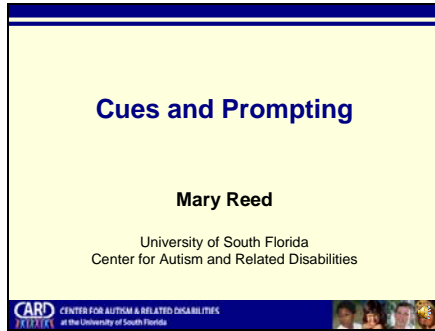
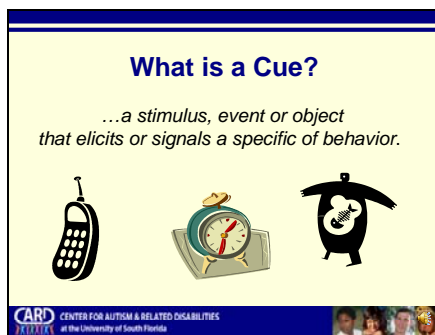


Slide 1



Hello, this is Mary Reed, the narrator for this tutorial on Cues and Prompting. This presentation will provide you with information about the use of cues and prompting strategies, a very important part of teaching a new skill. You will develop an understanding of the way children with autism learn. You will also be able to identify the type of guidance they need to learn how and when to perform a new behavior. To move to the next slide of the presentation, click your mouse or press the forward arrow key on your keyboard now.

Slide 2



What is a Cue? Quite simply, a cue is any event or object that provides a signal to perform a specific behavior.

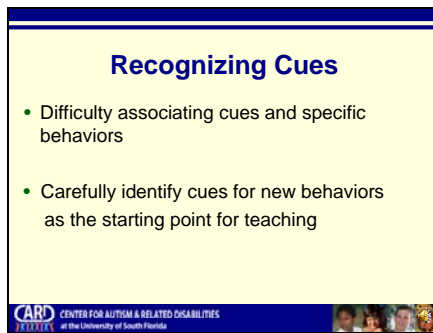
For instance, when the telephone rings, it's a cue for us to perform the behaviors of walking to the phone, picking it up and saying "Hello!". Another example is when you leave a note to yourself and put the phone book on the counter as a cue to reschedule a doctor's appointment next week. Your alarm clock also provides a cue each morning. Can you identify the behaviors it cues you to engage in when it goes off?

Often we rely on cues from our bodies, called *physical stimuli*, to know when it's time to do certain things. When you feel hungry and your stomach begins to rumble, often it is a cue for

you to make a snack or fix a meal. If the weather is hot and you begin to sweat, what behaviors does this cue you to perform?

Stop for a second now and think about the cues you routinely follow. You'll see we all rely on many cues throughout our day because they signal us to engage in an activity, task or behavior that is important to perform.

Slide 3



Recognizing Cues

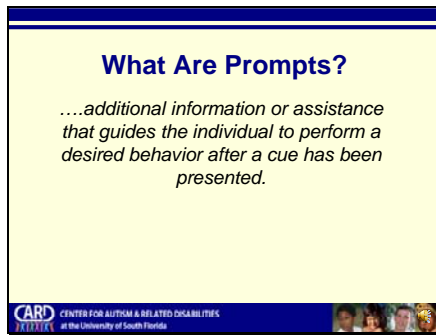
- Difficulty associating cues and specific behaviors
- Carefully identify cues for new behaviors as the starting point for teaching

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It is not uncommon for children with autism to have difficulty making the associations between environmental or physical cues and the behaviors often signaled by them. For example, they may not have learned the physical sensation of a full bladder is the cue for using the toilet. Other children may not realize that when another person says "Good morning!", it is the cue to look that person in the eye and say " Good morning!" back.

In order to help a child learn a new skill or behavior, it will be important to identify the specific cues that will signal when it is time to perform the new skill. Stop now and think about a skill you would like your child to learn or gain further independence with. Can you identify either a natural environmental cue or a physical stimulus that could signal the child to initiate the new skill or behavior?

Slide 4



What Are Prompts?

