Prompts and Prompt Fading

by Capella Partnered with CARD

WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will explore prompts and prompt fading by defining and discussing the following:

1. Prompting Definition and Use
2. Types of Prompts
3. Prompt Fading

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1. Prompting Definition and Use

Prompting involves giving extra help to enable the patient to perform a specific response so that it can be reinforced.

A **prompt** is a stimulus or "hint" presented in addition to the S^D to assist the patient in providing a correct response.

This diagram may help you understand what we mean when we say a prompt is an additional stimulus. It's something we say or do, in addition to the S^D, to help the patient respond.

S^D

\+ $\Rightarrow$ R $\Rightarrow$ S^R
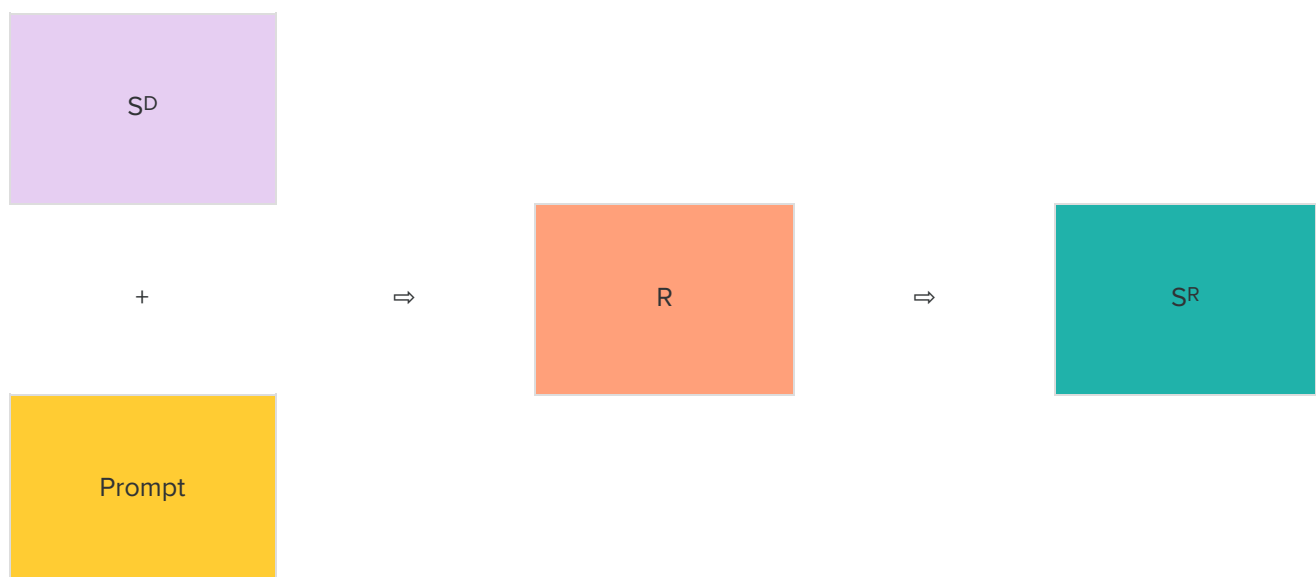
Prompt

