



Scaffolding AAC Success with Prompts and Cues

Prompts are designed to support or cue a student to use their AAC system to take up a communication opportunity, think of what they could say or develop their strategic skills.

Prompts are not designed to be used long term. We want to avoid students becoming dependent on prompts to communicate and need to have a plan to fade the prompting.

In a busy, fast-paced classroom environment it can be easy to jump in and repeat a question to fill the quiet space or tell a student what they 'should' say, in an effort to help students take a turn more quickly. However always giving this extra help doesn't necessarily support the student's journey towards independence. We are aiming to provide only as much 'help' as is needed in the situation.

Our most important prompt – WAIT

It often takes our students time to process a question or recognise the opportunity to participate, then think about what they could say and generate a message. Different students may need different amounts of wait time, but try counting to 10 in your head as a guide. If we ask the question again, or provide extra prompts too quickly it can interrupt what the student was thinking.

Focus your attention on the student and pause after you:

- Ask a question
- Set up an opportunity for a student to request, direct etc.
- Are about to do the next step in a familiar routine e.g. next word or line in a song, story etc.



Types of prompts and cues

Teachers and EAs use a range of prompts and cues to help students participate and experience success with school work every day. Similarly, we can use a range of prompts to help students using AAC to participate in communication opportunities and have success using their AAC system. These may include:

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Expectant Pause | Facial expression, eye gaze, gesture suggesting "It's your turn now" |
| Indirect verbal cue | Highlight the context "I have some bubbles..." |
| Direct verbal cue | Clue about what the child may want to say "I can blow bubbles. I like blowing bubbles" |
| Verbal referencing | Support child's problem solving. "I look around, I look at the teacher, I look at the one I want" |
| Accomplice suggestion | A person who is not the communication partner may suggest ideas. "You could use this one if you want to get those bubbles" |
| Light cues | Zig Zag over all symbols – "say something" Shine on specific symbol – "You could say this" |



(Chat Now Manual, p12-13)

Prompt Hierarchies

It can be helpful to think about the amount and type of prompts we are using, to work towards building students' independence and tracking progress towards their goals. A prompt hierarchy outlines graded levels of assistance used to support a student to participate in different communication opportunities. This can be used to systematically work towards increased independence by ensuring we are giving only the amount of help required and not over-prompting. A prompting hierarchy can also be useful to monitor progress as students develop their skills and require less prompting to participate or demonstrate a target skill. A number of prompt hierarchies have been developed for use with students using AAC. Some examples include:

Dynavox Chain of Cues

<http://www.dynavoxtech.com/implementation-toolkit/search-resources/default.aspx?page=1&keywords=chain+of+cues>

Revised AAC Prompting Hierarchy by Kate Ahern

<http://teachinglearnerswithmultipleneeds.blogspot.com.au/2016/03/rethinking-aac-prompting-hierarchy-in.html?m=1>

Reference

Communication Resource Centre: SCOPE (2007). *CHAT- Now Manual. Children's Aided language Tools*. Box Hill, Australia: Communication Aids and Resource Materials.