



# Functional Behavior Assessment

## Definition

A functional behavior assessment is a comprehensive and individualized strategy to:

- Identify the purpose or function of a student's problem behavior(s).
- Develop and implement a plan to modify variables that maintain the problem behavior.
- Teach appropriate replacement behaviors using positive interventions.

## Things to Do

- ✓ Define the problem behavior.
- ✓ Devise a plan to collect data.
- ✓ Compare and analyze the data.
- ✓ Formulate the hypothesis.
- ✓ Develop and implement a behavior intervention plan.
- ✓ Monitor the plan.

## ✓ Define the problem behavior.

A well-defined behavior is essential when collecting data and communicating results with other team members. Define the behavior in specific, observable, and measurable terms. In other words, something you can see and count.

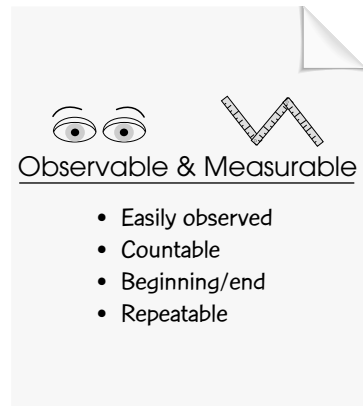
For instance, this is too vague . . .

Portia is aggressive.

Instead . . .

Portia pokes, hits, or kicks other students with her feet or hands during transition time.

. . . is a behavior that you can see and measure.

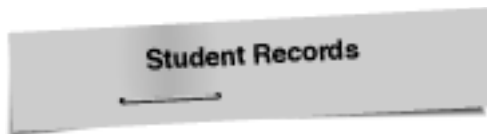


## ✓ Devise a plan to collect data.

There are two basic methods for collecting data—direct and indirect.

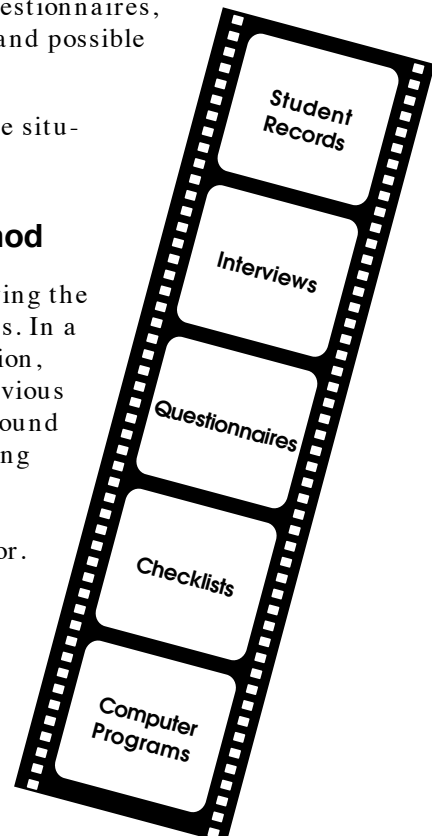
Indirect methods often use student records, interviews, questionnaires, or checklists to identify how others perceive the situation and possible motivations for the problem behavior.

Then more direct methods, such as observations, record the situational factors surrounding the problem behavior.



### Indirect Method

Begin by reviewing the student's records. In a systematic fashion, identify any previous relevant background data from existing documents that relate to the problem behavior.





When conducting an interview, consider asking the following questions:



... is present when the problem occurs?



... is happening just before the problem occurs, and what happens immediately after the problem behavior?

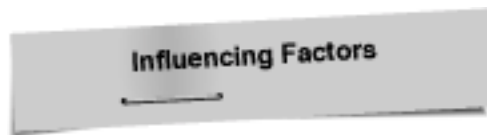


... does the problem behavior occur?







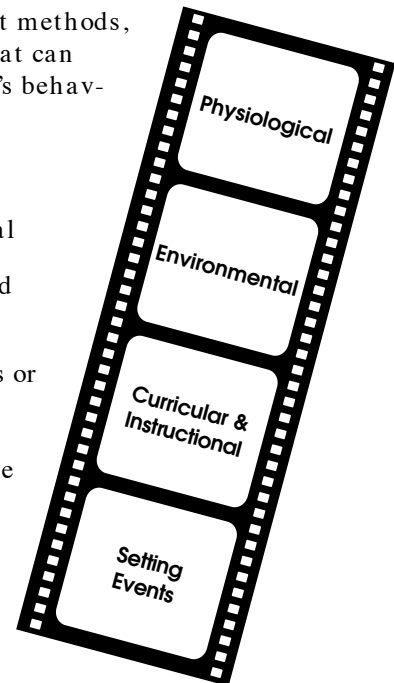
... does the problem behavior take place?

