

## Pivotal Response Training (PRT) ---EBP Brief Packet---

### Components of the EBP Brief Packet...

This evidence-based practice overview on Pivotal Response Training includes the following components:

1. **Overview:** A quick summary of salient features of the practice, including what it is, who it can be used with, what skills it has been used with, and settings for instruction.
2. **Evidence-base:** The *PRT Evidence-base* details the NPDC criteria for inclusion as an evidence-based practice and the specific studies that meet the criteria for this practice.
3. **Step-by-Step Guide:** Use the *PRT Step-by-Step Practice Guide* as an outline for how to plan for, use, and monitor PRT. Each step includes a brief description as a helpful reminder while learning the process.
4. **Implementation Checklist:** Use the *PRT Implementation Checklist* to determine if the practice is being implemented as intended.
5. **Data Collection Sheets:** Use the data collection sheets as a method to collect and analyze data to determine if progress is being made for a learner with ASD.
6. **Tip Sheet for Professionals:** Use the *PRT Tip Sheet for Professionals* as a supplemental resource to help provide basic information about the practice to professionals working with the learner with ASD.
7. **Parent Guide:** Use the *PRT Parent Guide* to help parents or family members understand basic information about the practice being used with their child.
8. **Additional Resources:** Use the *Additional Resources* to learn more about the practice.
9. **CEC Standards:** A list of *CEC Standards* that apply specifically to PRT.
10. **Module References:** A list of numerical *References* utilized for the PRT module.

#### Suggested citation:

Suhrheinrich, J., Chan, J., Melgarejo, M., Reith, S., Stahmer, A., & AFIRM Team. (2018). *Pivotal Response Training*. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, FPG Child Development Center, University of North Carolina. Retrieved from <http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/pivotal-response-training>

This overview  
brief will  
support your  
use of the  
evidence-  
based  
practice:  
Pivotal  
Response  
Training.

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information visit:  
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### What Is PRT?

Pivotal response training (PRT) is an intervention that integrates principles of child development with those of applied behavior analysis (ABA). This means that facilitating a PRT interaction involves a simultaneous consideration of the learner with ASD's developmental levels and progression, along with the intentional progression through the antecedent-behavior-consequence (ABC) pattern of behavior that is familiar in other behavioral interventions.

This means that throughout a PRT session, there are many times where the practitioner cycles through this 3-part sequence:

- delivery of clear opportunities to respond (antecedent),
- the learner with ASD exhibiting a behavior, and
- the practitioner providing feedback to the learner with ASD (consequence).

### Evidence-base

Pivotal response training meets the evidence-based practice criteria set by NPDC with 7 single case design studies and 1 group design study. The practice has been effective with learners in early intervention (0-2 years) to middle school learners (12-14 years). Studies included in the 2014 EBP report detailed how pivotal response training can be used effectively to address: social, communication, and play outcomes.

### How Is PRT Being Used?

PRT can be used by a variety of professionals. Speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, behavior specialists, psychologists, and other teaching professionals may all find PRT a valuable strategy. Most learners with ASD can benefit from a structured, systematic approach that utilizes naturally occurring teaching opportunities. One of the strengths of this approach is that it is adaptable to a wide range of teaching goals and service settings.

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## ---Evidence-base for Pivotal Response Training---

The National Professional Development Center on ASD has adopted the following criteria to determine if a practice is evidence-based. The EBP Report provides more information about the review process (Wong et al., 2014).

Efficacy must be established through high quality, peer-reviewed research in scientific journals using:

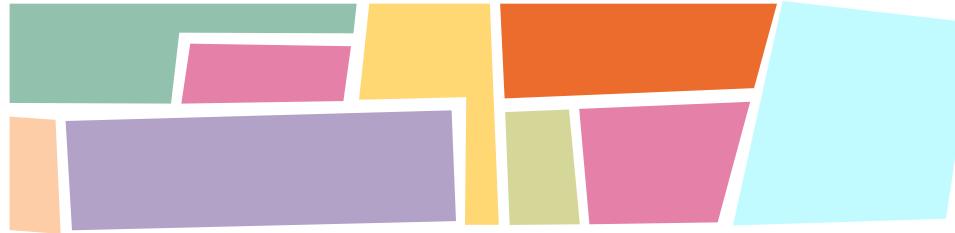
- randomized or quasi-experimental design studies (two high quality experimental or quasi-experimental group design studies),
- single-subject design studies (three different investigators or research groups must have conducted five high quality single subject design studies), or
- combination of evidence [one high quality randomized or quasi-experimental group design study and three high quality single subject design studies conducted by at least three different investigators or research groups (across the group and single subject design studies)].

### --OVERVIEW--

Pivotal response training is a foundational practice used to teach target skills and increase desired behavior. Pivotal response training meets the evidence-based practice criteria with 7 single case design studies and 1 group design study. The practice has been effective with learners in early intervention (0-2 years) to middle school learners (12-14 years). Studies included in the 2014 EBP report detailed how pivotal response training can be used effectively to address: social, communication, and play outcomes.

In the table below, the outcomes identified by the evidence base are shown by age of participants.

Early Intervention (0-2)	Preschool (3-5)	Elementary (6-11)	Middle (12-14)	High (15-22)
Social	Social	Social	Social	No studies
Communication	Communication	Communication		
	Play	Play		



## Pivotal Response Training (PRT)

### Early intervention (0-2 years)

\*Nefdt, N., Koegel, R., Singer, G., & Gerber, M. (2010). The use of a self-directed learning program to provide introductory training in pivotal response treatment to parents of children with autism. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 12(1), 23-32. doi: 10.1177/1098300709334796

### Preschool (3-5 years)

\*Nefdt, N., Koegel, R., Singer, G., & Gerber, M. (2010). The use of a self-directed learning program to provide introductory training in pivotal response treatment to parents of children with autism. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 12(1), 23-32. doi: 10.1177/1098300709334796

\*Robinson, S. E. (2011). Teaching paraprofessionals of students with autism to implement pivotal response treatment in inclusive school settings using a brief video feedback training package. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 26, 105-118. doi: 10.1177/1088357611407063

Sherer, M. R., & Schreibman, L. (2005). Individual behavioral profiles and predictors of treatment effectiveness for children with autism. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(3), 525. doi: 10.1037/0022-006X.73.3.525

\*Stahmer, A. C. (1995). Teaching symbolic play skills to children with autism using pivotal response training. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 25(2), 123-141. doi: 10.1007/BF02178500

### Elementary (6-11 years)

Harper, C. B., Symon, J. B., & Frea, W. D. (2008). Recess is time-in: Using peers to improve social skills of children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 38(5), 815-826. doi: 10.1007/s10803-007-0449-2

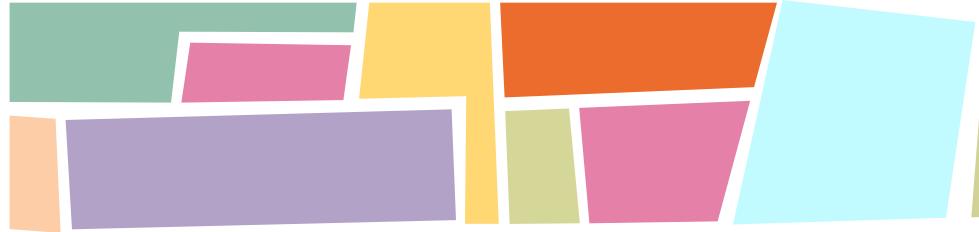
\*Koegel, R. L., & Frea, W. D. (1993). Treatment of social behavior in autism through the modification of pivotal social skills. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 26(3), 369-377. doi: 10.1901/jaba.1993.26-369

Kuhn, L. R., Bodkin, A. E., Devlin, S. D., & Doggett, R. A. (2008). Using pivotal response training with peers in special education to facilitate play in two children with autism. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*, 43(1), 37.