The stimulus that evokes a response through pairing (stimulus ➜ response ➜ reinforcement) eventually comes to have stimulus control over a response. Prompts are supplementary stimuli that will temporarily have
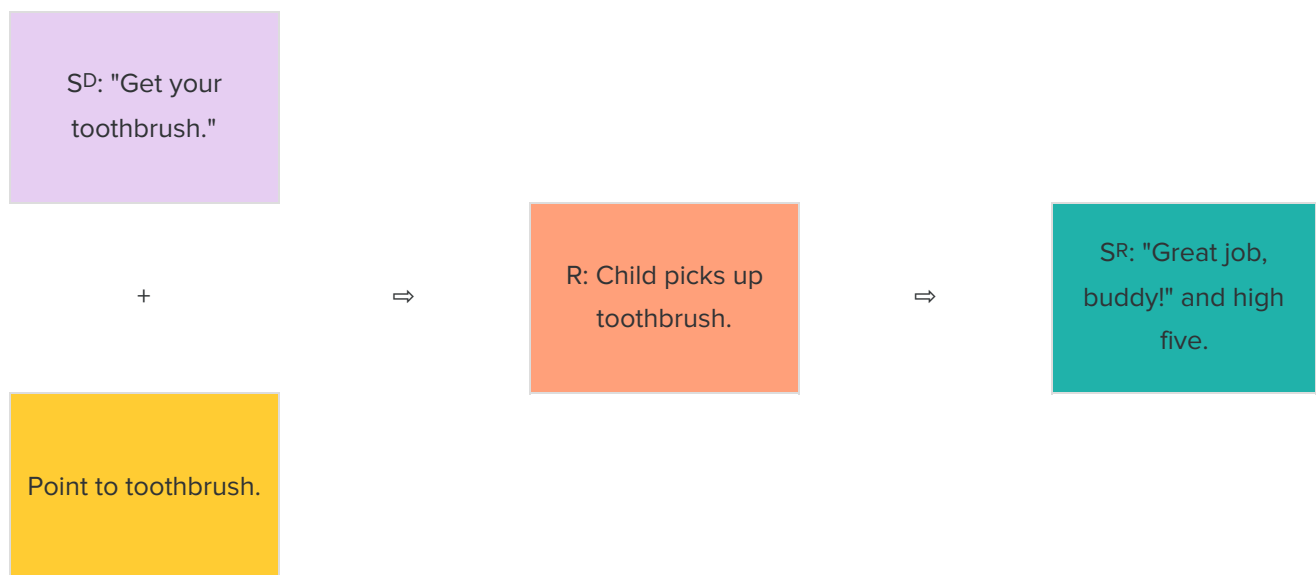
stimulus control over a response.

↪ **EXAMPLE** In this case, Jake does not know how to respond to the instruction or S^D, "Sit down." To teach Jake to respond to this instruction, the behavior technician physically guides the patient to respond.

| S^D: "Sit Down."				
+	⇒	Jake sits.	⇒	S^R: Give Jake chip.
Physically guide Jake.				

The prompt differs from the S^D in that the prompt does not stand on its own. You present a prompt with an S^D to help the patient respond.

↪ **EXAMPLE** In this case, the instruction was given to get a toothbrush. To teach the patient to respond to this instruction, the behavior technician points to the toothbrush to indicate where the patient needs to look to get it.

S^D: "Get your toothbrush."				
+	⇒	R: Child picks up toothbrush.	⇒	S^R: "Great job, buddy!" and high five.
Point to toothbrush.				

↪ **EXAMPLE** In this case, Jacob can't expressively label or say, "Car," when he sees a car. To teach Jacob to respond to this S^D, the behavior technician vocally gives the patient the answer as the first step in teaching the patient to expressively label the car.

S^D: Hold up picture.

(purple box) + "Car." (yellow box)	⇨	R: "Car"	⇨	S^R: Tickle Jacob.
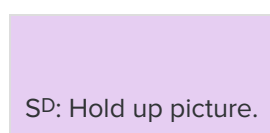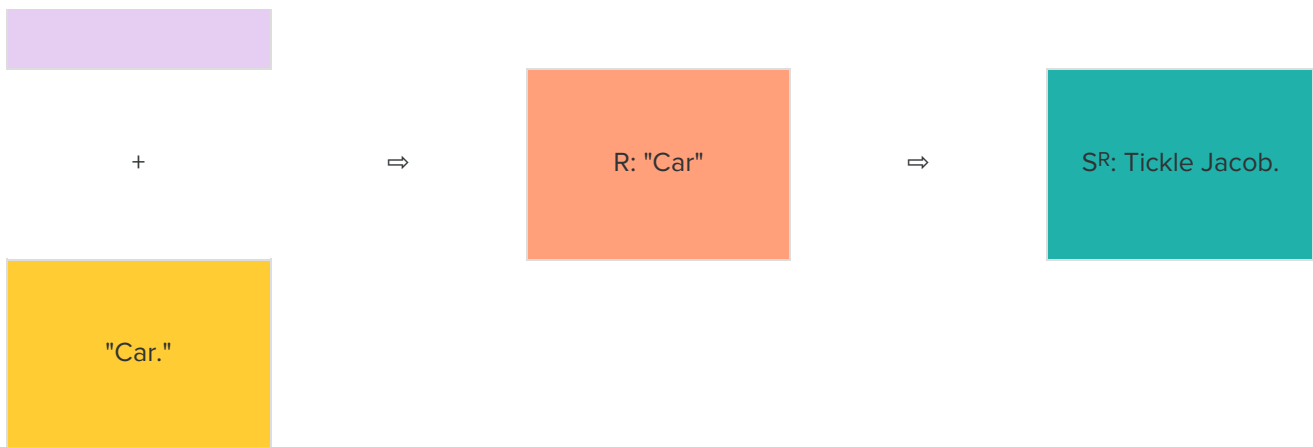
Video Transcription

