

The Seven Stages of Switch Development

Information sheet



Stage 1

Learning by experience
Exploring Egbert the Elephant
Circle/Red

Definition

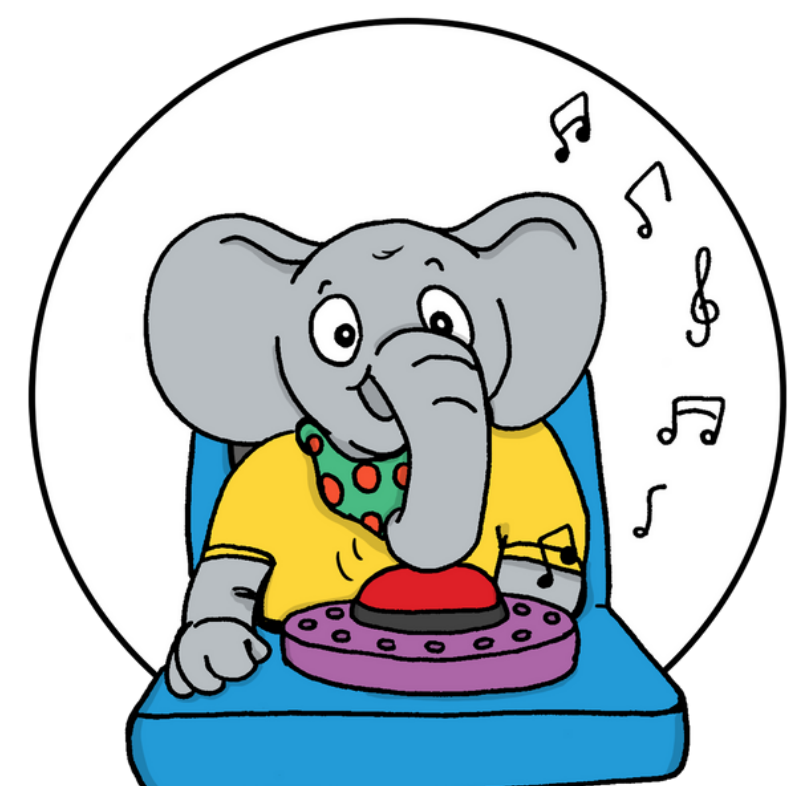
Exploring Egbert is the stage where you are first introduced to switches and learn how fun they can be. You will use your easiest body movements, which could be your hand, arm, leg, head, or even your whole body moving forward. This will activate a switch that is placed where you can easily press it. Don't worry if it is not a smooth body movement, we will look at this at a later stage.

The switch location may be different depending on whether you are in a chair, lying down, standing in a standing frame, or a different position. The switch activation will give you either an instant or a very short timed sensory response (lights, sound, tactile, movement). It is important the activity is extremely fun and not complicated – no additional brain draining activities!

Through repeated opportunities to press your switch, you will learn, through experience that when you move your body and touch a switch (pressed or press and hold) a fun activity/reward happens.

Milestones

- Introduction to switches: you are introduced to switches and start to learn about their function and develop an acceptance to the equipment being near you
- Finding the easiest body movement: you can use your easiest body movement to activate the switch
- Incidental and curious switch activations: through repeated activations of the switch, you will learn that your body movements are causing a fun response
- Fun activities and rewards: as you continue to activate the switch you'll receive a fun activity or reward in response, such as lights, sound, tactile, or movement



Top tips for working with switch users



- Provide frequent opportunities for the switch user to use their switch across their day
- Ensure activities are fun, of interest and rewarding to the user
- Helpers can, if required, model what the switch does by pressing it to show the switch user
- You can ask a therapist (e.g. Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist) for advice on which body movement would be easiest for the switch user to access their switch
- Try moving the switch closer to the switch user or to somewhere they may incidentally activate it – avoid prompting at this stage as it shifts the child’s focus from independent exploration to compliance
- Try different switches to see which one works best for the switch user – do not get distracted by obsessing over getting the ‘right’ switch – there isn’t one – just the best switch for the moment
- Consider the user’s sensory needs when exploring the type of switch and switch activity (e.g. the clicking noise or the tactile feel of the switch can become a positive or negative focus)
- Communicate with the switch user what happens when they use the switch with words, pictures or sounds
- Ensure activities involve direct activation, where the switch is on when activated and off when released, OR momentary activation, where the switch plays for a timed period (set for no longer than 6 seconds) when activated.

Activities

Try using a switch that does something itself when it is pressed, such as light up or vibrate so the child can experience direct feedback

Use cause and effect toys, for example, toys that activate a sound, light or movement when the switch is pressed. You could try a noisy switch toy to capture the child’s attention

Consider sensory activities, for example activities that provide sensory stimulation when the switch is pressed, such as bubble tubes, fibre optic lights, or vibrating toys

Have a simple message recorded on a voice output switch that gives a simple, fun request, such as ‘more tickles’. When the recording is played, ensure the response is given immediately

Instead of a prompt hierarchy where the type of prompt increases in support level, we recommend our one prompt switch session support cycle