And finally, are there times or places when the problem behavior does NOT occur? Such information is valuable when planning future interventions.



When using indirect methods, watch for factors that can influence a student's behavior, such as:

-  Physiological
-  Environmental
-  Curricular and instructional
-  Setting events or incidents that happen sometime before the problem situation.



### Use a Variety of Methods and Sources

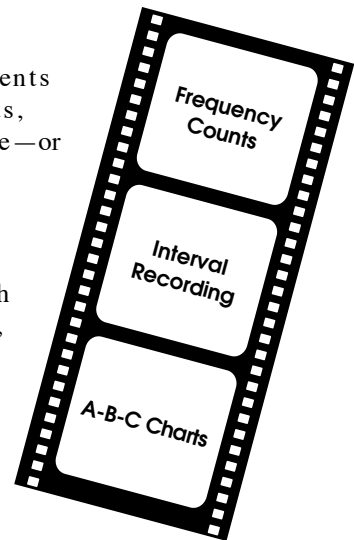
Using a variety of indirect methods like these are especially important if there's more than one reason for the student's noncompliant behavior. To know if you're on the right track, gather information from as many sources and places as possible, such as daily classes, counselors and teachers, and after-school activities.

### Direct Method

Next use direct assessment to observe and record the problem events as they happen. Direct assessments may include frequency counts, interval recording systems, and antecedent-behavior-consequence—or A-B-C charts.

### Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence

To use an A-B-C form, start by writing the basic information, such as the student's name, observer's name, and so on. Then each time the student behaves inappropriately, record the behavior and what events occur just **before**. These events are called "**antecedents**." Also be sure to record the **consequences**—or what happens right **after** the incident.



A-B-C OBSERVATION FORM			
Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Notes

Remember to record only those things you see or hear, not your interpretation of the behavior.

Continue collecting data in this manner until a pattern emerges that shows a relationship between the student's behavior and his environment. Typically this requires 2 to 5 days, depending on how often the behavior occurs and the frequency of the observation.

The more data you collect, the more accurate the picture of the student's day-to-day behavior and the events that surround it.



## Compare and analyze the data.

To see the big picture, summarize the data. A summary could identify:

- ✎ Setting events.
- ✎ Antecedents or triggering events.
- ✎ The target behavior.
- ✎ Consequences that maintain the behavior.

Another summary could simply identify who, what, when, and where.

Organizing your data in these ways will help clarify relationships between the student's behavior and related events or factors.

**FBA SUMMARY**

setting events	antecedents	target behaviors	consequences

**FBA SUMMARY**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_ Problem Behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

WHO	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE



## Formulate the hypothesis.

Based on the data you collect, give your best, educated guess to explain the function or reason for the behavior. Generally speaking, problem behaviors serve two basic functions:

- ✎ To get something.
- ✎ To avoid and escape something.



## Develop and implement a behavior intervention plan.

Students respond best to Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) that use positive methods to encourage and teach appropriate, alternative behaviors. For example, positive methods may include:

- ✎ Modifying the physical environment.
- ✎ Adjusting the curriculum or instructional strategy.
- ✎ Changing the antecedents or consequences for the student's behavior.
- ✎ Finally, teaching a more acceptable replacement behavior that serves the same function.

### Behavior Intervention Plan

An effective BIP should teach problem-solving skills the student can use on a regular basis. It also allows an instructor to explore additional strategies NOT generally considered.

