Increasing Independence at Home, for Optimal Learning at School: A Toolkit for Families

# Tip 3: prompting

Watch this video: [Video - Tip 3: Prompting](https://vimeo.com/356560584/ce38912e12)

## Definition

Prompts are supports and reminders used to help children complete a task.

## Benefits

Providing prompts allows your child to experience success. If they do not receive enough prompts, they will continue to incorrectly complete a task, and then over time these will become habits.

Prompting can be used to encourage positive behaviour/s and proactively increase engagement in learning new skills.

## Using this tip

In order to support your child to do their homework tasks or practise new skills independently, use the least intrusive prompt possible (\*intrusive = disruptive or hands-on). The different types of prompts are often presented in an order from least to most intrusive. It is important to reduce prompts over time so students do not become prompt-dependent.

| Hierarchy of prompts | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Least intrusive | Independent | Child completes task with no assistance. |
|  | Visual | Example: attached reminder signs on desk or on walls, highlighting |
|  | Verbal | Short direction. Example: ‘Next step, keep working.’ |
|  | Explicit Verbal | Repeat the instruction. Example: ‘Please write your name at the top of the page.’ |
|  | Gestural | Point to direct child’s attention. |
|  | Model | Demonstrate the task and ask your child to imitate the action. |
| Most intrusive | Physical | Hand-over-hand prompting. |

**Note:** physical prompts refer to gently guiding your child's hand to help them do a task – not physically forcing a child to do something.

They are rarely required with school-aged children (they are used more frequently with children in the early years or for students with disability or additional needs).

**Example:** holding a pencil to help your child trace or write.

**Non-example:** physically moving your child back into their seat if they are walking around the room.

As soon as your child resists a physical prompt you must cease prompting (e.g. if they pull away from the pencil, you must let go).

## Encourage independence

Allow your child to try a task independently whenever possible.

**Start with independence** and work your way through the prompt hierarchy to find the least intrusive prompt necessary to help them to complete the task.

Do not use all of the prompts: select three or four that best suit the task and the child.

**Example:** For Maria to answer a question during maths homework, she may need a:

**1.** chance to respond independently

**2.** visual prompt

**3**. full verbal prompt

**4**. gestural prompt.

After giving a prompt, allow response time (three to 10 seconds) before trying the next (more intrusive) prompt type.

This will help to avoid over-prompting and children from becoming prompt-dependent.

When going through the prompt hierarchy, give a prompt type only once. If there is no response or an incorrect response, try the next prompt type.

If there are multiple steps to a task, reset the prompting for each step. Start with independence for each step and each task. Children may require different prompts for different tasks.

**Best Practice Tips**

When using the Prompting tip:

* Discuss with your child’s teacher
* Use the least intrusive prompt necessary
* Allow sufficient response time (three to 10 seconds)
* Prompt children before they incorrectly complete a task
* Reduce prompts over time, to increase independence
* If your child resists, stop prompting.

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