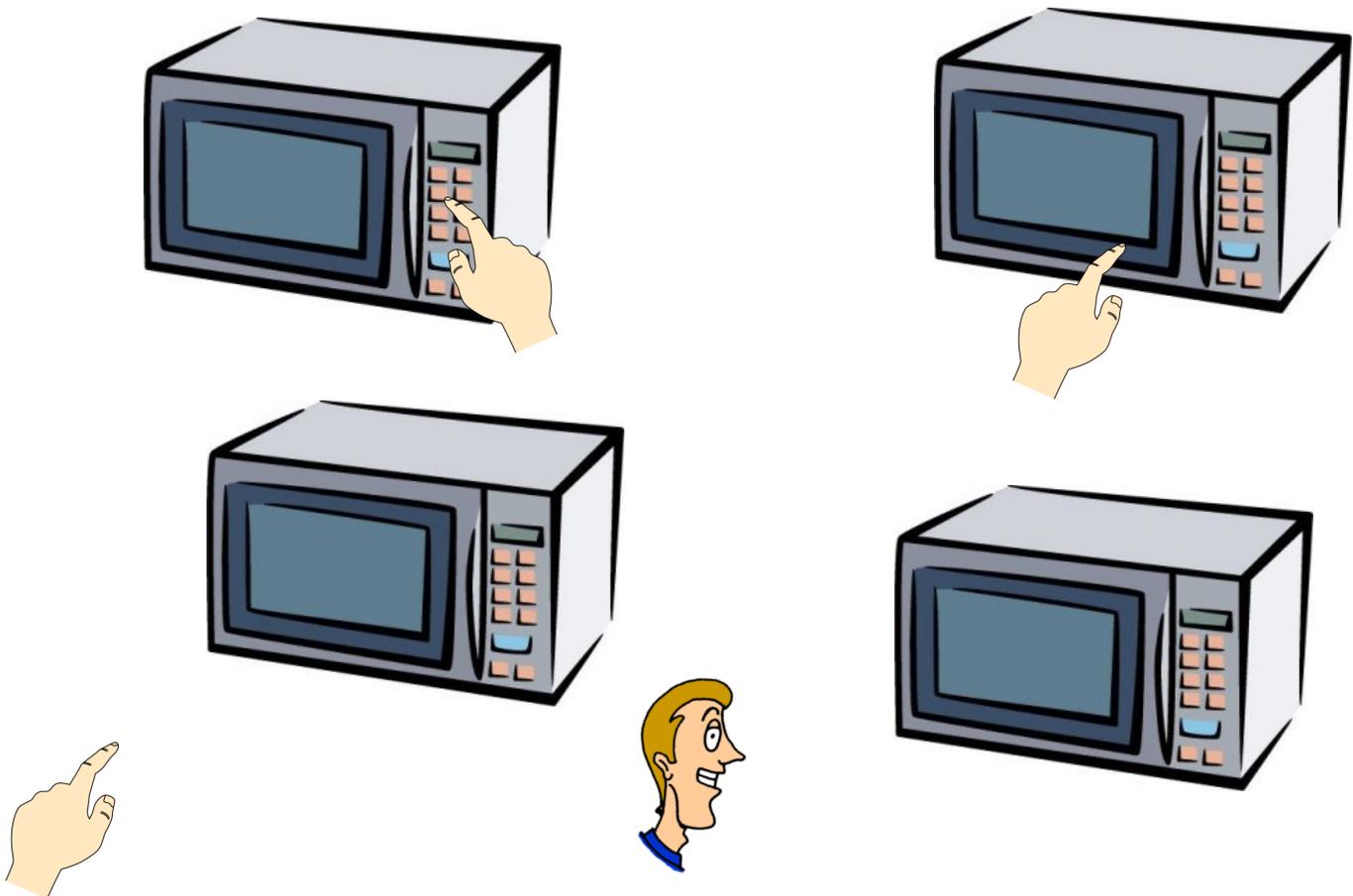
Caution: We often use gestures without being aware of what we are doing. While you're coaching remain alert to your eye, head and body movements when you're prompting a trainee.

Gestural Prompts

Fading from gestural prompts:

Gestural prompts are not difficult to fade. If you can get an appropriate response using this, use it in preference to verbal prompting. If you use both gesture and verbal prompting, you must have a fading plan for both prompts.