OK, I'm going to show you how to do it. And I'm going to stand right behind you. I'm going to tilt the paper because it makes it easier that way. And then I'm just going to guide your hand slowly. OK? So we're going to go all the way up to the top and then come down and around. Perfect.

OK.

That's all.

Thank you.

Prompts are used by all individuals to help us perform tasks and be more successful in various situations. We use prompts in ABA for several reasons:

- Prompts help make learning more effective and efficient.
- Prompts allow patients to immediately access reinforcers.
- Prompts help to avoid frustration and confusion for the patient.
- Prompts can be individualized according to the patient's needs and the specific target behavior.

⚙ **THINK ABOUT IT**

Can you think of a prompt that occurred in your day?

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Prompt
A stimulus or "hint" presented in addition to the S^D to assist the patient in providing a correct response

2. Types of Prompts

Many different types of prompts exist (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2020). During this training, we will discuss and provide examples of eight of the most commonly used prompts for teaching patients with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

1. Physical Prompt

A physical prompt involves manual guidance of the patient to facilitate a correct response, in one of two ways:

- Full Physical: Providing guidance for the entire time, sometimes called "Hand over Hand." For instance, if the S^D is "Clap," the behavior technician gently pushes the patient's hands together.
- Partial Physical: Providing guidance for part of the performance of the skill. For instance, if the S^D is "Clap," the behavior technician gently moves the patient's hands towards each other, but not all the way together.

↪ EXAMPLE A full physical prompt might involve helping a patient write their name hand over hand, while a partial physical prompt might involve only guiding their hand to the paper.

Video Transcription

At some point. Good. January. February.

2. Gestural Prompt

A gestural prompt refers to gesturing in some way with your body to indicate the correct response to the patient. The behavior technician points, nods their head, or gazes notably to indicate target stimulus.

↪ EXAMPLE The behavior technician says "Give me blue," and points to the blue card.

↪ EXAMPLE The behavior technician says "Find fish," and glances at the toy fish.

Video Transcription

OK. Thank you. Come sit down in the chair. Oh, good job.

[WATER RUNNING]

Nicolas, over here. What letter--

3. Model Prompt

Model prompts involve providing a physical demonstration of the desired behavior for the patient to imitate.

↪ EXAMPLE "I'll show you how to first, then you do it!"

↪ EXAMPLE The behavior technician says "Take off sock," and takes off their own sock.

⚙ THINK ABOUT IT

Think of an example of a time someone modeled something for you. For example, you might see someone on a cooking show use an ingredient in a new way. This serves as a model – now you can try the new recipe, too!

Video Transcription

How do this?

Get your wrist.

OK, let's do the next one.

4. Echoic Prompt

An echoic prompt means providing vocal demonstration of the desired behavior for the patient to imitate, in one of the following ways:

- Full Echoic: Fully vocalizing the desired behavior

  ⤷ EXAMPLE "What is your name?" "Marie!"

  ⤷ EXAMPLE "What color is this?" "Blue!"

