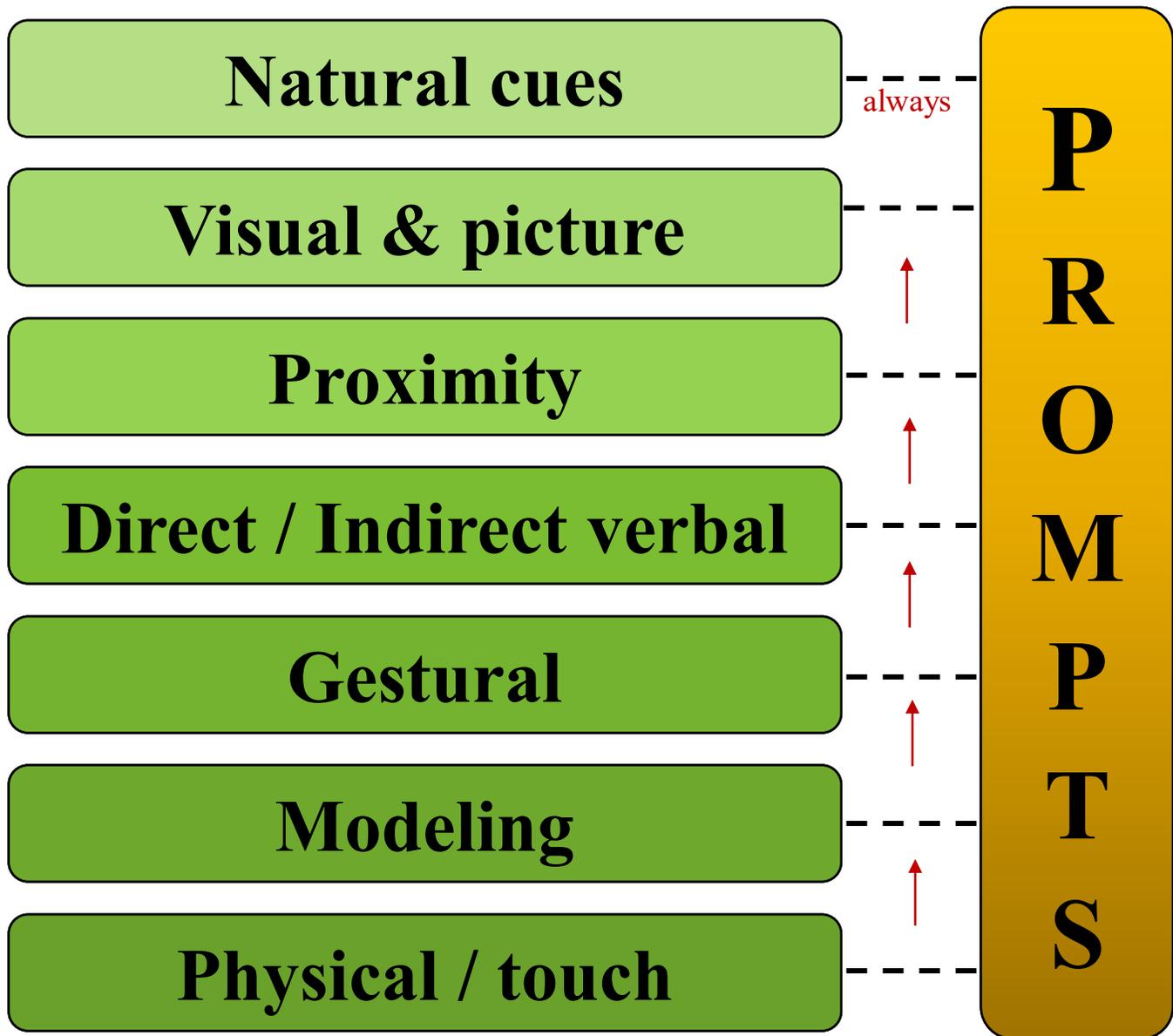




Job Coach Strategies for Systematic Training Techniques

Innovations in Employment Supports



The above diagram provides a visual representation of prompts descending from least restrictive, less direct contact with the trainee, to most restrictive, most direct contact and involvement with the trainee. When a learner begins to demonstrate the ability to perform tasks, there will need to be a plan to fade the prompts so that the employee is able to carry out the job or tasks independently. Not every prompt in the list needs to be used when teaching a skill. Prompts should be utilized based on what is least restrictive and most effective for a particular learner and effective for the task being learned. Whichever prompts are used they need to be faded as quickly as possible to avoid prompt dependency. This document will review each of the prompts identified above.

