

Section: Instruction
Topic: Fading Assistance

There comes a time in training a new activity when the student you're working with is ready to take the plunge and do the activity by themselves. How do you get yourself out of the picture and still help the student feel confident that they can accomplish the activity correctly and independently?

This section will help you to decide when, during training, the student is ready for less help from you and will show you how to provide less and less assistance so that the student become independent.

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Providing assistance teaches a student to look at the right thing and do the correct response. Fading assistance teaches the student to do these things without your help. There are three things you can do to fade your assistance: 1) Give less information, 2) give information earlier in the task, 3) 'get out of the picture.'

Give less information. For example, at the intersection you pointed at the pedestrian signal and said, "Amy, when you see the walk signal, go!" Amy looked at the signal and when it changed to 'WALK' she looked both ways and crossed the street. At this intersection, you just point at the pedestrian signal and say, "Look!"

Charlena is using a pair of pliers to cut wire. You modeled the correct response the first time, i.e., you said, "Watch me, Charlena." You picked up the wire and cut it. Then you said, "Now you do it." This time you just point to the pliers and say "Cut the wire, Charlena."

Give information earlier in the task. For example, the last time Brian went bowling, you reminded him to pay for his shoes right before the cashier asked him to pay. With this reminder, Brian promptly paid the cashier when the cashier said, "That'll be 35 cents for the shoes." Today, before entering the bowling alley, you say, "Brian, remember, when the man says, 'That'll be 35 cents for the shoes,' give him your money."

Getting out of the picture. When the student begins to respond without your help, stop helping and start getting yourself out of the picture. There are several ways to do this. You can let the student go ahead and do the activity or part of an activity by himself with you watching from a distance. For example, say, "Tiffany, you go and buy those items by yourself; I'll meet you at the counter." "Randy, go ahead and get ready to bowl; I'll meet you at the lane in a couple of minutes." Some students may still want your help, even though they don't need it. They might hesitate and look at you rather than do what they're supposed to do. There are several things you can do to encourage these students to be independent. You can turn away and not look at them or walk away. You can say, "Don't look at me, you know what to do." or "You're on your own, buddy."

In general, when students are performing pretty independently, you act less like a teacher and more like a friend. You accompany the student to the activity, you let them lead the way, you might do the activity with your peer, i.e., buy a soda at Arby's, but not tell your peer what to do. Perhaps you can talk and joke around more (as long as the student continues to perform independently). There may still be some steps in the activity the student will need help with. When these steps come up, you need to put on your teaching hat and teach following the guidelines described in this section. But for the most part you will be buddies, going to a class together, doing an activity together, enjoying each other's company, and enjoying your mutual accomplishment.

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Assignment # _____
Due Date _____
Name _____

Below are situations where some aspect of instruction has been provided. For each situation, your task is to decide if there was a problem with the instruction provided; if so, what the problem was; and what you would have done instead.

1. The data indicates that Vanessa has correctly paid for her items at Safeway with only one verbal cue, for three days in a row. By looking at the data sheet, you know the last 2 cues were indirect verbal cues ("Listen to the counterperson.") When Vanessa approaches the counter to pay you say, "Listen to the counterperson."
 - a. Is there a problem?
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What would you have done instead?
2. Darin has completed savings account transactions at the bank 2 days in a row with little to no assistance. In the bank, the tutor walks up to the counter with Darin and watches him fill out his slip. Darin does his correct again, and the tutor says, "Great!" The tutor walks with Darin to the customer wait line and when the bank teller indicates to Darin that it's his turn, the tutor walks with him to the teller, and observes the transaction. The tutor quietly says, "You're doing a nice job, Darin." Darin completes the transaction successfully and the tutor walks with Darin out of the bank.
 - a. Is there a problem?
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What would you do instead?