



Using a System of Least-to-Most Prompts to Teach Communication Skills

What is the level of evidence?

- This is a Research-Based Practice for **students with disabilities** based on two methodologically sound single subject studies across 20 participants.

Where is the best place to find out how to do this practice?

The best place to find out how to implement least to most prompting is through the following research to practice lesson plan starter:

- Using least to most prompting to teach communication skills
 - [Employment-Based Communication \(Heller, Allgood, Ware, & Castelle, 1996\)](#)

With who was it implemented?

- Students with
 - Low vision and moderate to profound hearing impairments (1 study, n=5)
 - Moderate to severe intellectual disability (1 study, n=15)
- Ages ranged from 13 to 21
- Males (n=11), females (n=4)
 - Gender not specified (n=5)
- Ethnicity
 - None reported (n= 20)

What is the practice?

A system of least-to-most prompts is a method used to transfer stimulus control from response prompts to the natural stimulus whenever the participant does not respond to the natural stimulus or makes an incorrect response. Least-to-most prompts begin with the participant having the opportunity to perform the response with the least amount of assistance on each trial. Greater degrees of assistance are provided with each successive trial without a correct response (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007).

In the studies used to establish the evidence base for using least-to-most prompting to teach cooking skills, least-to-most prompting included:

- gesture, manual sign, and model combined with community-based instruction and simulation (Heller, Allgood, Ware, & Castelle, 1996)
- increasing levels of prompting combined with community-based training (Westling, Floyd, & Carr, 1990)

How has the practice been implemented?

- Least-to-most prompting (i.e., gesture, manual sign, and model) combined with community-based instruction and simulation was used to teach receptive and expressive communication for individuals with deaf-blindness using communication boards on job sites (Heller, Allgood, Ware, & Castelle, 1996)
- Least-to-most prompting was used in combination with community-based training to teach appropriate communication between the student and a store employee when making purchases (Westling, Floyd, & Carr, 1990)

Where has it been implemented?

- Community (2 studies)

How does this practice relate to Common Core Standards?

- Comprehension and Collaboration (Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening, Grade 9-12)
 - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
 - Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspective.

How does this practice relate to the State's Career Cluster Initiative: Essential Knowledge and Skills?

- Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace (Communications)
 - Employ verbal skills when obtaining and conveying information
 - Communicate with other employees to clarify workplace objectives

- Interpret verbal and nonverbal cues/behaviors to enhance communication with co-workers and clients/participants (Communications)
 - Interpret verbal behaviors when communicating with clients and co-workers

References used to establish this evidence base:

Heller, K.W., Allgood, M.H., Ware, S.P., & Castelle, M.D. (1996). Use of dual communication boards at vocational sites by students who are deaf-blind. *Re: View, 27*, 180-191.

Westling, D.L., Floyd, J., & Carr, D. (1990). Effect of single setting versus multiple setting training on learning to shop in a department store. *American Journal on Mental Retardation, 94*, 616-624.

This Practice Description was developed by The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), Charlotte, NC, funded by Cooperative Agreement Number H326E140004 with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). This document has been reviewed and approved by the OSERS. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education. OSEP Project Officer: Dr. Selete Avoke. RSA Project Officer: Kristen Rhinehart-Fernandez. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be: National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (2018). *Using a System of Least-to-Most Prompts to Teach Communication Skills*.