Natural Cues

Definition:

Prompting should always be paired with the *natural cue* in the environment that informs a person it is time to do something. 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 learner know it's time to complete a task. In the absence of a natural cue, a trainer may need to contrive a cue, which might be a visual or picture cue, a natural support, an alarm, or any other cue that is created, and that will draw the learner's attention to the task at hand.

When something has spilled on the floor, it's time to mop.



When the temperature reads 160 degrees, the burgers are done



Associating natural cues:

Prompting should always begin with associating tasks with natural cues in the environment that inform a learner it is time to do something. Associating natural cues will promote learning, 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. A cleared table is then the natural cue to wipe the table with a wet cloth. A bucket full of dirty dishes would be a natural cue for a dish room worker to rack the trays. Natural cues are not created in the work environment and do not need a fade plan.

After the customers leave, it's time to bus the table.



After you have swept the floor, it's time to mop the floor.



When the phone rings, it's time to answer the call.



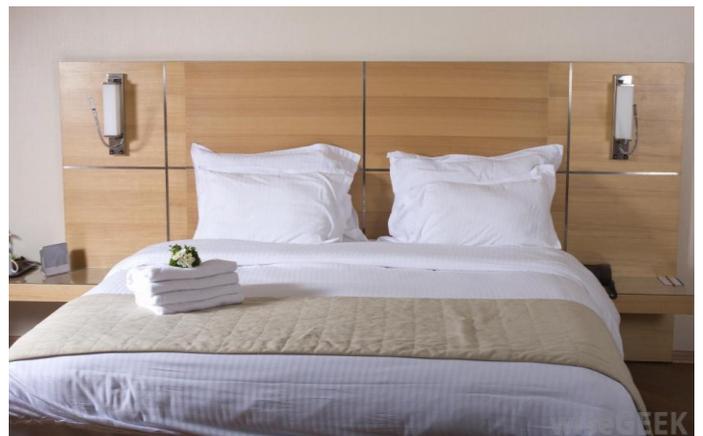
When the bus-person brings in a tray of dirty dishes, it's time to rack the trays.



Visual and Picture Cues

Definition:

When there is no natural cue in the environment, or if the learner does not respond to it, a visual cue may need to be created. 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.



Implementing Visual and Picture Cues:

Examples of visual prompts can include post-it notes, color-coded items or using colored tape on items to identify or organize. Photographs, diagrams, written lists, and drawings are also good examples. This is a time when a trainer can utilize the information understood about someone's preferred learning style and get creative. Be aware that too many visual prompts can create a visually cluttered environment, which will cause the cue 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.



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 does not require a fading plan and can be considered a modification or an accommodation.

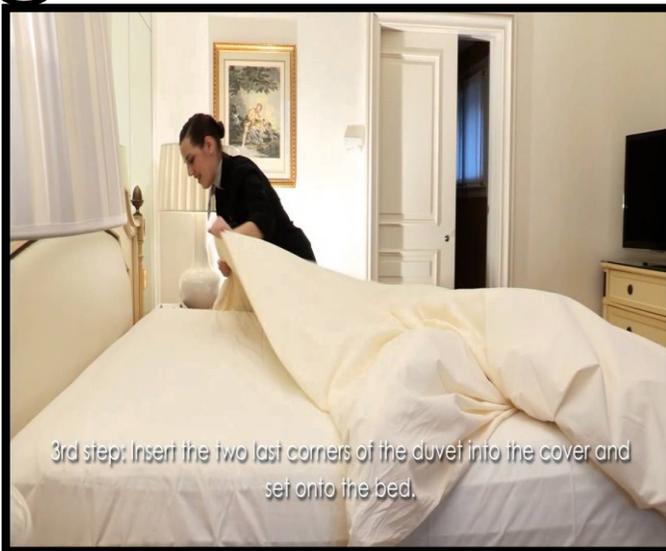
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Proximity



Proximity can refer to the distance between the coach and the learner but can also refer to the distance between the learner and an object or cue in the environment that lets the trainee know it's time to do complete a task. Note, the mop bucket and the coach are in the room and close to the learner.

Proximity—Shadowing



Shadowing is a term often used when a job coach is reducing supports and increasing proximity as part of the fading process. Shadowing refers to a learner being observed by a job coach who is near enough to intervene when needed, but in the background of the work setting. This technique is often used when the fading process has started for a task. Generally, there is no prompting, but the job coach is available in case any difficulty or questions arise. Shadowing allows the learner to be independent but with support close by.