Pierce, K., & Schreibman, L. (1997). Multiple peer use of pivotal response training to increase social behaviors of classmates with autism: Results from trained and untrained peers. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 30(1), 157-160. doi: 10.1901/jaba.1997.30-157

\*Robinson, S. E. (2011). Teaching paraprofessionals of students with autism to implement pivotal response treatment in inclusive school settings using a brief video feedback training package. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 26, 105-118. doi: 10.1177/1088357611407063

\*Stahmer, A. C. (1995). Teaching symbolic play skills to children with autism using pivotal response training. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 25(2), 123-141. doi: 10.1007/BF02178500



## Pivotal Response Training (PRT)

Middle (12-14 years)

\*Koegel, R. L., & Frea, W. D. (1993). Treatment of social behavior in autism through the modification of pivotal social skills. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 26(3), 369-377. doi: 10.1901/jaba.1993.26-369

High (15-22 years)

No studies

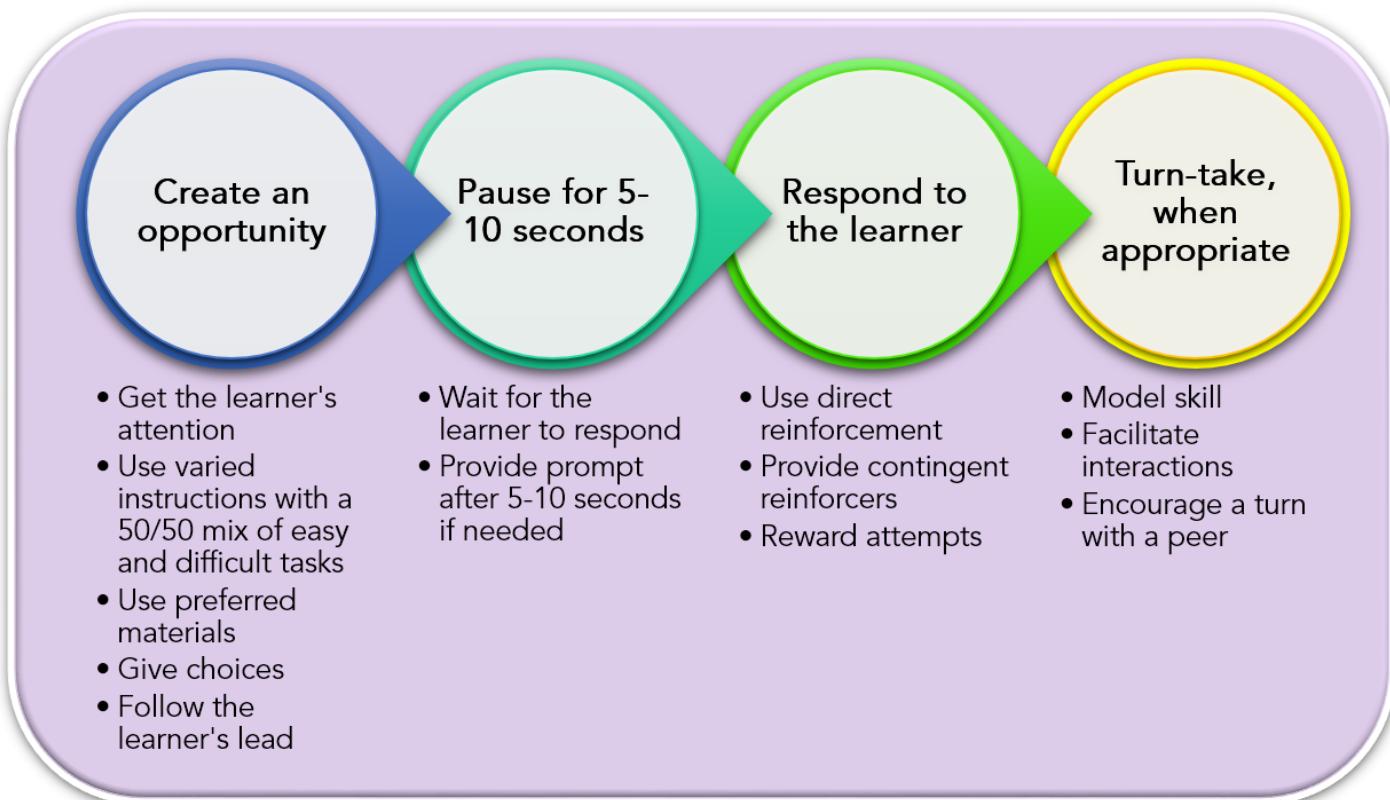
\* Research which included participants in multiple age ranges.

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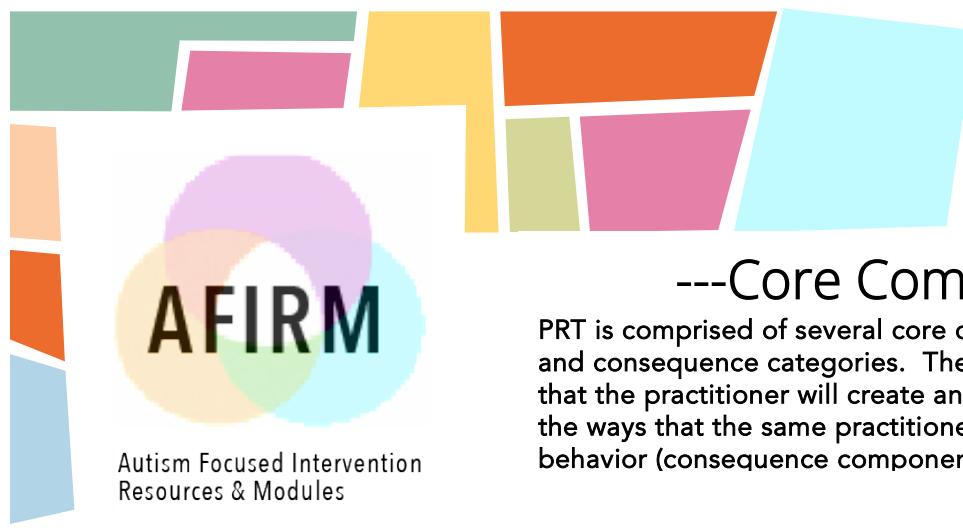
## ---PRT Process Guide---

PRT is comprised core components that determine the way that a practitioner will create an opportunity and will respond to the learner. The use of these components together leads to increased motivation and learning in many learners with ASD.



