

Module: Prompting

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: Graduated Guidance

Finn is a 7-year-old with ASD. He currently receives services within a self-contained classroom for elementary students with autism. Three other students with ASD also receive services within this setting. Finn's parents are very concerned about their son's difficulty with self-help skills. In particular, they would like him to do a better job of washing his hands and brushing his teeth. Finn often skips important steps during these tasks and doesn't spend enough time washing his hands or brushing his teeth. Because of his parents' concerns, Finn's teacher, Mr. Jones, wants to address self-help skills at school. After talking with Finn's parents, Mr. Jones has decided that the first target skill will be to teach Finn how to wash his hands thoroughly before lunch. Because hand washing is a chained task, Mr. Jones will use graduated guidance to help Finn acquire this skill. Once Finn becomes more proficient at washing his hands, Mr. Jones plans to work with his parents to help Finn improve his hand washing at home as well.

Before implementing graduated guidance, Mr. Jones first identifies the target behaviors that make up the chained skill. He does so by completing the chain of skills at home and writing them down as he goes. The following steps were identified:

1. Turn on water
2. Wet hands
3. Get soap
4. Rub hands
5. Rinse hands
6. Dry hands

Mr. Jones also creates the following visual checklist for the activity. He hopes that this will give Finn additional visual and written support to wash his hands more independently.



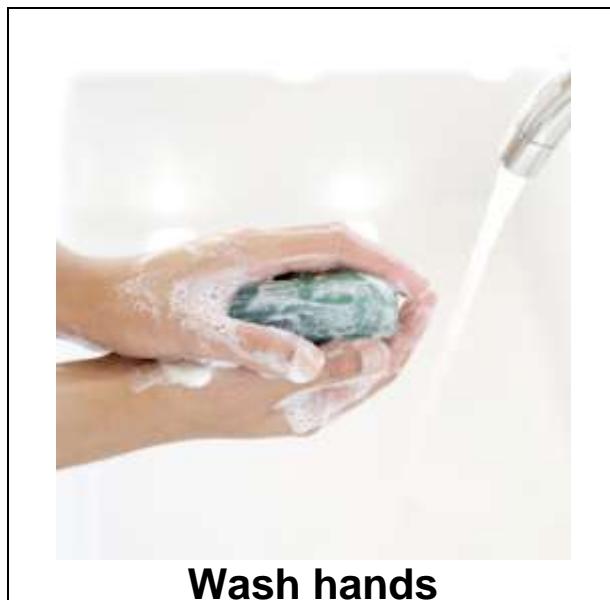
Courtesy of Kara Hume, Ph.D.

After the steps in the chained task have been determined, Mr. Jones identifies the target stimulus. He decides that a naturally occurring event would be most effective. For example, before eating meals, Finn will wash his hands. Mr. Jones feels that this would be the most appropriate stimulus because it can be present both at school and at home; thus, helping him to generalize use of the target skill across settings. Next, Mr. Jones identifies the cue or task direction that will signal Finn to use the target skill. Because Finn has difficulty with receptive language, Mr. Jones decides to use the following picture card that shows

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a person washing his hands. As Mr. Jones gives the card to Finn, he will say, "Wash hands, Finn." Mr. Jones feels that this combination of a visual support with a verbal task direction will help Finn begin using the target skill successfully.



Wash hands

Mr. Jones then selects reinforcers that can be given to Finn after he washes his hands successfully. He decides that verbal praise is the best reinforcer for this activity because it is the most natural and has motivated Finn in the past. Mr. Jones also determines that the controlling prompt to be used with all steps in the chain will be full physical assistance. That is, if Finn does not respond to less intensive prompts (e.g., gestural, verbal) when trying to complete a step in the chain, Mr. Jones or another adult will physically help Finn complete the skill. Mr. Jones feels that a response interval of 4 seconds will be a sufficient amount of time to wait before providing Finn with more assistance when trying to complete each step. As Finn begins using the skill associated with a particular step (e.g., turning on faucet, getting soap), Mr. Jones will immediately remove the prompt so that Finn can complete the skill independently and not become dependent upon Mr. Jones to finish the task. Mr. Jones also has decided to set a timer for 20 seconds as soon as Finn starts rubbing his hands together. He hopes that this will help Finn wash his hands more thoroughly and independently. With the planning complete, Mr. Jones decides to begin teaching the skill the following day before lunch.

Before lunch the next day, Mr. Jones gives Finn the picture card with the instruction, "Wash hands" on it. As he hands the card to Finn, Mr. Jones says, "Wash hands, Finn." Finn takes the card, but does not move. Mr. Jones waits 4 seconds and then says, "Finn, it's time to wash your hands." Mr. Jones also points to the bathroom and gently nudges Finn in the direction of the bathroom. Finn then begins walking toward the bathroom with the picture card in his hand. Mr. Jones follows Finn into the bathroom and waits for him to begin the chained task of washing his hands. After about 4 seconds, Finn still has not started washing his hands. At this point, Mr. Jones provides increasing amounts of assistance until Finn starts to complete the first step in the chain. For example, Mr. Jones uses verbal and gestural prompting to help Finn begin the first step. He says, "Turn water on, Finn" while pointing to the faucet on the sink. Then he waits 4 more seconds to see if Finn turns the water on without additional prompting. When he doesn't, Mr. Jones uses full physical assistance (i.e., hand-over-hand) to help Finn get started. As Finn begins to complete this step independently, Mr. Jones immediately stops using the prompt. After Finn turns the water on, Mr. Jones waits to see if Finn will begin the second step independently. When he doesn't, Mr.

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Jones repeats the prompting procedures by providing and withdrawing assistance as needed. This process is repeated for each of the steps in the chain.

To monitor Finn's progress, Mr. Jones collects data as Finn is engaged in the activity. For example, he records the number of chains completed (a) correctly without prompts, (b) correctly with prompts, and (c) correctly, but with resistance. As Finn becomes more proficient at starting and completing each step independently, Mr. Jones increases the response interval as well as his distance from Finn during the hand-washing activity. Mr. Jones also provides training and support to Finn's parents so that they can begin implementing the activity at home to increase Finn's generalization of the target skill.