- Partial Echoic: Partially vocalizing the desired behavior

  ⤷ EXAMPLE "What is your name?" "Ma…"

  ⤷ EXAMPLE "What color is this?" "Bl…"

Video Transcription

How old is Jack? Say I'm two.

I two.

Yay! Good job.

Say here we go.

There go.

Yeah. Good talking. Very good.

Nice job, [INAUDIBLE]. That looks beautiful.

Mine is better than yours.

Is it better than mine?

Yes.

It looks beautiful. Should you circle that one?

Is it the best?

It is the best.

Is it better than yours?

You can say it looks so good.

It looks so good.

It does. Are you proud of yourself?

Yep.

You should be. It's beautiful. Let's try another one.

5. Directive Prompt

Directive prompts involve giving verbal instructions to guide the patient's behavior. They may include textual, visual, or other verbal cues, such as directions on how to do something, like how to make a snack, how to prepare to do homework, etc.

> ⤳ EXAMPLE The behavior technician rolls a ball to the patient. The behavior technician says "Push," and makes the pushing motion with their hand to demonstrate.

> ⤳ EXAMPLE "What is your name?" "Say 'Marie.'"

🚩 **HINT**

Note the distinction between an echoic and directive prompt when it comes to vocal responses. The echoic is only the vocal response that should be repeated, whereas the directive includes the instruction "Say…" Your BCBA will determine which type of prompt is more appropriate for a given patient.

Video Transcription

Good. Remember, go all the way to the wall, OK?

Yeah.

There you go. There you go. All the way to the wall. Perfect

What did I do for you?

Thank you.

Awesome. Thank for saying thank you. Can you look at my eyes?

Thank you.

You're welcome.

--How to play with her.

Try again. Go over there and walk back to her again. Jack Riley, come back. Walk nicely to her.

Step back.

Walk nicely. Oh yeah. High five. Yeah! You did it. She's so happy.

Ask him again.

Have you ever been to South Dakota?

No.

So you could say, have you? Liam, stop.

Have you?

I've never been to South Dakota.

Me neither.

Cool.

6. Proximity Prompt

Proximity prompts refer to altering the location or placement of a stimulus to facilitate a desired response, such as placing the answer closer to your patient in a DTT program.

⤳ **EXAMPLE** The behavior technician places a lemon and a banana in front of the patient. They make sure that the patient will respond correctly by placing the lemon closer to the patient than the banana. The behavior technician says "Give me lemon."

⤳ **EXAMPLE** The behavior technician places the patient's shoes by the front door, and when standing at the door to go outside, asks the patient, "What do you need to put on before we go outside?"

Video Transcription

OK. Are you ready? OK. Point to the one that means school crossing. Nice job. That's right. That one means school crossing. Great job.

7. Stimulus Manipulation Prompt

With a stimulus manipulation prompt, the behavior technician changes some aspect of the target stimulus (for example, color, size, shape), such as making the target response larger than the distracter items.

↪ EXAMPLE The behavior technician wants the patient to identify the word "Dog" from an array of three words: Dog, Cat, Pig. The behavior technician prints the word "Dog" in color (blue) while the other words are in black and white.

Video Transcription

Touch orange. Super! Touch orange. Wow! Touch orange. Wow! That was so good. Touch orange. Super job! Touch orange. Wow! Super job! Touch orange. Yeah, you did it!

Touch orange. Oh wow! Way to go, sweetie! Touch orange. That was so good. That was so good! That was so good!

Touch orange. Oh my goodness! Super! High five! Touch orange. Oh, so smart. You are such a smarty pants!

Touch orange. Whoa! You did it! That was super duper!

Touch orange. Oh! Wow!

8. Visual and Textual Prompts

With a visual or textual prompt, the behavior technician shows a picture or object (visual) or a word (textual) to the patient to evoke the correct response.

↪ EXAMPLE The behavior technician asks "What has fur?" and shows a flash card with a picture of a dog when the target response is "Dog."

Video Transcription

OK, so are you ready to make coffee?

Yeah.

All right. So here's the instructions. Go ahead and read the instructions and follow the steps, OK?