Adapted with permission from: Stahmer, A. C., Suhreinrich, J., Reed, S., Schreibman, L., & Bolduc, C. (2011). *Classroom pivotal response teaching for children with autism*. Guilford Press.

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## ---Core Components of PRT---

PRT is comprised of several core components that align with the antecedent and consequence categories. These core components determine the ways that the practitioner will create an opportunity (antecedent components) and the ways that the same practitioner will respond to the learner with ASD's behavior (consequence components).

Component	Definition
Antecedent - Create	Get the learner's attention
	<i>Get the learner's attention before presenting an opportunity or instruction.</i>
	Present a clear opportunity
	<i>The opportunity must be easy to understand and around the learner's developmental level.</i>
	Use varied instruction
	<i>Opportunities and materials should vary throughout the activity.</i>
	Include some easy tasks
	<i>Provide a mixture of easy and difficult tasks to increase motivation.</i>
Behavior - Pause	Use preferred materials (and vary them)
	<i>Use a variety of preferred materials and interests in each activity.</i>
Consequence - Respond	Give choices
	<i>Give choices between and within activities.</i>
Turn-take when appropriate	
	<i>Sometimes model a skill, facilitate back-and-forth interaction, or encourage turn taking.</i>
Respond to the learner's interests	
	<i>Acknowledge when the learner's interests change and follow their lead when possible.</i>
Observe	<i>Observe how the learner responds.</i>
Provide contingent reinforcers	<i>Provide immediate and well-timed reinforcers.</i>
Use direct reinforcement	<i>Reinforcers should be an item or activity that is natural or directly related to either the desired behavior or the context of the activity.</i>
Reward attempts	<i>Reward goal-directed attempts, or good trying, throughout the activity.</i>

Adapted with permission from: Stahmer, A. C., Suhrheinrich, J., Reed, S., Schreibman, L., & Bolduc, C. (2011). *Classroom pivotal response teaching for children with autism*. Guilford Press.

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**---PRT Motivational Strategy Guide---**

An essential component of a successful PRT session is a learner who is motivated to perform the activity, thereby reaching their target goal. Three motivational strategies are: using preferred materials, giving choices, and providing reinforcers. Use this guide to determine when to use each

Motivational Strategy	Best for...	May not be a good fit for...
Use Preferred Materials	Individually Preferred Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one</li> <li>• Fit the target goal</li> <li>• A learner with low motivation</li> <li>• A learner with low resistance to giving up materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group activities</li> <li>• Do not fit the target goal</li> <li>• A learner with high resistance to giving up materials</li> </ul>
	Play-based Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit the target goal</li> <li>• Learner's age and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not fit the target goal</li> </ul>
	Enhanced Academic Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A learner who has difficulty engaging in academic activities</li> <li>• Required learning activities, such as worksheets, homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When learner preferred materials cannot be incorporated</li> </ul>
Give Choices	Learner Selected Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A learner with low motivation</li> <li>• Activity gives learner control, such as free play, recess</li> <li>• Learner can determine the length of activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group activities</li> <li>• Activity materials are set</li> <li>• Activity length is set</li> </ul>
	Choices Between Selected Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit the target goal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only one choice is available</li> </ul>
	Choices Within Selected Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group activities</li> <li>• Activity is set</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A learner with low motivation</li> </ul>
Choose Effective Rewards	Use Reinforcers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A learner with low motivation</li> <li>• A learner learning a new target skill</li> <li>• Non-preferred activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A learner with high motivation</li> <li>• Preferred activities</li> <li>• Achieved goals</li> <li>• Practicing achieved goals</li> </ul>
	Reward Attempts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A learner with low motivation</li> <li>• A learner frustrated with the activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieved goals</li> <li>• Practicing achieved goals</li> </ul>

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**AFIRM**Autism Focused Intervention  
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Learner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Prior to formally beginning the assessment, introduce each of the items to the learner. Then start a timer and allow the learner to interact with the materials of their choosing. Mark the items the learning is playing with at 10-second intervals. Rank the items from most often selected to the least often selected.

Item	Tally at 10-second intervals	Total
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Item	Preference Level	Item	Preference Level
1.	High	6.	Medium
2.	High	7.	Low
3.	High	8.	Low
4.	Medium	9.	Low
5.	Medium	10.	Low

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## ---PRT Activity Plan---

Learner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Target Behavior/Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

PRT Activity Scheme: _____	Frequency: _____ times a week
Setting of Activity: _____	Length: _____ minutes
<p>➤ <i>Get Learner's Attention and Present a Clear Opportunity</i></p>	
➤ <i>Easy Tasks &amp; Varied Instructions:</i>	➤ <i>Difficult Tasks &amp; Varied Instructions:</i>
<p>➤ <i>Use Preferred Materials:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Individually preferred materials:</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Play-based materials:</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced academic materials:</li></ul>	
<p>➤ <i>Give Choices:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Choices between activities:</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Choices within activities:</li></ul>	
<p>➤ <i>Model Turn-taking</i></p>	
<p>➤ <i>Pause for 5-10 seconds</i></p>	
<p>➤ <i>Respond to the Learner:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Direct reinforcement:</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Contingent Rewards (how to earn and frequency):</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reward attempts (what does a good attempt look like):</li></ul>	

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## ---PRT Activity Plan---

 Learner's Name: Carolyn, George, & Natalia Date/Time: lunch

 Facilitator(s): Ms. Prince

 Target Behavior/Skill: Increase social skills

PRT Activity Scheme: <u>Board games</u>	Frequency: <u>5</u> times a week
Setting of Activity: <u>Ms. Prince's office</u>	Length: <u>10</u> minutes
<p>➤ Get Learner's Attention and Present a Clear Opportunity</p>	
<p>➤ Easy Tasks &amp; Varied Instructions: Say greeting. Ask 'How are you?' Respond to 'How are you?' with verbal prompts and visual cue cards</p>	<p>➤ Difficult Tasks &amp; Varied Instructions: Identify expected &amp; unexpected behaviors in social situations with verbal prompts and visual cue cards</p>
<p>➤ Use Preferred Materials:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individually preferred materials:  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Play-based materials: 'Social Skills' board game  <input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced academic materials:</p>	
<p>➤ Give Choices:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Choices between activities:  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Choices within activities: <i>Choose piece</i></p>	
<p>➤ Model Turn-taking</p>	
<p>➤ Pause for 5-10 seconds</p>	
<p>➤ Respond to the Learner:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct reinforcement: use the natural rewards in the board game (moving piece)  <input type="checkbox"/> Contingent Rewards (how to earn and frequency):</p>	
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reward attempts (what does a good attempt look like): <i>Provide emoticon stickers when a learner begins to share a story; discuss whether the behavior in the story is a social behavior</i></p>	

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### ---PRT Attention Checklist---

Learners with autism may exhibit unique ways of showing their attention. It is possible that the learner will demonstrate other indicators of attention. Use the checklist below to look for possible indicators of attention.

