

Prompting

Common Problems and Solutions

Problem	Solution
Child consistently makes errors at the final level in the prompting hierarchy.	The practitioner/parent selects a new, more controlling prompt that will ensure that the child uses the skill correctly.
Child consistently makes errors at an intermediate level in the prompting hierarchy.	The practitioner/parent (a) increases the number of levels in the hierarchy (use an additional prompt), (b) selects a new type of prompt, or (c) examines the difficulty of the task.
Child consistently waits for a prompt instead of attempting to respond to the independent level after several sessions of instruction.	The practitioner/parent differentially reinforces prompted and unprompted correct responses OR eliminates reinforcement for prompted correct responses.
Child consistently fails to respond at any level, including the final level.	The practitioner/parent finds a more powerful reinforcer.



Avoid Reinforcement Satiation!

To Avoid Satiation:	How to:
Menu of reinforcers	After conducting reinforcer sampling, observation and/or interest inventory keep on hand a number of the reinforcers identified.
Vary reinforcers	If the child very much enjoys tickles and silly faces, alternate tickles or silly faces when providing reinforcement for a skill/behavior. If the same child also enjoys pretzels, consider keeping pretzels as reinforcer for snack time and tickles are reinforcers for playtime.
Teach during several short sessions	Several short sessions helps to ensure that the child won't tire of the reinforcer before he has enough opportunities to practice the skill/behavior.
Avoid using edibles. If they must be used, use a variety.	Edibles (a primary reinforcer) should be used only when other reinforcers have not been identified or if the edible is a natural reinforcer (e.g., the child requests juice then juice is provided). If used, various types should be used and they should be paired with other types of reinforcement.
Shift from primary reinforcers to secondary reinforcers as soon as possible and pair them from the beginning.	Since toddlers with ASD are less likely than their typically developing peers to value secondary reinforcers, pair these with more valued reinforcers from the beginning. As the child becomes more motivated by secondary reinforcer, fade the primary reinforcer.
If child does lose interest in reinforcer, choose a new one.	If the child stops using the skill/behavior after mastering it or shows disinterest in reinforcer, change it. An inventory or reinforcer sampling may need to be repeated if no other reinforcers are immediately apparent.

Reinforcement

Common Problems and Solutions

Potential Reason	Potential Solution
Is the reinforcer of value to the toddler? How do you know?	Conduct reinforcement sampling to identify reinforcers that the child prefers and ones that he or she doesn't.
Is the child satiated/bored with the reinforcer? Is the reinforcer overused?	Only use the specific reinforcer when expecting the child to use a specific behavior/skill. For example, if using an edible like crackers only have them available when working with the child on the specific skill. Do not provide crackers for snack right before working on skill.
Is the schedule of reinforcement inconsistent with what the child needs?	If the child hasn't made the connection between the desired behavior/skill and the reinforcer, he or she will require the reinforcement to be provided after every successful use of the behavior/skill. Shifting to another schedule or reinforcement (a different ratio or different interval) will have to wait.
Are you not sure if the reinforcer is working?	Collecting data is important in order to best understand if reinforcement is or isn't impacting the toddler's responses. When taking data on child responses make note of the reinforcers used to identify if some support the toddler's use of the target skill/behavior better than others.

Identifying Opportunities

Target Behavior: Noah will engage in turn taking activities for five minutes within the context of at least five activities that occur throughout his day, three days of the week.

Wake Up and Dressing	Learning Opportunities: Exchange morning kisses back and forth. Take turns in the lead for putting on clothing (e.g., ,I'll help you put one arm into your shirt; you do the other arm by yourself).
Breakfast	Learning Opportunities: Passing food items; self-feeding
Play Time with Mom	Learning Opportunities: Take turns around stacking blocks, linking and unlinking cars of a toy train, picking up toys for cleanup.
Snack	Learning Opportunities: Take turns around preparing food for a snack (e.g., putting sliced cheese on a plate, taking carrots out of a bag).
Play at Park	Learning Opportunities: Take turns tagging each other; or going first. Take turns burying a toy in the sand or filling a bucket full of sand.
Lunch	Learning Opportunities: Take turns around putting ingredients into a sandwich, take turns carrying empty cups or dishes to the counter.
Nap	Learning Opportunities: Take turns putting stuffed animal to bed as part of a naptime routine (e.g., taking off shoes, pulling up blanket, patting back, saying "night night").
Screen Time	Learning Opportunities: Take turns pushing keys/keypad on a simple Internet game/app.
Dinner	Learning Opportunities: Take turns scooping food into the dog's bowl.
Bath Time	Learning Opportunities: Take turns washing a bath tub toy dog.
Bedtime	Learning Opportunities: Take turns turning pages in a book.

Common Challenge	One Approach
Parent agrees to co-developed plan but doesn't follow through	Upfront the problem – “Before we talk about a plan, I’d like to ask what seems to be getting in the way of putting our plans into action”.
When parent changes topics frequently	Park it – “I understand that this is something you want to talk about. How about we put it on our list to discuss as we plan for next week? Will that work?”
Parent insists on you telling her what to do	Return to the Why – Remind family that we know that their input and participation is what will help you be effective. Provide your expertise and remind them of theirs and its importance.
Another provider to the family takes a very different approach to yours not supportive of PII.	Name it – “I understand that Sarah works differently with you. I have found this approach to be effective in my work with families. In what ways are the different approaches a concern to you?”