Fading Proximity

Shana, you are doing very well, I've noticed that you can ask for help, set up your station, and send emails. I am going to stand back here and just observe while you work.



Utilize Natural Supports



As noted previously, shadowing is most often used when fading has occurred from the job tasks. As the job coach observes independence on the job, they should be able to gradually increase their distance from the learner 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 learner 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 learner is not having any problems. When fading proximity, the coach will also increase the length of time they are absent from the learner worksite.

It is important while fading from the job site to communicate this process to the learner, 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 learner, and they are not doing their job.

Direct Verbal Prompts

Definition:

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

Example:

“Move the boxes to closet”

“Press the red button”

Implementing direct verbal prompts:

When using a direct verbal prompt, as with all prompts, associate the task with the natural cue in the environment that lets the learner know it's time to do something.

Example:

“Larry, the customers have left, it's time to bus the table.”

“Gene, the door has just chimed, customers have arrived, it's time to seat them.”

CAUTION —Direct verbal prompts are often 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 sure to be always clear and concise and use repetition appropriately to help the learner retain the instructions to memory. Fade from this technique as soon as you can illicit the desired response using a less restrictive prompt.

Fading Direct Verbal Prompts

One way to fade a direct verbal prompt is to increase the length of time between the natural cue and the prompt and/or decrease the directness of the prompt and use indirect verbal prompts [see next page].

When 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.

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; however, this can lead to prompt dependency.

Indirect Verbal Prompts

Definition:

An indirect verbal prompt cues the learner 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, which are questions that cannot be answered with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’, and instead require the respondent to elaborate on their response.

Indirect Verbal Prompts

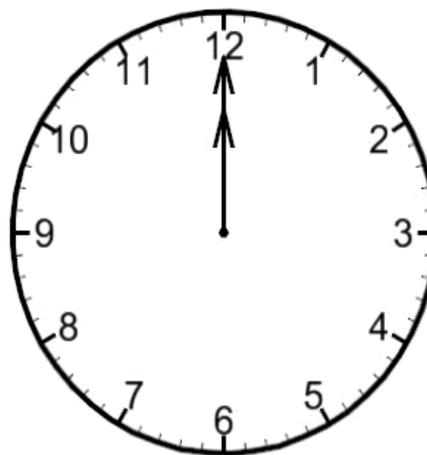
Implementing indirect verbal prompts:

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 learner 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 understand where the trainee is in their understanding while learning the task.

Indirect verbal prompts 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 due to context.

Show me what time you take your lunch break

How will you know when your lunch break is over?



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 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 learner struggle while they are trying to recall what to do next. Sometimes eagerness to teach by telling lulls the learner into being a passive responder; they are encouraged to wait for instructions. When coaching, allow the learner enough time to problem solve as well as to try different approaches as they learn.

What should you wear to work when it's cold and snowing?



Gestural Prompts

Definition:

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



Implementing gesture prompts:

