

PROMPT HIERARCHY

The prompt hierarchy is a system of cueing and when implemented, allows a student the opportunity to communicate. The cues are sequenced from least to most directive. By implementing in this order, the cues allow each student a greater number of opportunities to communicate.

PAUSE

Throughout the prompt hierarchy the communication partner is directed to pause. It is very important to focus attention on the student and wait for him to respond. It is recommended that the communication partner pause for 10 seconds before presenting another opportunity to the student to communicate.

- If the student initiates an interaction by touching, smiling, or vocalizing ...
- If you have just asked a question or made a statement about an activity ...
- If you have just arranged the environment so that the student must request an item in order to go on ...
- If you are about to perform the next step in a familiar routine ...

FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION ON THE STUDENT AND PAUSE.

STEP 1: Expectant Delay

Expectant delay is using the same cue as a pause. If the student has made any attempt to initiate communication or if you have arranged the environment, focus your attention on the student and wait 10 seconds. During conversations, allow the student to respond by focusing on him and waiting. Do not repeat or ask different questions. The student will have a greater chance of responding appropriately when given time to formulate an answer.

STEP 2: Open-ended Question

If the student does not respond to the pause, ask a “Wh” question and then pause.

Sample “Wh” questions are:

What do you want?

Why do you need this?

Who was with you?

When should we go?

What should we do next?

How can I do that?

Where is the bowl?

STEP 3: Request a Response

If the student responds to the pause or open-ended question with a behavior that is inappropriate to the situation or is at a lower level than desired, then request the student to respond more appropriately by **directing** them with what you expect. Use statements like:

Tell me what you want.
Use a whole sentence.

You need to ask me.
Use your pointing finger.

STEP 4: Partial Prompt

If the student does not respond appropriately **provide part of the answer** by:

- asking a question that contains a choice (“Do you want the red one or the blue one?”)
- giving a hint or a clue (“Is it the same color as your shirt?”)
- modeling the first few words of the answer (“Give me the ... ”)

STEP 5: Direct Model for Imitation

If the student has never produced the response you are seeking or he has not responded to the partial prompt, **provide a full model for the response and pause**. Use the student’s augmentative display when providing the model.

STEP 6: Physical Assistance

If the student does not respond to the model given, assist with **hand-over-hand modeling**, as appropriate.