## Do I have the learner's attention?

- The learner is looking towards me (may be through the corner of the eye).
- The learner is looking towards the teaching materials.
- The learner's body is oriented towards me or materials.
- The learner is not engaged in self-stimulatory behavior.
- The learner is not actively engaged with another object.
- The learner is reaching for teaching materials or toy.

Yes

No

What is the learner's language level?

What is the learner's target skill/behavior level?

How can I naturally gain the learner's attention?

What is a clear opportunity for the learner?

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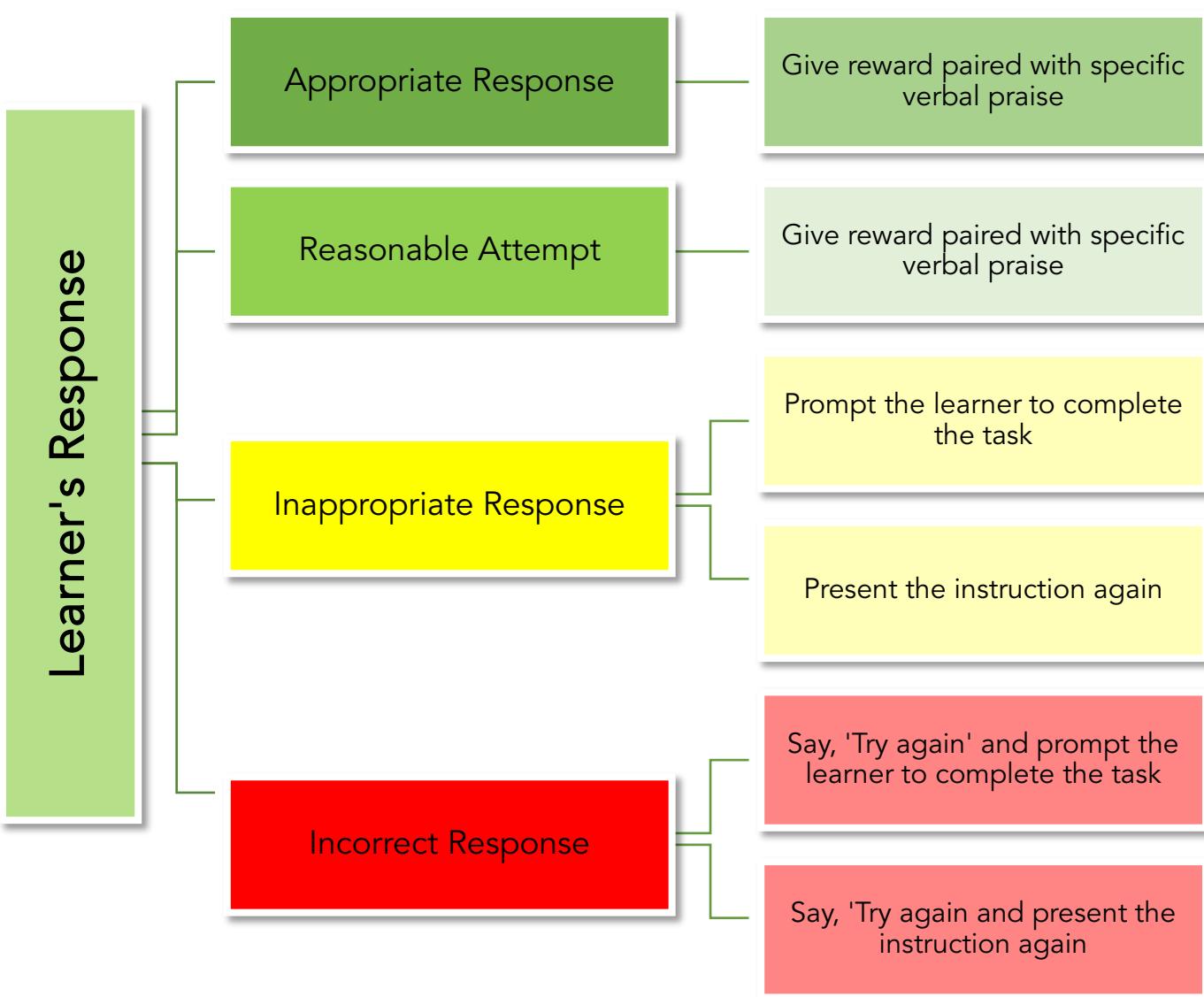
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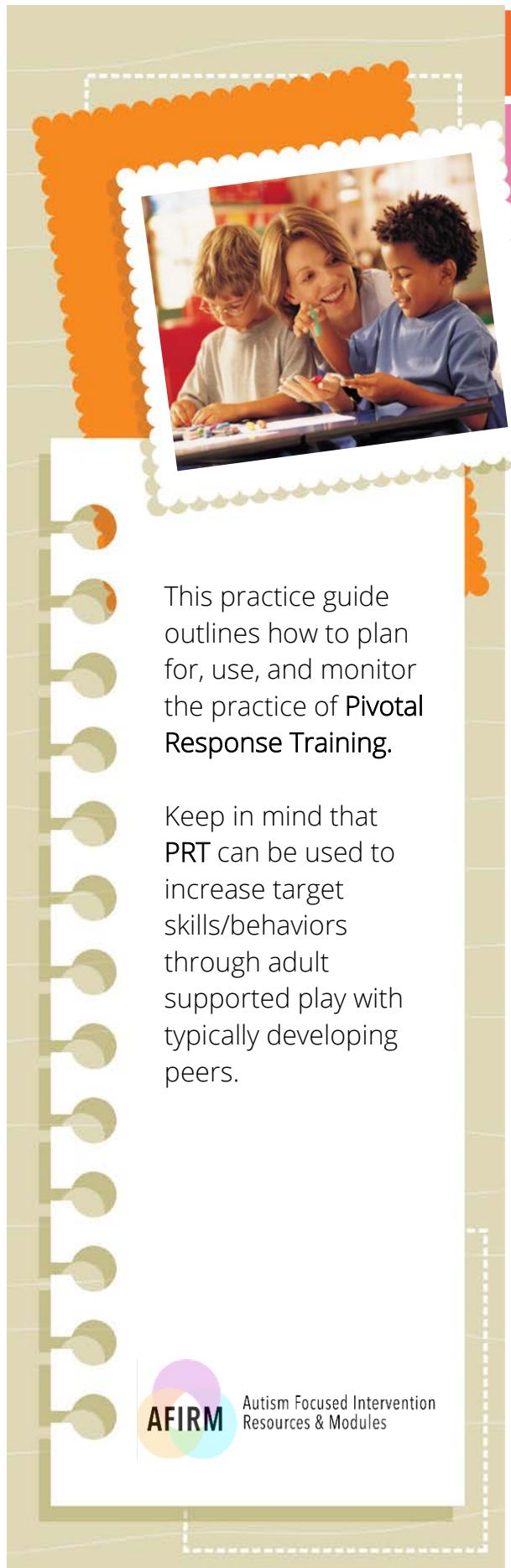
## ---PRT Appropriate Feedback---

Provide rewards immediately when the learner responds appropriately. Provide correction or prompting when they respond inappropriately or incorrectly. Rewards should be delivered frequently enough to encourage the learner to respond.