OK. Put filter in. Two scoops of ground in.

All right. Feet out, please. What's today's date?

13.

Nice job.

Good job! I love how you--

OK, so who wants to start the conversation? OK, go ahead.

Do you like cool toys?

All right, I'm going to tell you a story. And I want you to listen really closely, OK?

OK.

On Monday, Phineas and Ferb went to the carnival, and they ate cotton candy and rode on the Ferris wheel. They had a lot of fun. OK, Andre. Who went?

Phineas and Ferb.

Oh, good listening, my friend. Way to go.

3. Prompt Fading

The most important thing about prompting is that it has to work. It must help the patient make the correct response.

The second most important thing about prompting is that you have to get rid of it! So, as soon as a prompt starts to work, you should start removing it. The process by which prompts are removed is called prompt fading, defined as the systematic removal of a prompt across successive trials.

This two-part process consists of

- the transfer of control of the behavior from the prompt to the S^P/MO
- the gradual reduction of prompts until the patient no longer needs them to perform the skill independently

Behavior technicians can use fading procedures by reducing the amount of assistance they have to give to get a correct response from the patient. We know that prompts are supplementary stimuli that will temporarily have stimulus control over a response. Through fading, the goal is to transfer the stimulus control from the prompt to the S^D so that the S^D will evoke the response without the aid of a prompt.
This may involve fading one specific prompt or various types of prompts. Fading is critical in order to avoid prompt dependency.

> ↪ EXAMPLE Let's look back at a case. Jacob can't expressively label or say, "Car," when he sees a car. To teach Jacob to respond to this S^D, the behavior technician vocally gives the patient the answer as the first step in teaching the patient to expressively label the car.
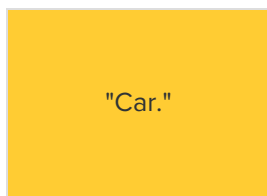
| S^D: Hold up picture.				
+	⇒	R: "Car"	⇒	S^R: Tickle Jacob.

"Car."

If the behavior technician always vocally gives the patient the answer, the patient will never learn to say, "Car," on his own when he sees a car. So, once Jacob can respond, "Car," when the behavior technician uses this prompt, the behavior technician will need to start fading the prompt. The picture slide will show us how the behavior technician can fade the prompt.
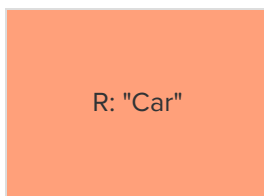
⚃ STEP BY STEP

Step 1: Initially, the prompt evokes the response.

We say the prompt evokes the response because Jacob cannot respond correctly unless the behavior technician says, "Car," while showing him the picture. This is a full vocal prompt.
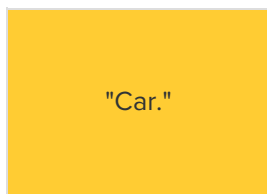
S^D: Hold up picture.

+

⇒

R: "Car"

⇒

S^R: Tickle Jacob.

"Car."
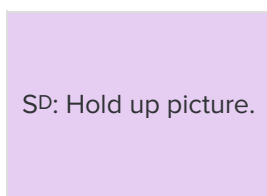
⚙ THINK ABOUT IT

Ultimately, what do we want the thing that evokes the response, "Car," to be? In this case, do we want the behavior technician saying, "Car," to be what evokes the response? Or do we want the patient seeing the picture to evoke the response?

*Step 2: Begin fading the prompt so the relevant S evokes the R.*

At this point, Jacob can respond correctly if the behavior technician: a) shows him the picture of the car, and b) says, "Ca...." The behavior technician only has to say part of the word now for the patient to respond correctly. This is a partial vocal prompt. The response is now partially evoked by the picture and the behavior technician saying, "Ca...."

