

Section: Instruction
Topic: Providing Assistance

Knowing when and how much assistance to provide while you are doing training can make the difference in how well the student learns to do the activity. Just the right amount and type of assistance may be exactly what the student needs in order to finally be able to do a new activity correctly and independently.

This section will help you learn the different types of assistance you can use during training and the rules for giving assistance.

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Goals: Your goal is to teach a student to do a task or activity as independently as possible. A task or activity is made up of a series of steps. For example, the first three steps of using a fast food restaurant are: 1) enter, 2) approach counter, and 3) order. To independently perform each step in an activity, you have to do two things: 1) Look at the right thing, and when you see it, 2) do the correct response. The right thing to look at as you approach McDonald's is the door. When you see it, you enter. The right thing to look at next is the counter. When you see it, you walk up to it. The third correct thing to look at (and listen to) is the counterperson. When s/he says, "May I take your order," you order.

Students with handicaps have a difficult time looking at the right thing, and doing the correct response for many activities. Your goal is to teach a student to 1) Look at the right thing, 2) do the correct response for each step in an activity. At McDonald's, you want to teach your peer to look for the door and enter, look for the counter and walk up to it, and look and listen to the counterperson and order. Providing assistance is how you accomplish this goal. There are two things you need to know about providing assistance: 1) types of assistance, and 2) rules for using assistance.

Types of assistance: Below are definitions and examples of the types of assistance you can provide to help a student look at the right thing and do the correct response.

- 1) Indirect verbal cue. A cue that does not inform the student exactly what s/he is supposed to do. Examples include nonspecific statements such as: a) "What do you do next?" b) "Keep going", or c) "What do you look at?"
- 2) Direct verbal cue. Telling the student exactly what to do. Examples include statements such as: a) "Open your schedule book and find the correct time", b) "Put your picture card in your pocket and find the next (grocery) item", or c) "Look at the walk sign across the street."
- 3) Gestural cue. This generally involves pointing at the thing which the student should be looking at or making a physical motion that tells the student what s/he is supposed to do. Examples include: a) pointing at the pedestrian signal across the street, b) pointing at the screwdriver after the student has placed a screw into the correct hole, or c) tapping the chair after the student has completed his turn bowling.
- 4) Model. Showing the student what to do with a physical and/or verbal example of the correct response. Examples include: (a) picking up a screwdriver and tightening a screw, then saying "Now you do it," or (b) carefully and slowly picking up the tray that has a large Coke and Big Mac on it, turning around, and starting to walk to a table; then stopping, putting the tray back on the counter, and saying, "Now you carry the tray to the table without spilling anything."
- 5) Pictorial cue. A visual symbol which lets a student know what to do. Examples include: a) pictures of grocery items (which

help a non-reading student locate groceries); or b) work preparation sheet which has a drawing of an I.D., bus tokens and pass, and an umbrella and coat. These pictorial cues help a student prepare to leave school for work without any additional teacher assistance.

- 6) Physical assistance. Actually physically helping a student perform a response correctly. Examples include: a) taking a student's hand, placing it on a screwdriver with the correct grip and helping him tighten a screw; b) placing a student's hand on the handles of a basket at Safeway (which s/he then picks up and holds); or c) pushing a student gently back between the white lines of the pedestrian cross walk after s/he has strayed outside the line while crossing a street.

Rules for Using Assistance: So, you're about to take a student out grocery shopping or bowling. You know the student is going to need some help. (That's why you're there, right?) How do you do it? There are two rules for providing assistance: 1) Think about the errors a student might make during the activity; and 2) provide just enough assistance so the student responds correctly the first time.

Think about errors. How do you know what errors the student will make during the activity you are teaching? There are two ways: a) you remember how the student did the previous day, or b) you look at your data before you start teaching to remind you how the student did. For example, you remember that John forgot to take out his shopping list at the store yesterday. You're pretty sure he will forget to do this today. You decide to use an indirect verbal cue. Right before John enters the store you ask

John, "What are you going to do after you get your basket." John says, "Get my list." You say, "Right!" John then enters the store, gets his basket and takes out his list. You say, "Nice going John!"

At the bowling alley Chris consistently forgets to get his bowling ball for his next turn after he has taken his first turn. You know this because the data on the step Get ball for second turn shows numerous errors for several days. You decide to use a direct verbal cue and a gestural cue. Right after Chris completes his first turn you say, "Chris, look (you point to the ball return). Get your ball." Chris walks to the ball return, gets his ball, and takes his second turn. You say, "Nice job, you got your ball again."

Provide 'Just Enough' Assistance: 'Just enough' assistance is different for different students. In order for Mark to walk to the counter in the snackshop he needs someone to say, "Walk to the counter," while gently guiding him to the counter by his elbow (verbal and physical assistance). Aletia simply needs someone to say, "OK, you know what to do" (an indirect verbal cue). In both cases the assistance provided was just enough for the student to respond correctly the first time.

How do you figure out how much assistance is 'just enough?' Your teaching experience with the student tells you. For example, you are teaching Matt to cross streets. You know that he will step into the intersection, regardless of the traffic going by, unless you provide him with some assistance. Needless to say, you really want Matt to stop at the curb the first time. You decide to use an indirect verbal cue. As both of you approach the curb you say, "Matt, remember what to do." But, alas, when Matt comes up to the curb he steps into the intersection. Fortunately

you are right beside him and stop him. Because of the error Matt made, you know that an indirect verbal cue was not enough assistance. As you approach the next curb you decide to use a direct verbal cue. You say, "Matt, remember, stop at the curb." This time Matt stops at the curb. You say, "Great job, you stopped!" Now you know that a direct verbal cue is just enough assistance for Matt to stop at the curb the first time. In general, if a student makes an error the first time they did something, you probably need to provide more assistance the next time.

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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. Tiffany is at the bowling alley. When it is her turn, the tutor says, "Now remember, Tiffany, take 4 steps, stop at the black line, and throw your ball." Tiffany picks up her ball, holds her ball with both hands, does not take 4 steps, bends down, and throws her ball using both hands. The ball manages to go into her lane, but goes right into the gutter.
 - a. Is there a problem?
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What would you do instead?
2. Aletia is at Wendy's. Aletia and the tutor walk into Wendy's together. Aletia walks up to the counter and waits for the counterperson. The trainer says, "You're doing fine, Aletia." Soon, the counterperson looks at Aletia and says, "Can I take your order?" Aletia says, "Hi."
 - a. Is there a problem?
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What would you do instead?

3. Name and give an example of four of the six eyes.

1,

2,

3,

4.