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## Pivotal Response Training (PRT) ---Step-by-Step Guide---

### BEFORE YOU START...

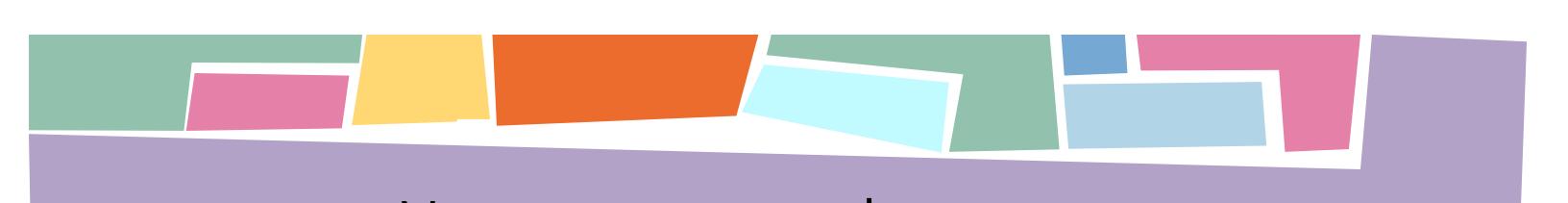
Each of the following points is important to address so that you can be sure the selected EBP is likely to address the learning needs of your student.

Have you found out more information about. . .?

- Establishing a goal or outcome that clearly states when the behavior will occur, what the target skill is, and how the team will know when the skill is mastered...
- Identifying additional evidence-based practices...

If the answer to any of these is "no," review the process of how to select an EBP.

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# Now you are ready to start...

## Step 1: Planning

The planning step explains initial steps and considerations involved to prepare for PRT and develop a lesson plan for a learner with ASD.

### 1.1 Identify easy and difficult tasks

Easy tasks, or maintenance targets, are those that a learner with ASD can do approximately 9/10 times correctly, whereas a difficult task, or acquisition target, is one that is new or continues to be challenging, such as their current goals. This mixture of task difficulty is important because:

- it reduces failure and increases motivation,
- maintains the learner with ASD's experience of success while still allowing the practitioner to help move the learner with ASD forward in learning new skills,
- is developmentally appropriate and consistent with how typically developing peers go between easy and difficult activities,
- increases spontaneity and reduces prompt dependence,
- will increase both confidence and natural use of skills, and
- helps the learner with ASD maintain skills over time.

### 1.2 Select materials

Each PRT activity should be based around materials that can be categorized into at least one of these groupings:

- individually preferred materials,
- play-based materials, or
- enhanced academic materials.



*Use the PRT Preference Assessment to identify and select learner preferred materials.*

### 1.3 Determine motivational strategies

An essential component of a successful PRT session is a learner who is motivated to perform the activity, thereby reaching their target goal. Three motivational strategies include:

- using learner preferred materials
- giving choices
- providing reinforcement



*Use the PRT Motivational Guide to determine motivational strategies to use.*

**Continue ➔**

## Step 1: Planning (continued)

### 1.4 Arrange environment

Setting up the environment when using PRT is similar to using other interventions:

- limit distractions
- provide visual supports

Note: For more information about visual boundaries, see the Visual Supports AFIRM Module.

### 1.5 Determine prompts

Writing down what the activity will look like is a helpful process to consider if the lesson makes sense and feels natural.

Note: For more information about prompting, see the Prompting AFIRM Module.

 Use the PRT Activity Plan to develop a PRT activity session.

### 1.6 Obtain training/supervision

Seeking the appropriate training or supervision is encouraged for those wishing to use PRT to ensure successful goal acquisition for learners.

## Step 2: Using

This section describes the process of implementing PRT.

### 2.1 Create an opportunity

The first step of conducting PRT is to create a clear opportunity for the learner to respond. A clear opportunity is understandable, uninterrupted, and developmentally appropriate. To create an opportunity:

- Get the learner's attention
- Use varied instructions
- Use preferred materials
- Give choices
- Follow the learner's lead

 Use the PRT Learner's Attention Checklist to gauge the learner's attention.

### 2.2 Pause

Some peers may require a longer processing time than expected. Pause and wait 5 to 10 seconds for the learner with ASD to respond. Avoid the temptation to repeat the presented opportunity until the learner has enough time to process the phrase. If learner is still unresponsive, consider ways to provide some additional prompting or support for the learner to help them understand that they should respond.

Note: For more information about prompting, see the Prompting AFIRM Module.

## Step 2: Using (continued)

### 2.3 Respond to the learner

Reward goal-directed attempts, or good trying, throughout the activity, as well as correct or appropriate responses. Ways to provide reinforcers for the learner include:

- Natural Reinforcement
- Continuous Reinforcement
- Intermittent Reinforcement

Note: For more information about providing reinforcers, see the Reinforcement AFIRM Module.



*Use the PRT Appropriate Feedback Guide to determine feedback for the learner.*

### 2.4 Turn-take, when appropriate

Incorporate turn-taking into the interaction for two reasons:

- easily regain control of the materials when needed
- model appropriate skills



*For more information about classroom-based PRT, please check out the CPRT Guide.*

## Step 3: Monitoring

The following process describes how the use of PRT can be monitored and how to adjust your plan based on the data.

### 3.1 Collect and analyze data

Plan to collect data on the learner's performance of the target skill throughout implementation.



*Use the PRT Interval Data Collection form to collect data on a target skill/behavior at the end of an interval.*



*Use the PRT Group Data Collection form to collect data on target skills/behaviors of group members.*



*Use the PRT Open Data Collection form to collect information at the end of the PRT session.*

### 3.2 Conduct a generalization probe

Conducting a generalization probe helps the practitioner be intentional in varying opportunities for the learner in order to obtain a complete picture of the learner's abilities.