| SD: Hold up picture.				
+	⇨	R: "Car"	⇨	SR: Sing to Jacob.
"Ca..."				
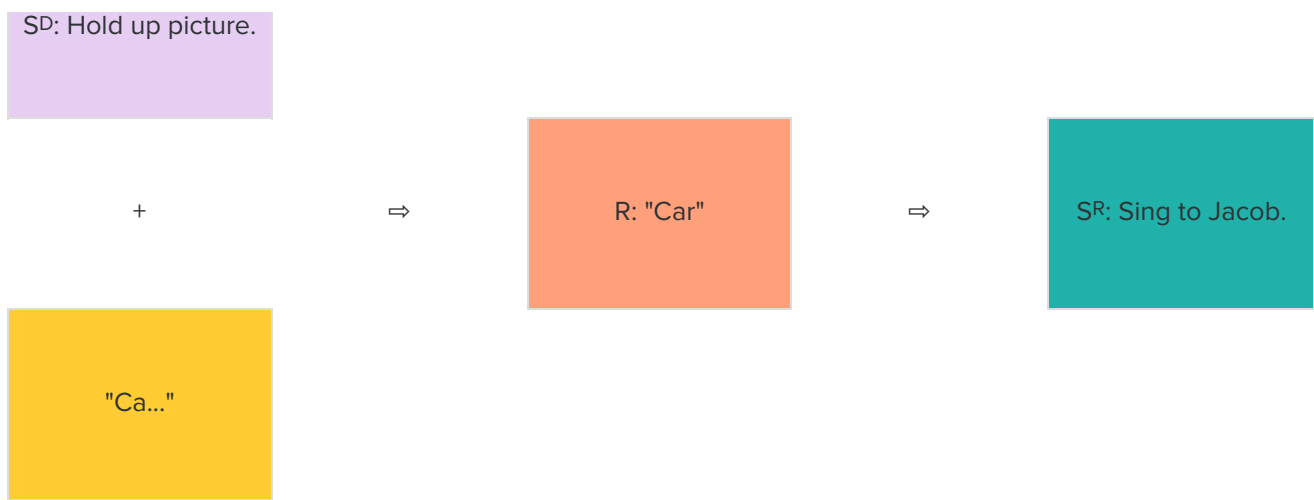
Step 3: Continue fading...we're almost there!

Now the behavior technician just has to say, "C..." while showing Jacob the picture of the car and Jacob responds correctly. The response, "Car," is still partially evoked by the picture and partially evoked by the behavior technician saying, "C...," but we can see that we are effectively fading out the need for the behavior technician to say anything because they have gone from saying, "Car" to "Ca..." and now to "C...."

SD: Hold up picture.				
+	⇨	R: "Car"	⇨	SR: Tickle Jacob.
"C..."				
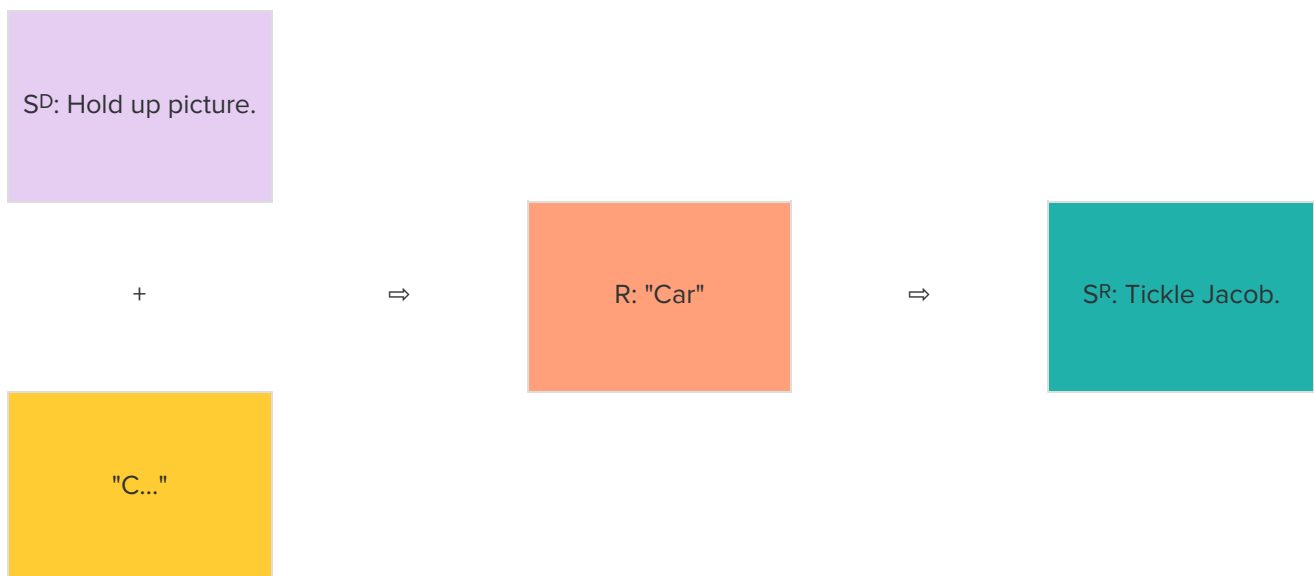
Step 4: Fade the prompt completely.