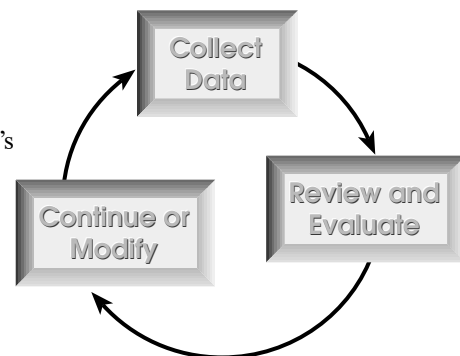
Behavior Intervention Plan				
Student Name _____		Problem Behavior(s) _____		
		Definition(s) _____		
Grade _____	Date of Birth _____			
Teacher Name _____		Replacement Behavior(s) _____		
Date _____		Definition(s) _____		
RECOMMENDED CHANGES				
Modification	Description of Procedure	Who	What	Where
Teach Replacement Behavior(s)				
Environmental Changes				
Changes in Curriculum/ Instruction				
Changes in Antecedents				
Changes in Consequences				
Related IEP Goals _____				
Review #1 Date: _____		Modification to plan: _____		
Review #2 Date: _____		Modification to plan: _____		
Review #3 Date: _____		Modification to plan: _____		

### ✓ Monitor the plan.

Regardless of the behavior intervention plan that your team develops, be sure to regularly monitor the student's progress over time.

This means:

- ✍ Collect data on student progress.
- ✍ Review and evaluate the behavior goals.



✍ Then determine whether to continue or modify the BIP.

Setting review dates ensures that this will happen.

### Review Dates

### Functional Behavioral Assessment

A FBA is not a one-shot process. You can do an FBA anytime you need useful information to design effective interventions, because conducting an FBA is not only complying with federal law, it's

## Examples

basic good practice.

### Example 1

Merlinda is a preschool student who likes her teacher's attention. When Merlinda is getting ready for sharing time, she often pokes or kicks other students. Her instructor responds by putting Merlinda on her lap. But over time, the instructor notices that Merlinda's behavior is increasing rather than going away. To solve this problem, the instructor may do any of the following:

- ✎ Stop putting Merlinda on the instructor's lap when Merlinda misbehaves.
- ✎ Give Merlinda lots of attention when she keeps her hands and feet to herself.
- ✎ Mark seating spaces for all the children.
- ✎ Teach Merlinda to politely ask others to

move.

### Example 2

Silvia, a 14-year-old student with severe disabilities, often refuses to let go of her favorite objects when participating in activities. This behavior particularly interferes with her ability to work. To solve this problem, her work instructor may:

- ✎ Modify the work activities by giving Silvia one-third of the usual number of items to sort.
- ✎ Praise Silvia when she puts her favorite objects down to work.
- ✎ Give Silvia time away from the task with her favorite objects if she works faster.
- ✎ As a replacement behavior, teach Silvia

## Variations of the Technique

to raise her hand and ask for a break from the activity.

Computer programs offer another indirect method

to analyze problem behaviors. For example, the Functional Assessment and Intervention Program

## Potential Problems and Solutions

After Collecting Data for 2 to 5 Days,  
There Is No Obvious Pattern of Behavior

(FAIP) asks a series of questions relating to the student's noncompliant behavior; then analyzes the data to recommend interventions.

Consider using different methods of collecting data. Do you need to spend more time observing the problem-behaving student? Have you considered events outside of the regular classroom?

**REMEMBER:** The more data you collect, the more accurate the picture of the student's

### The Intervention Is Not Working

behavior problem and possible contributing factors.

Continue collecting and evaluating data. Use the data to determine whether to continue or modify the BIP. **REMEMBER:** Use positive interventions that:

- ✍ Modify the physical environment.
- ✍ Adjust the curriculum or instructional strategy.
- ✍ Change the antecedents or consequences for the student's behavior.
- ✍ Teach a more acceptable replacement behavior that serves the same function.

## Getting Ready

Determine WHO should participate in the assessment? With proper training, experience, and support, much of an FBA can be done by:

- ✍ Special education instructors
- ✍ Paraeducators

- ✍ Parents
- ✍ Counselors
- ✍ Administrators
- ✍ General classroom teachers

Deciding who should participate is primarily determined by the needs of the situation and the student. Therefore, participants will vary from team to team.

### IEP Team

As members of an IEP team, the general educator's role is increasing as they collaborate with others in the management and instruction of all students, including those with disabilities.

### Functional Behavior Assessment Must Be Conducted

When should an IEP team conduct an FBA? Ideally, before conducting an FBA, try resolving the student's problem behavior using standard, effective classroom practices. However, if the behavior continues in spite of your best efforts and impedes the student's learning—or the learning of others—then it's important to conduct an FBA.

Recent federal legislation mandates that when a student with disabilities is removed from school for more than 10 days in a school year, an FBA must be conducted.





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