IRIS CENTER

Fundamental Skill Sheet

High-Probability Requests

What Is It?

High-probability (high-p) requests are a sequence of requests to which a student is highly likely to respond. High-p requests are made before the teacher provides a low-probability (low-p) request—one with which a student infrequently or never responds—to promote student compliance for a target behavior.

What Do We Know About This Skill/Practice?

- High-probability requests can be used in both general and special education settings.
- This strategy operates on the assumption that students are more likely to comply with teacher directives if they are already engaged in compliant classroom behavior.
- High-p requests can be used to proactively reduce the likelihood that problem behavior will occur.
- High-p requests can be used to increase compliance with low-probability requests for a range of students, including those with developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or emotional behavioral disorder.
- Teachers can implement this strategy to address a range of situations and behaviors, including:
    - Completion of academic work
    - Initiation of appropriate social interaction
    - Compliance with teacher instructions
    - Challenging behavior during transitions

Procedures

1. **Identify a frequent problem behavior.** Consider instructional or behavioral requests with which a student infrequently (i.e., less than 40% of the time) or never complies.
2. **Create a list of high-p requests**. Identify three to five high-probability requests—those with which students comply 80% to 100% of the time—that relate to the context of the low-p request (i.e., problem behavior).
3. **Deliver a request sequence.** To encourage a student to comply with a low-p request:
    - Give three to five high-probability requests in quick succession (i.e., with five seconds or less between each request and the student's compliance).
    - Provide brief, verbal praise after the completion of each high-p request.
    - Give a low-p request and immediately praise the student when he complies.

Tips for Implementation

- Provide each high-p request within five seconds of the completion of the prior request, and the low-p request within five seconds of the last high-p request.
- Make sure each high-p request in the sequence relates directly to the low-p request. For example, a high-p request like "Touch your nose" might be appropriate to help a student start the momentum necessary to put on his coat (low-p request). However, this same high-p request might not be appropriate to encourage a student to complete multiplication problems (low-p request).
- When developing a sequence of high-p requests, consider the student's age and developmental level.
- Create a pool of high-p requests to avoid repeating the same high-p sequence.

Things To Keep in Mind

- High-p requests are particularly beneficial for students who engage in problem behaviors to escape from or avoid a task or activity.
- High-p requests should be appropriate for the student's age, developmental level, and skill sets.
- All requests, whether high-p or low-p, must be requests that students are capable of completing independently. Because of this, the lists of high-p and low-p requests that teachers create will vary from student to student.
- For some students, verbal praise in response to compliance with high-p requests may not be sufficient. Instead, following compliance, these students may need to be given a tangible reinforcer (e.g., a sticker, preferred item, token), which should be faded over time.
- Once a student has begun to comply with a low-p request at an acceptable rate, the teacher should begin to reduce the ratio of high-p to low-p requests (i.e., fade over time). For example, if the teacher starts by issuing four high-p requests before each low-p request, she should reduce that over time until no high-p request is required to achieve compliance.

Implementation Examples

The table below provides examples of high-p requests sequences that teachers could use to encourage students to comply with the target behaviors. Note how the high-p requests in each example relate directly to the low-p request.

Problem/Target Behavior	Request Sequence
Problem behavior: Emily refuses to put on her coat before going out for recess. **Target behavior:** Putting on coat	**High-p requests** • *Emily, touch your nose.* [student response, teacher praise] • *Wiggle your fingers.* [student response, teacher praise] • *Emily, pick up your coat.* [student response, teacher praise] **Low-p request** • *Put on your coat.* [student response, teacher praise]
Problem behavior: Josiah typically refuses to come to the carpet during group instruction when asked. **Target behavior:** Sit on carpet for group instruction	**High-p requests** • *Josiah, put your pencil on your desk.* [student response, teacher praise] • *Please tell me the science word of the week.* [student response, teacher praise] • *Give me five.* [student response, teacher praise] **Low-p request** • *Josiah, sit on the carpet for group instruction.* [student response, teacher praise]
Problem behavior: Raheim has great difficulty beginning math instruction after lunch. **Target behavior:** Open digital textbook	**High-p requests** • *Raheim, please meet me at the back table.* [student response, teacher praise] • *Raheim, please pass out these four electronic tablets to your tablemates.* [student response, teacher praise] • *Return to your seat.* [student response, teacher praise] **Low-p request** • *Raheim, open your digital textbook to the page marked multiplying fractions.* [student response, teacher praise]

Elementary Video Example

Coming Soon.

High School Video Example

In the video below, Mrs. Ward wants to use high-p requests to encourage Virginia to begin her independent writing assignment. Note the procedures Mrs. Ward uses to implement high-p requests in the example and where her delivery falls short in the non-example.

Foundational Research & References

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About the Author

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