RBT® CHEAT SHEET · ACROSS THE OUTLINE · A.5, B.3, D.1

ABC data and the functions of behavior

Function is the consequence that keeps a behavior going. Your ABC data are the clues; your supervisor names the function.

Write the ABCs so a stranger could check them A.5, B.3

Antecedent: right before	Behavior: what was done	Consequence: right after
Mom said, "Tablet time is over."	Mateo cried and lay on the floor for 2 minutes.	Mom handed back the tablet.

- **Observable:** you can see or hear it. **Measurable:** you can count or time it.
- Describe actions. Leave out labels (aggressive, lazy), feelings (frustrated) and reasons (to get attention).
- Dead man's test: if a dead person could "do" it, such as sit still, it is not a behavior.
- Give a count or a time, not "a lot." Write entries as soon as it is safe, not from memory at the end.

Descriptive assessment: watch, change nothing B.3

Method	What you record
ABC narrative	A brief open-ended description each time the behavior occurs.
ABC continuous	Every occurrence, on a checklist of preset antecedents and consequences.
Scatterplot	Whether, or how much, it occurred in each time block across days.

Descriptive data show correlation, not cause. A consequence that often follows a behavior is a clue, not a confirmed function.

The four common functions D.1

Function	The behavior gets...	Clues in your data	Example
Attention	A reaction from others: eye contact, comforting, talking, even a reprimand. *Social positive.*	Happens mostly when attention is low; someone reacts right after.	Amara throws her cup when her dad is on the phone. He stops and says, "No throwing."
Access to tangibles	A preferred item or activity. *Social positive.*	Follows "no" or an item being taken away; the item comes back.	Noah cries when the train is put away. Staff have often handed it back.
Escape or avoidance	A task or demand ends, is delayed or never starts. *Social negative.*	Follows demands; the task is removed or put off.	Diego puts his head down at the reading worksheet. The teacher takes it: "We'll try later."
Automatic	Its own sensory result, with no one else involved.	Continues at similar levels when alone, with no social consequence.	Ms. Chen rocks and hums alone in her room and in the busy common area alike.

Memory aid some teams use: **SEAT**, for sensory (an informal name for automatic), escape, attention and tangible. One behavior can serve more than one function.

Functional analysis conditions B.3

Condition	Problem behavior produces
Attention	Brief attention while the adult appears busy
Escape (demand)	A brief break from the task
Tangible	Brief access to a preferred item that was removed
Alone or ignore	No social consequence at all
Play (control)	Nothing programmed; attention and items are free, no demands

A qualified professional designs and closely supervises an FA. Run each condition exactly as written and follow its safety and stopping rules.

Exam traps

Function is not form. The same hit can serve attention for one learner and escape for another.

Repetitive does not mean sensory. If it continues when the person is alone, automatic is suggested. If it rises when someone reacts, suspect a social function.

Escape or attention, when both happen? Look at the pattern. Mostly right after demands, and the task ends: escape.

Descriptive or FA? If nothing was arranged on purpose, it is descriptive, however detailed.

Play is the control, not a test for "play" as a function.

You record and report. Your supervisor determines function and changes the plan.

Read the free lesson

D.1 Recognize the common functions of behavior

praxisnotes.com/learn/rbt/D/functions-of-behavior

Scan to get the app

Praxis Learn is not affiliated with or endorsed by the BACB®. Registered Behavior Technician® (RBT®), BCBA®, BCaBA® and BACB® are registered marks of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. Task titles are our own paraphrases. A study aid, not clinical advice.