**Northern Therapy Group**

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## Prompt Hierarchies

A prompt hierarchy is a structured systematic method of assisting students to learn and use new skills. Prompt hierarchies provide each student with a greater number of opportunities to communicate. They will reduce the student's level of frustration, anger, and adult dependency.

There are two different types of prompt hierarchies: *Most-To-Least* and *Least-To-Most*.

1. **Most-To-Least -** This prompt hierarchy is used <u>before</u> a new skill is mastered. It provides a very high level of support in learning and acquisition of a new skill. The prompting level will fade down once the skill is mastered. The following is the sequence for Most-To-Least prompting levels:

   (1) Full Physical Prompt
   (2) Partial Physical Prompt
   (3) Model Prompt
   (4) Gesture Prompt
   (5) Verbal Prompt
   (6) Indirect Prompt (Verbal or Nonverbal)
   (7) Position Prompt
   (8) Visual Prompt
   (9) Independent

2. **Least-To-Most –** This prompt hierarchy is used <u>after</u> a student has learned a new skill and is working on mastery, generalization and independence. The following is the sequence for Least-To-Most prompting levels:

   (1) Independent
   (2) Visual Prompt
   (3) Position Prompt
   (4) Indirect Prompt (Verbal or Nonverbal)
   (5) Verbal Prompt
   (6) Gesture Prompt
   (7) Model Prompt
   (8) Partial Physical Prompt
   (9) Full Physical Prompt

**Description of each prompting level:**
   ❖ Independent = The student is able to perform the task on his/her own with no prompts or assistance.
   ❖ Visual Prompt = Adult uses visual materials such as photographs, videotapes, icons, or drawings of a task independently or in a sequence of images.

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- ❖ Position Prompt = Adult holds an item or his/her hand close to the student with expectant facial expression.
- ❖ Verbal Prompt = (1) Direct - Adult gives a specific verbal direction in addition to the task direction.
    (2) Indirect – Adult tells the student something about what is expected such as oral information or question that leads the student in the right direction. Facial expressions, hand motions, and shrugs are also considered indirect nonverbal prompts.
- ❖ Gesture Prompt = Adult uses pointing, gesturing, and facial expressions to communicate specific information to the student.
- ❖ Model Prompt = Adult demonstrates the task that is requested of the student and the student imitates the adult's model.
- ❖ Partial Physical Prompt = Adult touches the student to elicit a response (e.g. minimal physical guidance such as touching the student's hand/elbow to initiate or complete a task).
- ❖ Full Physical Prompt = Hand-over-hand assistance – Adult place his/her hand over the student's hand to help with completing the task.

**Expectant Delay:** Expectant delay or time delay refers to fading the use of prompts during instructional activities by providing a brief delay between the initial instruction, additional instructions and/or prompts. It allows the adult to gradually increase the waiting time between an instruction and any prompts used to elicit a response.

**Pause:** It is extremely important for the communication partner to pause and allow the student to respond when using the prompt hierarchy levels. *It is recommended for the communication partner to pause for at least 10 seconds before presenting another communication opportunity to the student.*