This is our goal. Now Jacob says, "Car," when he sees a picture of a car!

SD: Hold up picture.	⇨	R: "Car"	⇨	SR: Give Jacob chip.
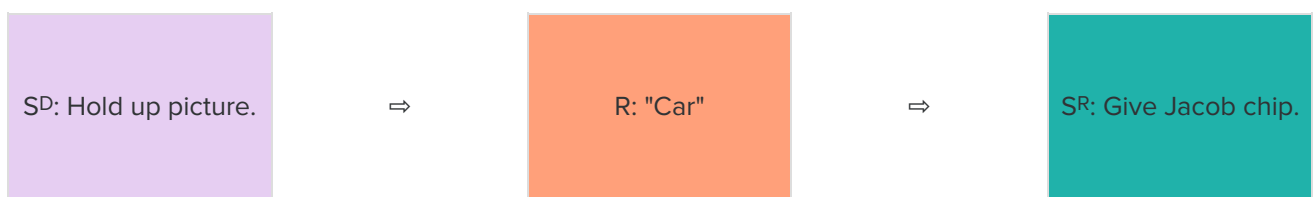
Prompting can also be faded using delays before the prompt is delivered, called a time delay prompt. When teaching manding (requesting an item), you may hold up a preferred item and wait for the patient to say the name of the item. During initial acquisition, you will likely need to prompt the patient to say the name of the item, perhaps with a vocal model. Zero time delay would involve giving an immediate vocal model as soon as

the patient makes any kind of initiation toward the item (such as pointing, reaching, or looking). The vocal model can be faded out by gradually increasing the delay between the patient's initiation to the preferred item and your delivery of the prompt. This is called a progressive time delay, as you gradually increase the delay between the instruction and the prompt.

You might also use a constant time delay procedure, where the delay of a particular length or duration is always used, regardless of the stage of the training.

> ⤳ EXAMPLE You always wait ten seconds to present the vocal model. By doing this, you are essentially providing the patient with a choice: sit and wait ten seconds, respond to the prompt, and then get the reinforcer, or they can respond immediately and get the reinforcer sooner.

📄 **TERM TO KNOW**

Prompt Fading
The systematic removal of a prompt across successive trials

☑ **SUMMARY**

In this lesson, you learned about the **definition and use of prompting**, which involves giving extra help to enable the patient to perform a specific response so that it can be reinforced. Remember, a prompt is a supplementary stimulus or "hint" presented in addition to the S^D to assist the patient in providing a correct response. Next, you explored the different **types of prompts**: physical, gestural, model, echoic, directive, proximity, stimulus manipulation, and visual or textual. Lastly, you learned about **prompt fading**, which is the systematic removal of a prompt across successive trials. This two-part process consists of the transfer of control of the behavior from the prompt to the S^D/MO and the gradual reduction of prompts until they are no longer needed for the patient to perform the skill independently. It is important to note that fading is critical in order to avoid prompt dependency.

📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**

Prompt
A stimulus or "hint" presented in addition to the S^D to assist the patient in providing a correct response.

Prompt Fading
The systematic removal of a prompt across successive trials.