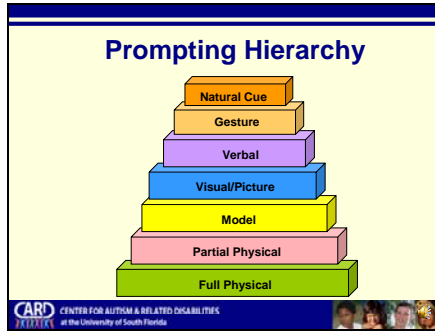
....additional information or assistance that guides the individual to perform a desired behavior after a cue has been presented.

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A prompt is somewhat different from a cue, because a prompt is additional information or assistance provided after a cue has been presented. A prompt directs the individual to perform the new skill or behavior if he or she does not respond to the initial cue.

Prompting, when used properly, promotes efficient learning because it ensures a correct response will occur. This creates success for the individual by allowing access to reinforcement. Prompting therefore promotes faster learning.

Slide 5



Prompting can take many different forms.

It's important to think of prompting as levels or steps in a hierarchy, ranging from naturally occurring cues to prompts that require physical guidance and are most intrusive.

Let's work our way through the hierarchy, starting at the top with natural cues

We have already discussed natural cues. Remember, they are things that occur in the environment or the physiology of the body that remind the individual to perform a specific behavior. After a cue has been presented, no additional assistance, information or prompting may be needed in order for the individual to initiate the targeted behaviors the cue signals.

If the individual does not respond after the initial cue is presented, additional prompting will be necessary.

The next level of prompting is to provide gestures. For example, a gestural prompt might be pointing with your finger, a wave of your arm or an exaggerated facial expression that gives the individual additional visual information about what to do next. For example, after directing a child to pick up his shoes and socks, you might point or wave your arm toward the items on the floor and then

wait for the child to respond.

Sometimes a simple gesture isn't enough information and the child may still not understand what to do. You will then need to provide additional information in order for the child to perform the target behaviors. The next level of prompting is verbal, or simply using a few key spoken words to direct the child further. For instance, you could add the words "pick up socks" or "now get your shoes" to the previous example if the child does not respond to a gestural prompt of pointing to the shoes and socks on the floor.

Many individuals with autism have difficulty understanding spoken words and gestures, but understand visual information more easily. For such an individual, using a visual or picture prompt may be necessary. A visual prompt can be a photo, a label, a drawing, a map or a printed word, so long as it is recognizable and understood by the individual.

The next level of prompting on the hierarchy is modeling. This involves providing a demonstration of the actual behavior you wish the child to exhibit. For instance, while teaching your child how to pick up his shoes and socks, you may actually pick the first sock up as a demonstration of what to do with the second one.

The last two prompting levels

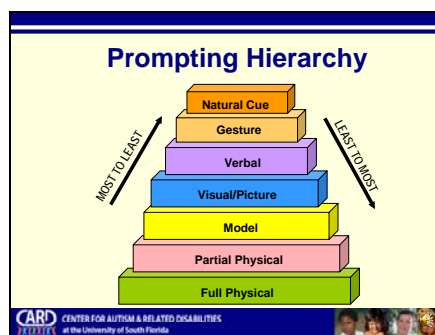
involve physically guiding the child through some or all of the physical movements involved in the new behavior. This could be either partial, or full, physical assistance.

You may need to rely on these levels of prompting when teaching your child how to perform an activity that requires fine motor movements or several motions in a sequence, such as pulling pants up or down, zipping or unzipping a jacket, stabbing and eating food with a fork or learning to cut with scissors.

Partial physical prompts provide enough physical guidance to get the behavior started, then remove or lessen the assistance to allow the child to complete the behavior more independently.

Full physical prompting provides direct physical guidance from the start of the activity through its completion.

Slide 6



Now that you understand the prompting hierarchy, it's also important to make a decision about where to start and how to promote greater independence as the skill is acquired. Not only will you need to determine which level of prompting will be most effective, you'll also need to plan fading the prompts so the child can perform the behavior on their own.

One way of prompting is to follow the "most to least"

strategy, in which prompting begins at the level most likely to successfully guide the child to demonstrate the targeted behavior, yet without providing more assistance than necessary. This will ensure the child will perform the new skill or behavior successfully and allow them to access reinforcement as a result. As the child learns the new skill, you will then begin to fade the level of prompting to one that is less intrusive. For instance, you may begin teaching the child how to run the water in the bathroom sink by providing full or partial prompting to turn the knob. Once you feel the child has learned what to do at that level of assistance, you can fade prompting to the next level by demonstrating how to turn on the water while the child watches. After the child has learned to turn the water on by following your model, you can fade prompting even further to a spoken prompt of “turn the water on”.