*Use the PRT Generalization Probe to probe the learner's generalization of the target skill/behavior across materials, settings, and teachers.*

Continue →

### Step 3: Monitoring (continued)

#### 3.3 Determine next steps based on learner progress

If the learner with ASD is showing progress with PRT based upon collected data, then continue to use this practice with the learner. Gradually new target skills and behaviors can be introduced to the learner with ASD.

If the learner with ASD is not showing progress with PRT, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the target skill or behavior well defined?
- Is the target skill or behavior measurable and observable?
- Do the motivational strategies match the learner's learning style and developmental level?
- Was PRT used with fidelity? (Use the *PRT Implementation Checklist* to determine fidelity.)
- Are the visuals and activities appropriate to the learner's developmental level and level of language skills?
- Are instructions varied to maintain learner's motivation?
- Are reinforcers used that are motivating to the learner?
- Was the reinforcer applied with fidelity?
- Were learner attempts rewarded with a reinforcer?

If these issues have been addressed and the learner with ASD continues not to show progress, consider selecting a different evidence-based practice to use with the learner.

# Pivotal Response Training (PRT)

## ---Implementation Checklist---

*Before you start:*

*Have you...*

- Identified the target skill?
- Collected baseline data through direct observation?
- Established a goal or outcome that clearly states **when** the behavior will occur, **what** the target skill is, and **how** the team will know when the skill is mastered.

*If the answer to any of these is "no", refer to the "Selecting EBPs" section on the website.*

Observation Date Observer's Initials	1	2	3	4
<b>Step 1: Planning</b>				
1.1 Identify easy and difficult tasks				
1.2 Select materials (individually preferred, play-based, and/or enhanced academic)				
1.3 Determine additional motivational strategies (choices and rewards)				
1.4 Arrange environment				
1.5 Determine prompts				
1.6 Obtain training and/or supervision, if needed				
<b>Step 2: Using</b>				
2.1 Create an opportunity				
<input type="checkbox"/> Get the learner's attention				
<input type="checkbox"/> Use varied instructions (50/50 mix of easy and difficult)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Use selected materials (Step 1: Planning 1.2)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Give choices (between and/or within activities)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Follow the learner's lead				
2.2 Pause 5 to 10 seconds.				
2.3 Respond to the learner				
<input type="checkbox"/> Give reinforcement (natural, contingent, and/or intermittent)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Reward attempts				
2.4 Turn-take, when appropriate				
<b>Step 3: Monitoring</b>				
3.1 Collect data on target skill/behavior				
3.2 Conduct a generalization probe				
3.3 Determine next steps				



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**Prompt Level:**  
F - Full  
P - Partial

**Prompt Type:**  
Ph - Physical  
V - Verbal  
Vs - Visual  
G - Gestural  
I - Independent (no prompt)

**Maintenance target performance:**  
1 - No response/maximal prompting required at all opportunities  
2 - Maximal prompting required at most opportunities  
3 - Most responses prompted; sporadic independent responses  
4 - Some independent responses (at least 50%), some prompted responses  
5 - Mostly independent responses (more than 75% of responses independent)

**Target skill:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Maintenance Targets:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acquisition Targets:** \_\_\_\_\_

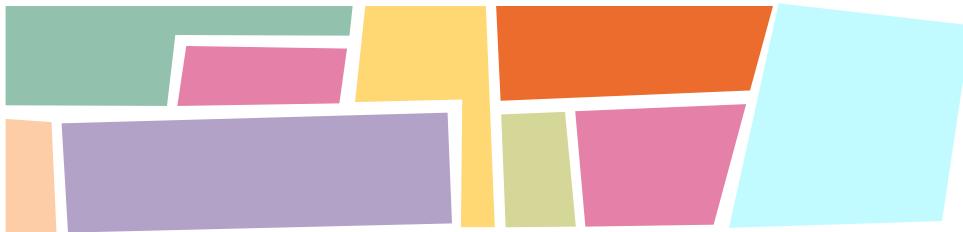
Initials	Material/Activity	Prompts					Sample Student Response/Notes					Maintenance Targets	
		F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I				1 2 3 4 5	
		F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I				1 2 3 4 5	
		F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I				1 2 3 4 5	
		F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I				1 2 3 4 5	
<b>Summary</b>		Least supportive prompt needed for response to acquisition cue:					F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I
													1 2 3 4 5

**Target skill:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Maintenance Targets:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acquisition Targets:** \_\_\_\_\_

Initials	Material/Activity	Prompts					Sample Student Response/Notes					Maintenance Targets	
		F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I				1 2 3 4 5	
		F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I				1 2 3 4 5	
		F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I				1 2 3 4 5	
		F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I				1 2 3 4 5	
<b>Summary</b>		Least supportive prompt needed for response to acquisition cue:					F	P	Ph	V	Vs	G	I
													1 2 3 4 5



# Pivotal Response Training (PRT)

**Prompt Level:**

F - Full  
P - Partial

**Prompt Type:**

Ph - Physical  
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**Maintenance target performance:**

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- 5 - Mostly independent responses (more than 75% of responses independent)

**Target skill:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Maintenance Targets:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acquisition Targets:** \_\_\_\_\_

Initials	Material/Activity	Prompts					Sample Student Response/Notes					Maintenance Targets
		F P Ph V Vs G I										1 2 3 4 5
		F P Ph V Vs G I										1 2 3 4 5
		F P Ph V Vs G I										1 2 3 4 5
		F P Ph V Vs G I										1 2 3 4 5
<b>Summary</b>		Least supportive prompt needed for response to acquisition cue:					F P Ph V Vs G I					1 2 3 4 5

**Target skill:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Maintenance Targets:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acquisition Targets:** \_\_\_\_\_

Initials	Material/Activity	Prompts					Sample Student Response/Notes					Maintenance Targets
		F P Ph V Vs G I										1 2 3 4 5
		F P Ph V Vs G I										1 2 3 4 5
		F P Ph V Vs G I										1 2 3 4 5
		F P Ph V Vs G I										1 2 3 4 5
<b>Summary</b>		Least supportive prompt needed for response to acquisition cue:					F P Ph V Vs G I					1 2 3 4 5

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**Acquisition target performance:**

- 1 - No response/maximal prompting required at all opportunities
- 2 - Maximal prompting required at most opportunities
- 3 - Most responses prompted; sporadic independent responses
- 4 - Some independent responses (at least 50%), some prompted responses
- 5 - Mostly independent responses (more than 75% of responses independent)

**Motivation:**

- 1 - Minimal motivation, many negative behaviors
- 2 - Poor motivation, moderate negative behaviors
- 3 - Good motivation, some negative behaviors
- 4 - High motivation, few negative behaviors
- 5 - Optimal motivation, minimal negative behaviors

Learner	Task/Skill Area:	Task/Skill Area:	Task/Skill Area:	Task/Skill Area:	Motivation
	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	Task:  Rating: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Adapted with permission from: Stahmer, A. C., Suhrheinrich, J., Reed, S., Schreibman, L., & Bolduc, C. (2011). *Classroom pivotal response teaching for children with autism*. Guilford Press.


