

Hand Under Hand Technique



What does it mean?

Hand-under-hand prompting refers to physical prompting that involves the facilitator guiding a person's hands from underneath (not over top) their hand.

Your hands perform the activity while the individual's hands rest on top - in this way the individual can feel what your hands are doing. If the activity is new to them and they are hesitant, they may feel more secure touching your hands rather than the unknown object or activity. Also, because the individual's palms are on your hands, they will be able to focus their energy on feeling the movements of your hands. With hand-under-hand prompting, it is common for the individual to feel more comfortable and in control because they can move their hands freely if so desired.

Watch a Video



Why are the hands important in communication?

Our hands function as tools, sense organs, and our 'voices'.

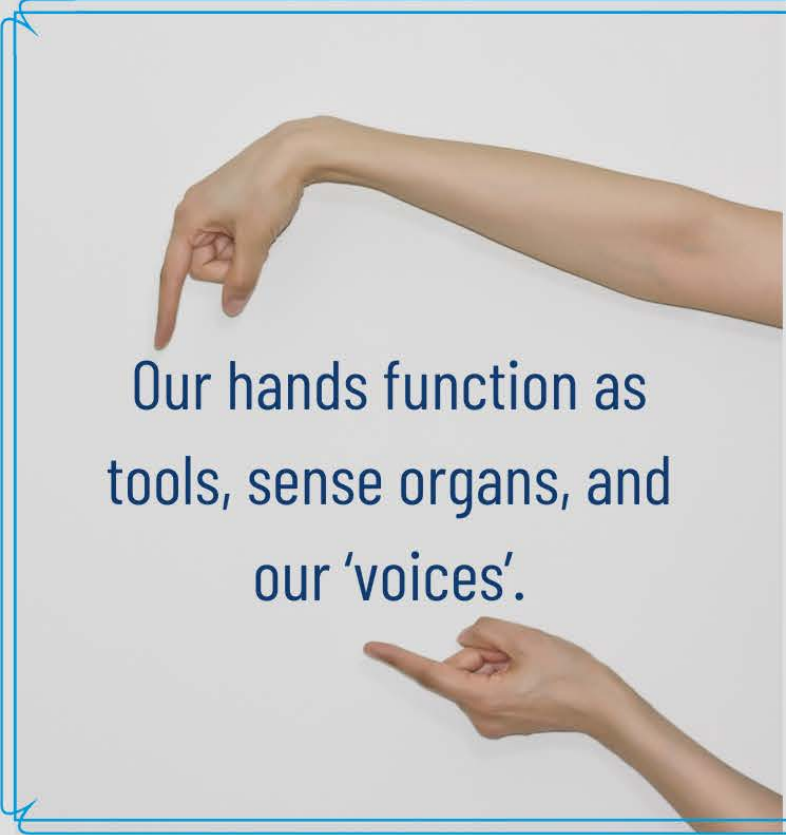
First, it is important to understand what role the hands play in typical language development. Gestures precede spoken words. An important gesture is pointing; it helps establish mutual topics and help the learner establish meaning to what they are pointing to – for example, a child points to a dog, and the parent says, “that’s a dog.” As a typical part of development, children point and use an accompanying glance toward the adult repeatedly as a way of confirming their new skill of naming. Throughout our lifespan, we continue to use our hands for nonverbal communication. We gesture to one another; we wave, point, etc. For some individuals, touch is their main avenue for communication. With their hands acting as their eyes and ears.

Touch is also both a passive and active sense:

- Passive touch is when the touch happens to us, it is receptive. It may be invited or uninvited and some people may experience challenges tolerating some touch
- Active touch is the expressive form, its actively doing it.

Why should we use hand under hand?

- It is noncontrolling, allowing the person to have more control – the person is not forced to comply, but can move their hands at will.
- It allows the person to know that you share the experience of touching the same object or of making the same kind of movements – thus establishing a mutual topic (communication) and lays groundwork for language
- Does not obstruct the most important parts of their own experience of any object they may be touching – focus on objects being touched rather than exclusively on the facilitator's hands
- Shows the person respect and also allows them to choose the pace
- Is less intrusive than manipulating their hands
- Provides a person who is blind or has low vision with spatial awareness
- Encourages authentic involvement
- Stimulates curiosity about what's around them
- Allows them to play a more active part in tasks
- Increases the desire to do things for themselves, reducing passivity and dependence. If their hands are on top of the other person's hands, they make the choice of moving with that person's hands, thus requiring active learning on their part.

A photograph showing a hand reaching down from the top right towards a hand reaching up from the bottom right. The hands are positioned as if they are about to meet or are in the process of a 'hand under hand' gesture. The background is a plain, light color.

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our 'voices'.

Why is hand under hand preferred over hand over hand?

Hand over hand touch conditions the hands of the individual to be passive, to wait for direction, and to avoid reaching out for information and stimulation. It takes away the person's control of their hands and what they are touching. It also shifts their attention from the object they are touching to the hands which are on top of theirs.