Begin by increasing the distance between the gesture and what the gesture is directing the learner to do. For example, if the prompter is pointing to a button on the microwave, they can point at the microwave face instead of the specific button, then to the microwave in general, and a head nod toward the kitchen. Additionally, decrease the duration of the prompt. For example, if the prompter is pointing to the microwave for 5 seconds, reduce to 4 then 3 then 2, and so on.



Modeling

Definition:
Modeling is completed by the coach or another person at the job and demonstrates for the trainee what the task looks like when it is being completed, as well as what it looks like when it is done correctly.



Preferably a co-worker or supervisor will model a task for the trainee, but in some instances the job coach will be required. When modeling a task the first time, a coach can describe the steps as they are completed. Be cautious of continuing this prompt on each trial of learning.



After the trainee has watched the task being completed correctly, the trainer steps back and observes the trainee, offering feedback to help correct and guide the task.

Implementing modeling:

Modeling is an effective training technique to use when the trainee is initially learning a job. Depending on the task, it might be helpful to allow the trainee to attempt the task. This will give the trainer feedback on where the trainee is in their understanding of how to complete a task and allow for a more effective training plan to be developed.

It is best to demonstrate one job task at a time and then allow the trainee to practice immediately after you demonstrate. You can repeat this process several times as needed. Modeling tasks allows the trainee to better judge the correct speed and accuracy that a task demands after seeing it done and then trying it. Modeling prompts are most appropriate when working with learners who have strong imitation skills or who are known to be visual and/or kinesthetic learners. When using modeling prompts, be careful about verbally explaining what you are doing. It might be necessary to do this during an initial demonstration, but you should not continue to couple modeling AND verbal prompts unless you have a plan to fade both.

Fading model prompts:

To fade model prompts, simply demonstrate less and less until the model becomes a gesture prompt. For example, if the job coach is using a model prompt to show the trainee how to stack plates in the dish rack, they can switch from putting the dishes in the rack, to pointing to the dishes and then the rack, and then pointing to the rack and increasing the distance and length of time between prompts.

Physical Prompts

Definition:

Physical prompts involve physically guiding the trainee's movement to engage in the desired behavior. Physical prompts can range from hand-over-hand guidance from learning how to turn a screw driver, to a gentle tap on the hand or shoulder as a reminder to move to the next step in the task, or to refocus attention.

Implementing physical prompts:

All physical contact should be as gentle as possible and job coaches should ask permission of the trainee first, before making any contact. Some individuals with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum may be very uncomfortable with any kind of touch. If you feel any physical resistance to this prompt, discontinue using it and determine if it is appropriate for use with the particular job task or the individual.

There is a wide range of use for physical prompting, below are a few examples:

- ⇒ Teaching muscle memory, as in the case of showing the trainee what it feels like to hold a hand mixer or hammer a nail.
- ⇒ Guiding the trainee's elbow to the next task.
- ⇒ Proper grip.
- ⇒ Gentle tap on the arm to refocus.

Physical Prompts



Fading physical prompts:

Fading physical prompts can be fairly simple. Reduce the pressure of the physical prompt or the location of the prompt so that less assistance is being provided. Full physical prompts are generally easy to fade to partial physical prompts and partial physical prompts are generally easy to fade to independence.

Helpful Tips For Training



- **Training begins where skill ends.** Engage in some assessment before training to determine where the trainee is in their understanding of a task. This will help to ensure there is an accurate training plan.
- Whenever possible, tasks are best taught by supervisors or co-workers at the job site. A coach may need to supplement learning or offer suggestions on how best to teach a trainee.
- When reinforcing a job well done, offer specific, constructive feedback that let's them know exactly what they are doing correctly and where they need to focus more attention.

For example: *“Bob you’re doing very well clearing the table, carrying the bucket to the dish room and picking up the napkins. Let’s review again how to wipe down the table so that it’s completely clean for the next customers.”*

Telling a trainee “good job, or you’re doing great” throughout the day does not let the trainee know where they are in the learning process.
- Do not reinforce a job well done with tangible items such as food, candy, or coffee. Pairing learning with a treat can greatly interfere with fading.
- It can be difficult to stand back and watch a trainee struggle when they are learning a new job. This is an important part of problem solving and learning. Resist the urge to step in too soon and too often. Allowing someone to struggle and learn will promote self confidence and self efficacy.
- Check for the trainee’s understanding throughout the learning process.
- Allow many opportunities for the trainee to ask questions and get clarification.