

San Diego City Schools  
Institute for Learning  
Special Education Programs Department

## PROMPTING HIERARCHY LEVELS

adapted from Diagnostic Center, Southern California (California Dept. of Education)  
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The Prompting Hierarchy Levels are a range of instructional stimuli provided in order to direct an individual toward the performance of a desired response. Prompts range from the least to the most intrusive. The amount of assistance increases with each level in the hierarchy.

1. **Natural Cue: (N)**  
Behavior independently occurs as a result of a natural cue to a stimulus in the environment. The individual performs the behavior without any assistance.
2. **Gestural Prompt: (G)**  
Physical gestures that may include pointing, beckoning, or shaking one's head to indicate approval or disapproval.
3. **Indirect Verbal Prompt: (IV)**  
The instructor uses words to imply that some behavior needs to occur.
4. **Modeling: (M)**  
Performing the desired behavior in order to encourage the initiation of that behavior by the individual.
5. **Symbolic (Pictorial or Written) Prompt: (S)**  
Symbols (pictures or words) are presented to guide behavior. Often a sequence of pictures or a lists of words are used, combined with the gestural prompt of pointing to the symbol of the desired behavior for that moment in time.
6. **Direct Verbal Prompt: (DV)**  
The instructor explicitly states the behavior that needs to occur.
7. **Minimal Physical Prompt: (MP)**  
Slight physical contact that guides the individual toward the behavior.
8. **Partial Physical Prompt: (PP)**  
The instructor physically starts the individual on the desired behavior, and then ceases the physical assistance so the individual may complete the behavior independently.
9. **Full Physical Prompt: (FP)**  
The instructor physically guides the individual through the entire behavior.