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## ---PRT Open Data Collection---

Record data only one time at the end of the activity, so there is one data point for the whole interaction. The information recorded at the end of the session includes an example of the learner's best response during the activity, the most frequent prompt level used to promote responding, and an estimation of how the learner performed the target skill with a '+', '✓', or '-' designation.

Learner: \_\_\_\_\_

**Response Level:**

+ - Responds independently to all or almost all (at least 80%) opportunities  
 ✓ - Responds independently to most opportunities (50%), but requires support for some opportunities  
 - - Requires support to respond to all or almost all opportunities

**Prompt Level:**

F - Full  
 P - Partial

**Prompt Type:**

Ph - Physical  
 V - Verbal  
 Vs - Visual  
 G - Gestural

**Motivation:**

1 - Minimal motivation, many negative behaviors  
 2 - Poor motivation, moderate negative behaviors  
 3 - Good motivation, some negative behaviors  
 4 - High motivation, few negative behaviors  
 5 - Optimal motivation, minimal negative behaviors

Date															
Initials															
Activity/Materials & Length of Time															
Task/Skill Area															
Difficult Tasks (Acquisition Skills)															
Difficult Response Level	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -										
Sample Best Response															
Prompts (if applicable)	F Ph	P V	P Vs	P G	F Ph	P V	P Vs	P G	F Ph	P V	P Vs	P G			
Easy Tasks (Maintenance Skills)															
Easy Response Level	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -	+ ✓ -				
Motivation	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5				

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## ---PRT Generalization Probe---

Learner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Target Behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

Target Behavior Domain: \_\_\_\_\_ Benchmark: \_\_\_\_\_

Identify three different materials (should be learner preferred materials), settings, and teachers for the purpose of the probe.

Materials/Activity	1.	2.	3.
Setting	1.	2.	3.
Teacher	1.	2.	3.

Circle the number that corresponds with the specific materials, setting, or teacher listed above. Circle the child's response to the probed skill target as: Correct (C), Incorrect (I), or No Response (NR).

Date	Materials			Setting			Teacher			Student Response		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	C	I	NR
Total												

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted with permission from: Stahmer, A. C., Suhrheinrich, J., Reed, S., Schreibman, L., & Bolduc, C. (2011). *Classroom pivotal response teaching for children with autism*. Guilford Press.

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## Pivotal Response Training (PRT) ---Professional's Guide---

# Pivotal Response Training

### Pivotal Response Training...

- is an evidence-based practice for learners in early intervention (0-2 years) to middle school learners (12-14 years) that can be implemented in multiple settings.
- is conducted in natural settings in which social, communication, and play skills are targeted for improvement.

### Why Use?

- PRT has been found to be effective in increasing social initiations, functional play skills, and symbolic play skills of learners with ASD.
- PRT incorporates a variety of motivational strategies, such as learner preferred materials, choices, and reinforcement.

### Outcomes

- The evidence-base for PRT supports the use of this practice to address the outcomes below:

Early Intervention (0-2)	Preschool (3-5)	Elementary (6-11)	Middle (12-14)	High (15-22)
Social	Social	Social	Social	No studies
Communication	Communication	Communication		
	Play	Play		



## TIPS:

- Create an appropriate opportunity for the learner with ASD at or just above their developmental levels.
- Check to see if you have the learner's attention before presenting an opportunity.
- Vary instructions, materials, tasks, reinforcers, and give choices to maintain the learner's motivation.
- Follow the learner's lead when their interests change.



## Pivotal Response Training

This tip sheet was designed as a supplemental resource to help provide basic information about the practice.

For more information, visit:



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# Pivotal Response Training (PRT) ---Professional's Guide---

## STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING

### 1. Plan

- Identify easy and difficult tasks
- Select materials
- Determine motivational strategies (learner preferred materials, choices, reinforcers)
- Arrange environment
- Determine prompts
- Obtain training and/or supervision, if needed

### 2. Use

- Create an opportunity (varied instructions, materials, choices)
- Pause 5 to 10 seconds
- Respond to the learner
- Turn-take, when appropriate

### 3. Monitor

- Collect data on target skill/behavior
- Conduct a generalization probe
- Determine next steps



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## Pivotal Response Training (PRT) ---Parent's Guide---

This introduction provides basic information about Pivotal Response Training.

This parent introduction to **Pivotal Response Training** was designed as a supplemental resource to help answer basic questions about this practice.

To find out more about how **PRT** is used with your child, speak with:

---

**For more information visit:**  
[www.afirm.fpg.unc.edu](http://www.afirm.fpg.unc.edu)

### What is a Pivotal Response Training?

- Pivotal Response Training is an evidence-based practice for learners in early intervention (0-2 years) to middle school learners (12-14 years).
- Pivotal response training (PRT) is an intervention that integrates principles of child development with those of applied behavior analysis (ABA).

### Why use PRT with my child?

- PRT provides learners with ASD with a natural and clear opportunity at or just above their developmental level to learn new target skills.
- Research studies have shown that PRT can be used to address a variety of goals, including social, communication, and play outcomes.

### What activities can I do at home?

- Since PRT occurs in natural settings, provide varied instructions or commenting during daily activities, such as setting the dinner table or playtime with siblings.
- Provide opportunities for your child to take turns, either with yourself, siblings, or with peers during a playdate.



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Check out  
these  
resources to  
support your  
use of PRT  
here.

For more  
information visit:  
[www.afirm.fpg.unc.edu](http://www.afirm.fpg.unc.edu)

## ---Additional Resources---

### Articles:

Boudreau, A. M., Corkum, P., Meko, K., & Smith, I. M. (2015). Peer-mediated pivotal response treatment for young children with autism spectrum disorders: A systematic review. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 30*(3), 218-235. doi:10.1177/0829573515581156

Bozkus-Genc, G., & Yucesoy-Ozkan, S. (2016). Meta-analysis of pivotal response training for children with autism spectrum disorder. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 51*(1), 13-26.