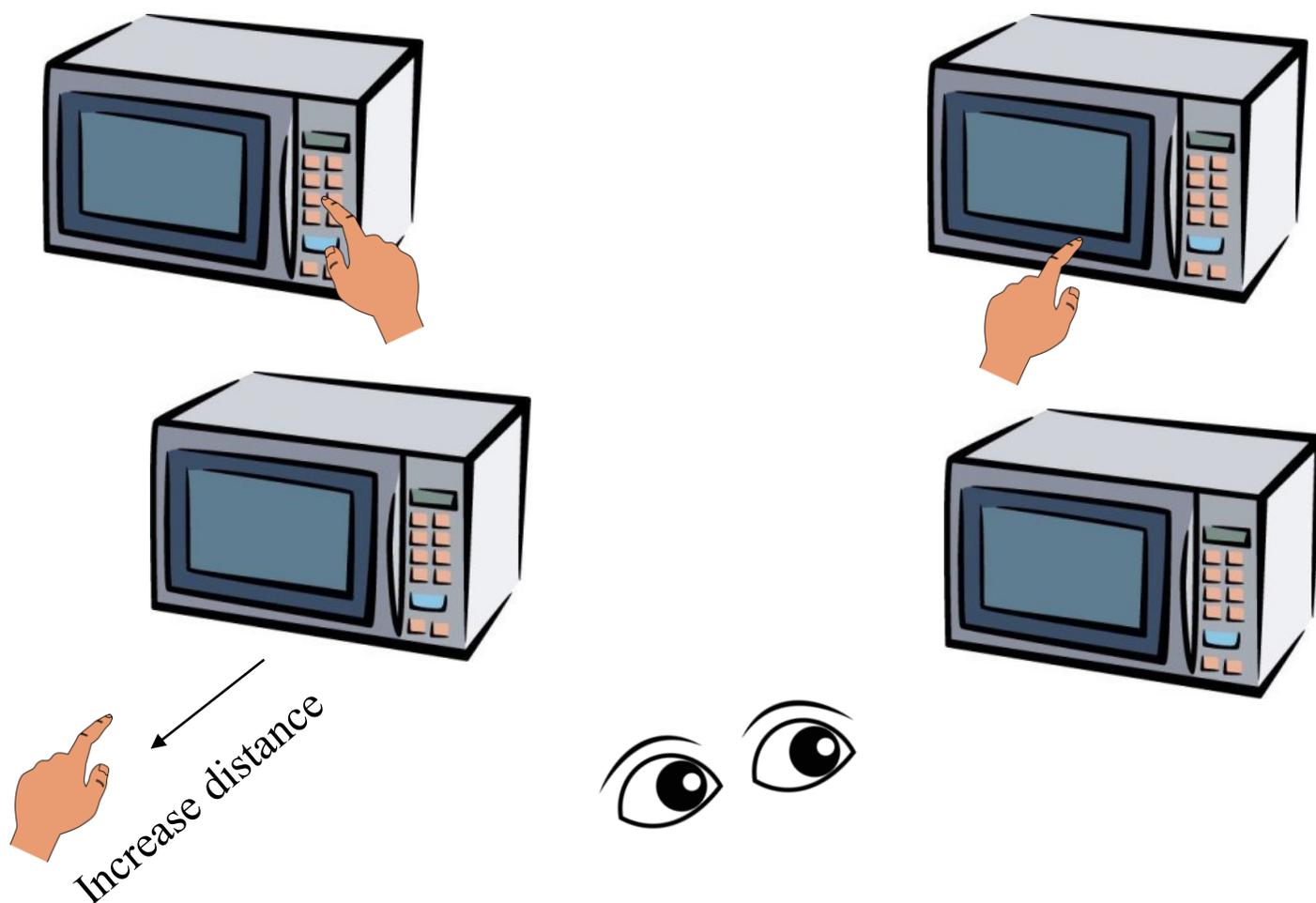
Gestures are most effective when they are a natural movement and can allow the learner to keep a low profile on a job. When using gestures, make sure that they are performed within the learner's visual field. Gestures should never involve making any physical contact with the trainee. Gestures are not 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 learner 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 prompting a learner.

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 direct 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 learner what the task looks like when it is being completed, as well as what it looks like when it is done correctly.

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 learner to attempt the task. This will give the trainer feedback on where the learner 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 learner to practice immediately after you have demonstrated. You can repeat this process several times as needed. Modeling tasks allows the learner 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.



Preferably a co-worker or supervisor will model a task for the trainee, but in some instances the job coach will be required.

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.



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

Physical Prompts

Definition:

Physical prompts involve physically guiding the learner's movement to engage in the desired behavior. Physical prompts can range from hand-over-hand guidance in learning how to turn a screwdriver, 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 learner before making any contact. Some individuals may be 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 a particular job task or the learner.

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 learner's elbow to the next task.
- Ensure proper grip.
- Gentle tap on the arm to refocus.

Fading physical prompts:

Fading physical prompts can be fairly simple in a vocational setting. 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 Teaching & Training in a Vocational Setting

- ❑ **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 instruct a learner.
- ❑ When reinforcing a job well done, offer specific, constructive feedback that lets the learner 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 on how to wipe down the table so that it’s completely clean for the next customers.”*
- ❑ Repeatedly telling a learner “good job”, or “you’re doing great” throughout the training does not inform the learner of what they are doing correctly or where they need to focus their attention. Be specific in your feedback.
- ❑ Do not reinforce a job well done with tangible items such as food, candy, or coffee. Pairing learning with receiving a treat can interfere with fading.
- ❑ It can be difficult to stand back and watch a learner 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 learner’s understanding throughout the learning process.
- ❑ Allow many opportunities for the learner to ask questions and get clarification.