

19 ways to step back

It often feels right to give help to students with disabilities, but this may not be in their best interest. Use this list to help yourself to **STEP BACK**

1. You **are STEPPING BACK so that your students can step forward and become independent.** Keep this simple fact in mind in all that you do.
2. Clock how long it actually takes for students to start zippers, pick up dropped papers, or find page numbers. What is a few more seconds in the grand scheme of things?
3. Sit on your hands for a whole task while you practice giving verbal instead of physical prompt or more intrusive support.
4. If you must give more intrusive prompts, try “hand-under-hand” or “side-by-side” modeling instead of “hand-over-hand” or “light physical prompts”. **This provides for more choice.**
5. **Let your students make mistakes. Let them “fail forward”.** It’s part of the human experience!
6. **Acknowledge your own needs.** There’s a reason why you chose the helping profession.
7. Sit further away. If you’ve been within arm’s reach, sit just within earshot. If you’ve been sitting just within earshot, sit across the room.
8. Pat yourself on the back every time you help with seeing, not thinking. **Your job is to give information and teach the student how to self-advocate.**
9. Even though helping can feel right, be aware that too much assistance is short-sighted. **Sometimes less is more, less is better.**
10. Catch yourself before you correct your student’s work. **Don’t cover for them. This is about their skills...NOT yours.**
11. **Commit to NO intervention for a whole activity. Take data instead.** Things might not fall apart as much as you had expected.
12. “What page are we on?” “What’s for lunch?” **Have students ask their classmates instead of you,** both during school and on the telephone or through text messages.
13. Assign “**student**” learning partners. **Always seek out peer appropriate support.**
14. **Teach students to decline assistance, “Thanks, but please let me try it by myself.”**
15. **Whenever you add prompts, include a plan to phase them out.**
16. **Let the boss know that you need to STEP BACK** so that your students can be more independent. You’re not shirking your responsibilities
17. Collaborate with other adults to break your habits of helping too much. Agree to remind each other to STEP BACK.
18. Try helping only when classroom teachers give you a signal. They may prefer to respond directly, or to **give students longer to work it out alone.**
19. Post a sign, “Are there any other ways that I could STEP BACK?” and allow the student more independence?

Adapted from: Classroom Collaboration by Laurel J. Hudson, PhD (Perkins School for the Blind)