Brock, M. E., Dueker, S. A., & Barczak, M. A. (2018). Brief report: Improving social outcomes for students with autism at recess through peer-mediated pivotal response training. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 48*(6), 2224-2230. doi:10.1007/s10803-017-3435-3

Cadogan, S., & McCrimmon, A. W. (2015). Pivotal response treatment for children with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review of research quality. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation, 18*(2), 137-144. doi:10.3109/17518423.2013.845615

Duifhuis, E. A., Boer, J. C. d., Doornbos, A., Buitelaar, J. K., Oosterling, I. J., & Klip, H. (2017). The effect of pivotal response treatment in children with autism spectrum disorders: A non-randomized study with a blinded outcome measure. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 47*(2), 231-242. doi:10.1007/s10803-016-2916-0

Fossum, K., Williams, L., Garon, N., Bryson, S. E., & Smith, I. M. (2018). Pivotal response treatment for preschoolers with autism spectrum disorder: Defining a predictor profile. *Autism Research, 11*(1), 153-165. doi:10.1002/aur.1859

Gengoux, G. W., Berquist, K. L., Salzman, E., Schapp, S., Phillips, J. M., Frazier, T. W., ... Hardan, A. Y. (2015). Pivotal response treatment parent training for autism: Findings from a 3-month follow-up evaluation. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 45*(9), 2889-2898. doi:10.1007/s10803-015-2452-3

Hardan, A. Y., Gengoux, G. W., Berquist, K. L., Libove, R. A., Ardel, C. M., Phillips, J., ... Minjarez, M. B. (2015). A randomized controlled trial of pivotal response treatment group for parents of children with autism. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 56*(8), 884-892. doi:10.1111/jcpp.12354

Koegel, R. L., Bradshaw, J. L., Ashbaugh, K., & Koegel, L. K. (2014). Improving question-asking initiations in young children with autism using pivotal response treatment. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 44*(4), 816-827. doi:10.1007/s10803-013-1932-6

Lei, J., & Ventola, P. (2017). Pivotal response treatment for autism spectrum disorder: Current perspectives. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment, 13*, 1613-1626. doi:10.2147/NDT.S120710

### Articles (continued):

Lei, J., Sukhodolsky, D., Abdullahi, S., Braconnier, M., & Ventola, P. (2017). Reduced anxiety following pivotal response treatment in young children with autism spectrum disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 43-44, 1-7. doi:10.1016/j.rasd.2017.09.002

Minjarez, M. B., Mercier, E. M., Williams, S. E., & Hardan, A. Y. (2013). Impact of pivotal response training group therapy on stress and empowerment in parents of children with autism. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 15(2), 71-78. doi:10.1177/1098300712449055

Mohammadzaheri, F., Koegel, L. K., Rezaee, M., & Rafiee, S. M. (2014). A randomized clinical trial comparison between pivotal response treatment (PRT) and structured applied behavior analysis (ABA) intervention for children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(11), 2769-2777. doi:10.1007/s10803-014-2137-3

Rezaei, M., Moradi, A., Tehrani-Doost, M., Hassanabadi, H., & Khosroabadi, R. (2018). Effects of combining medication and pivotal response treatment on aberrant behavior in children with autism spectrum disorder. *Children (Basel)*, 5(2), 19. doi:10.3390/children5020019

Smeekens, I., Oosterling, I. J., den Boer, J. C., Buitelaar, J. K., Staal, W. G., & van Dongen-Boomsma, M. (2017). Pivotal response treatment for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2017(12) doi:10.1002/14651858.CD012887

Steiner, A. M., Gengoux, G. W., Klin, A., & Chawarska, K. (2013). Pivotal response treatment for infants at-risk for autism spectrum disorders: A pilot study. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43(1), 91-102. doi:10.1007/s10803-012-1542-8

Stock, R., Mirenda, P., & Smith, I. M. (2013). Comparison of community-based verbal behavior and pivotal response treatment programs for young children with autism spectrum disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 7(9), 1168-1181. doi:10.1016/j.rasd.2013.06.002

Stockall, N., & Dennis, L. R. (2014). Using pivotal response training and technology to engage preschoolers with autism in conversations. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 49(4), 195-202. doi:10.1177/1053451213509486

Verschuur, R., Didden, R., Lang, R., Sigafoos, J., & Huskens, B. (2014). Pivotal response treatment for children with autism spectrum disorders: A systematic review. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1(1), 34-61. doi:10.1007/s40489-013-0008-z

Verschuur, R., Huskens, B. E. B. M., Verhoeven, L. T. W., & Didden, H. C. M. (2017). Increasing opportunities for question-asking in school-aged children with autism spectrum disorder: Effectiveness of staff training in pivotal response treatment. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 47(2), 490-505. doi:10.1007/s10803-016-2966-3

### Apps:



Pivotal Response Treatment for Autism – Training & Facilitation by Noorin Hasan (Free)



Autism Therapy with MITA by ImagiRation LLC (Free)

Continue →

## Books:

Koegel, R. L., & Koegel, L. K. (2006). *Pivotal response treatments for autism: Communication, social, & academic development*. Paul H Brookes Publishing.

Koegel, R. L., & Koegel, L. K. (2012). *The PRT Pocket Guide: Pivotal Response Treatment for Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Brookes Publishing Company.

Suhrheinrich, J., Reed, S., Schreibman, L., & Bolduc, C. (2011). *Classroom pivotal response teaching for children with autism*. Guilford Press.

## Websites:

AppliedBehaviorAnalysisEdu.org. (2018). *How is Pivotal Response Treatment® (PRT) Used in ABA?* Retrieved 5/16/18, from <https://www.appliedbehavioranalysisedu.org/how-is-pivotal-response-treatment-prt-used-in-aba/>

Classroom Pivotal Response Teaching. (2016). *Classroom Pivotal Response Teaching*. Retrieved 5/16/18, from <https://www.classroomprt.org/>

Classroom Pivotal Response Teaching. (2017). *CPRT Blog*. Retrieved 7/19/18, from <http://cprtblog.blogspot.com/>

The Gevirtz School (GGSE) - UC Santa Barbara. (2014). *About PRT*. Retrieved 5/16/18, from <https://education.ucsb.edu/autism/pivotal-response-treatment>

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## Pivotal Response Training CEC Standards

The CEC Standards that apply to all 27 evidence-based practices can be found on our website at: <http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/learn-afirm>

Below are CEC Standards that apply specifically to Pivotal Response Training (PRT) module.

Standard	Description
<b>Initial Preparation Standard 4: Assessment</b>	
DDA4 K4	Individual strengths, skills and learning styles
ISCI 4 S5	Interpret information from formal and informal assessments
ISCI 4 S8	Evaluate instruction and monitor progress of individuals with exceptionalities
<b>Initial Preparation Standard 5: Instructional Planning &amp; Strategies</b>	
DDA5 K1	Specialized curriculum designed to meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities/autism spectrum disorders
ISCI 5 S8	Prepare lesson plans
ISCI 5 S9	Prepare and organize materials to implement daily lesson plans

Standard	Description
<b>Advanced Preparation Standard 6: Professional and Ethical Practice</b>	
SEDAS6.S2	Teach others to use individual strengths to reinforce and maintain skills

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information, visit:  
[www.afirm.fpg.unc.edu](http://www.afirm.fpg.unc.edu)

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2. Koegel, R. L., & Frea, W. D. (1993). Treatment of social behavior in autism through the modification of pivotal social skills. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 26(3), 369-377. doi: 10.1901/jaba.1993.26-369
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<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/imce/documents/2014-EBP-Report.pdf>
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