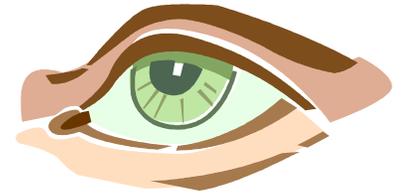


# Best Instructional Practices for Young Children with Autism

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- ✚ Get the student's attention before giving a direction to increase the chance of appropriate responding. Give the direction quickly once the student is attending (indicated by body position, eye contact, verbal confirmation, etc., depending on the student).
  - Hands down
  - Look at me
  - “\_\_name\_\_”
  - Ready position
- ✚ Give only one direction at a time
  - Stated briefly and clearly (eg, “Pick up the crayon”)
  - Give an opportunity for independent responding (2-3 seconds)
  - Follow through with each direction
    - Direction
    - Response (prompted or independent)
    - Reinforcement
  - Only give the next direction once the previous one has been completed or approximated
- ✚ Use prompting to increase engagement and responding
  - If it is the student's first exposure to the direction, prompt immediately
  - If it is a previously learned skill, give more opportunity for independent responding
  - When in doubt, wait 2-3 seconds, then prompt using least-to-most intrusive prompting hierarchy if the student does not respond independently.
    - Gesture
    - Indirect verbal
    - Model
    - Partial physical
    - Full physical
  - Use only ONE prompt at a time (be aware of inadvertent prompts such as looking at the correct answer) and move to the next most intrusive prompt if the student is still unsuccessful.
  - If unsure of the prompting system for the task, consult the teaching plan (the prompt that elicits a response is the one recorded in the data)
- ✚ Use different tones of voice depending on the context
  - Neutral instructions
  - Animated conversation/praise (depending on your personal style)
  - Stern consequences/redirection (if necessary for certain students)
  - Neutral repetition of direction
  - Students with autism are also learning how to recognize cues related to affect (facial expression and tone of voice) and will imitate the tones they hear. Always be aware of the tone of voice you are using for the context.
- ✚ Work through problem behavior
  - If possible, continue a task through minor problem behavior (crying, tapping hands, stomping feet, whining, etc.)
    - Re-evaluate the potency of the reinforcer
    - Decrease the demand slightly to achieve compliance and positive momentum (on YOUR terms, not on the student's)



- Prompt a response to complete the task more quickly (hand-over-hand is ok) so the student can access a reinforcer
- Remember the biggest reward to a student might be the removal of the task and/or being left alone
- Do not allow escape from a task contingent upon problem behavior
  - Prompt the student to ask for a break
  - Prompt the student to use self-calming strategies (briefly and with the task still present)
  - Remind the student of the reinforcer
  - Select the most important component piece of the task and require only completion of that piece to end the task (eg, is it more important to be doing the task or sitting at the table?—if unsure, ask your teacher)
- Consider other environmental issues that could help or hinder the situation. Modify if appropriate
  - Possible physical discomfort
  - Unfamiliar tasks/materials
  - Peers
  - Previous success (or lack of) with the task
  - Frequency of access to reinforcement
- If it appears the student is more interested in getting attention (positive or negative) than in escaping from the task, avoid eye contact, use a neutral tone of voice, and remain CALM. Wait 20-30 seconds before repeating a direction.
- If a student becomes escalated to a point where he/she is engaging in more serious problem behavior (self-injury, aggression, elopement), consult the student's specific plan for responding.
- If it is known that the task is potentially aversive to the student, engage in positive interactions and build momentum towards task presentation (if possible). This can be brief—the point is the student is happy and engaged with you before the task is presented.
- As long as the student is attempting to engage with the task, your tone should be enthusiastic, animated, and positive.