A second strategy would be to move in the opposite direction on the prompting hierarchy, moving from “least to most”. In this situation, you would always start with the initial or natural cue and allow a period of time, usually 5-8 seconds, for the child to respond. If the child does not respond within this period of time, you would move to the next level of prompting by using a gesture to guide the child’s attention and elicit the targeted response. If the child does not

respond, or responds incorrectly within another 5-8 seconds, you would prompt the response again, but this time you would move to the next level of prompting by using a spoken direction. This would be a verbal prompt. You would continue in this manner until the child has successfully demonstrated the targeted response.

Slide 7



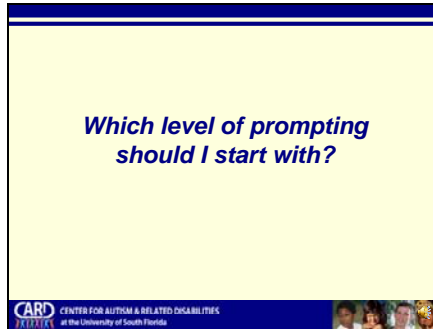
You'll also want to make some other careful considerations about promoting in order to effectively teach the child a new skill. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

Slide 8



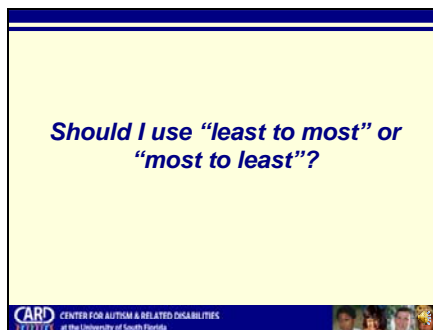
How does my child learn new things? Do they need to learn the skill a little bit at a time or is it better to teach the entire sequence from start to finish? Also, how much practice does he or she need? The answers to these questions will help you choose the optimal ways to present a new teaching situation and to plan the best use of prompting.

Slide 9



Which level of prompting should I start with? Remember that a prompt is just an extra bit of information that guides the child to perform the correct response. Therefore, you'll want to choose the level that is most likely to elicit the response you are targeting, without providing more assistance than necessary. You might find it helpful to think about other times when the child has learned something new. What additional visual, verbal or physical assistance did he or she need to be successful?

Slide 10

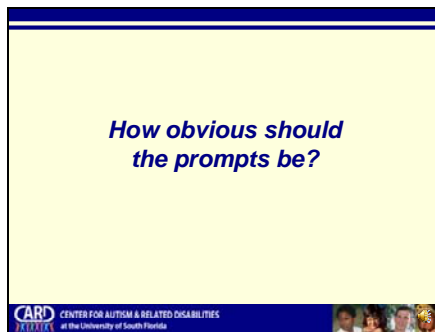


Which prompting technique should I use, "least to most" or "most to least"? The answer to this question depends on what you know about how the child learns, and the specific skill they are learning. In order to prevent errors in learning, some children need to experience success during their first attempts. These children often benefit from the "most to least" approach, because their first attempts are guided by prompting that ensures the correct response is performed. After you feel the child is successfully demonstrating the targeted behavior with the level of prompting you have initially selected, you can then fade to the next, less intrusive level of assistance. For example, a child first learning how to apply toothpaste to his brush may need full or partial physical prompting at first to learn the right way to squeeze the toothpaste from the tube onto the bristles of the toothbrush. When you feel the child can properly perform the skills with this level of prompting, you can then fade your physical assistance to modeling, gestural or verbal prompts.

However, other children have difficulty separating the prompt itself from the sequence of the skill they are learning. These children easily become

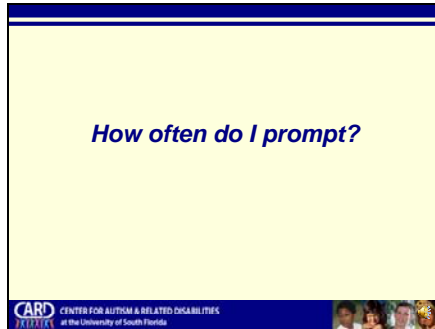
dependent on prompting, even when they have demonstrated they know what to do. This is because they have come to expect the prompt as a step of the routine. For these learners, prompting starts with the natural cue, followed by a gestural, verbal or modeled prompt if necessary. A good question to ask is *“Will the prompt become a part of the sequence the child learns?”*. The “least to most” approach will consistently offer the minimum level of assistance that is needed. You will also need to think carefully about how to move to a less intrusive level of prompting as quickly and naturally as possible, but without compromising what the child has already learned.

