

3.C. Cues and Symbols

Systems for Receptive Communication

TACTILE CUES

1. **Touch Cues**

Specific signals that are executed on the child's body.

2. **Object Cues**

Everyday objects that are presented to the student as cues and that may be touched on the body.

What is a Touch Cue?

A TOUCH CUE consists of tactile contact, made in a consistent manner directly on the learner's body, to communicate with her.

What is the Purpose of Touch Cues?

- Specifically for receptive communication
- Used immediately preceding an action or activity
- To alert child that something will follow the cue
- Made directly onto child's body
- Made same way each time by every person who uses them with child

How Do Touch Cues Help?

- Reduce startling
- Develop anticipatory responses
- Can communicate a directive
- Help children make sense of their day
- Provide clearer information about expectations

What Does the Ability to Anticipate Tell Us?

- Child understands your message
- How much wait time to allow
- Cognitive processing is taking place
 - Child remembers previous event
 - Remembered and recognized your signal
 - Made an association between two actions
- He or she is ready for more!
 - May demonstrate readiness for event
 - May try to assist or engage more fully

Examples of Touch Cues

- Tapping the child's bottom (in supine): "I'm going to lift your hips" (for diaper)
 - Gently pulling up on the child's upper arms: "Get ready to stand up."
 - Touching the child's left elbow: "This is the way I say 'Hi,' so you know who I am."
 - Touching the child's ear: "Time to put your hearing aids on."
-

What is the Purpose of Object Cues?

- Provide concrete information or directive
- Allow student to prepare for transition to and participation in new activity
- Help form an accurate notion of what is to occur
- Develop an expectation of what's next
- Helps child develop sense of autonomy
- Can later be used for making choices

Types of Object Cues

1. Actual Object
2. Partial or Associated Object
3. Arbitrary Object Cues

1. Actual Objects

- Used initially to introduce object cues
- Object presented to child and time given to explore cue
- Keeping object during activity reinforces association to activity
- Consistency & repetition continue to reinforce association
- Once association is clearly established child can move to use of partial/associated object
- Can also be used to introduce other objects in same category (e.g. metal spoon, serving spoon)

Examples of Actual Objects

Spoon or section of g-tube = EAT

Diaper = TIME FOR CLEAN DIAPER

Washcloth = BATHTIME

Stroller = GO OUTSIDE

Tactile ball = THERAPY

Blanket = BEDTIME

CD case = MUSIC

2. Partial or Associated Object Cue

More Examples of Partial/Associated Object Cues

Piece of seat belt = GO IN CAR

Tile square = BATHTIME

Piece of diaper = TIME FOR CLEAN DIAPER

Plastic clasp from stroller = GO OUTSIDE

Bumpy fabric = THERAPY

Piece of blanket = BEDTIME

Knob from CD player = MUSIC

3. Arbitrary Object Cue

How do we select object cues?

- Most significant from child's perspective
- Not aversive or distracting
- Labeled for others to understand
- Age-appropriate
- Durable and easily duplicated
- Tactually different

What should we consider when selecting photograph and picture symbols?

- Size, color, and shape
- Visual clutter
- Glare
- Background color (contrast)
- Way to highlight symbol

How can we facilitate consistency?

- Post a list of steps in the cueing routine
- Model cues for all potential communication partners
- Identify and share specific nature of response expected from the child
- Observe delivery of cues and child responses
- Monitor and collect data on deliver & responses
- Communicate among team members if changes are needed

Resources for Touch Cues

[See Project SALUTE: Successful Adaptations for Learning to Use Touch Effectively](#)

Symbol Hierarchy

- Identical Object
 - Partial or associated object
 - Object with 1 or 2 shared features
 - Photos
 - Picture symbols
 - Print/Braille
 - Words/Signs

Tangible Symbols

- Can be touched or manipulated
 - Have a clear relationship to the referent (people, places, objects, activities, concepts)
 - Are permanent
 - Indicated through a simple motor response
 - ~Rowland & Schweigert (2000). *Tangible Symbol Systems*. Oregon. Design to Learn Products.
- (See Slide 42 (IN(2) for pictures with examples.)

Abstract Symbols

Abstract symbols have no physical connection to the object they represent

Examples: Speech, Sign Language, Print or Braille words