



## 3-Step Prompting

### What is 3-Step Prompting?

- 3-step prompting is a way to help your child follow instructions and learn new skills. It can be especially helpful for young children and those with learning challenges. This strategy is designed to give children a good chance to follow instructions on their own before you help them. Over time, this helps them be more independent.

### How does it work?

- **Step 1: Give a simple, direct, verbal instruction.** Use just a few words to provide the instruction and try to focus on what you'd like your child *to do*, rather than what *not to do*. *Example:* "Please sit down."
  - Wait about 10 seconds. If your child does what you ask, provide enthusiastic praise. *Example:* "Good job sitting down! You're a very good listener."
  - If your child does not do what you ask after 10 seconds, move on to Step 2.
- **Step 2. Repeat the verbal instruction with a model or gesture.** Give the same instruction you did in Step 1, and at the same time *show* your child what you want them to do. *Example:* "Please sit down like me (as you are sitting down)."
  - Wait about 10 seconds. If your child does what you ask, provide enthusiastic praise, just like for Step 1.
  - If your child does not do what you ask after 10 seconds, move on to Step 3.
- **Step 3. Repeat the verbal instruction with gentle physical guidance.** Give the same instructions you did in Steps 1 and 2, and gently guide your child to the "correct" answer. Do this with the least amount of physical guidance possible. *Example:* "Please sit down (while gently lowering the child into a chair)."
  - Still provide praise, but with slightly less enthusiasm than in Steps 1 or 2. *Example:* "Yep, that's sitting down. Good job."
  - Try again! Go back to Step 1 to give your child another chance at following instructions independently.