Slide 11



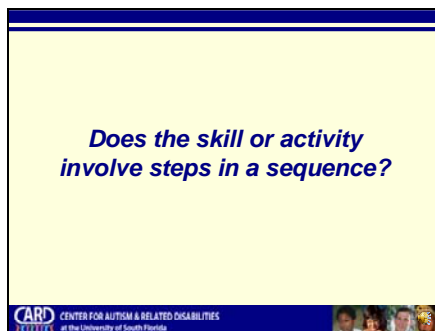
How obvious should the prompts be? Remember, effective prompting always delivers enough information to guide the correct response, without offering more than is needed. Therefore, be sure the prompt you choose captures the child’s attention and provides the right type of information about what to do.

Slide 12



How often do I prompt? Once a prompt has been delivered, be sure to wait a period of time – usually 5-8 seconds – before prompting again if he or she doesn't respond. This delay will allow the child time to process and interpret the prompt, as well as to follow through on it. Prompting too quickly may be overwhelming and will not allow the child enough time to demonstrate what they may have learned. If the child does not respond to the prompt after a delay of up to 8 seconds, you will want to prompt again, using a more intrusive prompt that provides more information about what to do.

Slide 13



Does the skill or activity involve steps in a sequence? Breaking an activity into a sequence of steps that flows naturally from start to finish creates a routine that will also promote the child's learning and independence. As the routine of the activity becomes more familiar to the child, the completion of each step will naturally signal what to do next. For instance, there are many steps involved in learning to properly unload a dishwasher. These steps do not have to follow a specific sequence, but we often naturally create them. First we unload the top rack, with the clean glasses and cereal bowls, then we unload the bottom rack with plates, pans and silverware. When each step

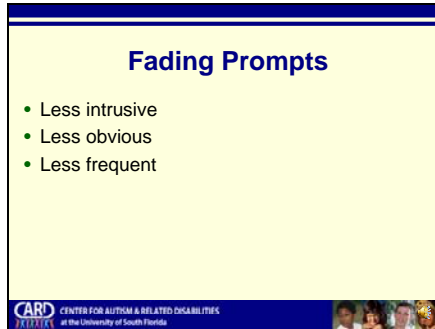
is finished, it automatically reminds us what to do next until the job is completed. The same strategy, called task analysis, can be used to teach your child a new skill or activity. If you would like to learn more about *task analysis*, you may want to also view the CARD tutorial on that subject.

Slide 14



Can prompts be paired together? Yes! This strategy will be most effective if you pair prompts from two levels at the same time. For instance, when teaching a child how to purchase a drink from a vending machine, you might find he or she will learn each step more easily if a verbal prompt to “put the coins in the slot” is delivered along with a pointing gesture that indicates the location of the slot. This will also allow you to fade your prompts more quickly. In the example above, you will soon be able to fade the spoken prompt to simply pointing to the coin slot without speaking.

Slide 15



Fading Prompts

- Less intrusive
- Less obvious
- Less frequent

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Since our ultimate goal in teaching any new skill is for the child to gain as much independence as possible, we also have to consider how that will occur. This will involve fading the initial prompts used to teach the skill, allowing more independence to perform it without assistance. This can be done in 3 ways.

First, try making the prompts less intrusive, by moving up the prompting hierarchy to the next level of prompting. You can also make the prompts less obvious and more general. Finally, you can make them less frequent, allowing greater lengths of time for responding to previous cues and prompts.

Slide 16



Questions?

- **Give us a call!**
- 800-333-4530
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- **Send us a e-mail!**
- card-usf@fmhi.usf.edu

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Now that you've learned something about cues and prompting, you probably have other questions about how this will related to teaching your own child or student a new skill. Feel free to contact the USF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities for specific answers and additional assistance.