

ABC and Scatter Plot Data:

Helpful Tools for Gathering Information on Challenging Behaviors

THE ABCS OF ABC DATA

What is ABC data?

- Antecedent (A), Behavior (B), and Consequence (C) data—often referred to as the ABCs of behavior—help school teams and behavior analysts identify patterns of behavior.
- Triggers or antecedents to challenging behaviors may include common situations such as being asked to complete a difficult or less-preferred academic task or school routine, having preferred items or activities restricted (e.g. asking a student to put his iPad® away), and during times of the day when adult or peer interaction is limited (e.g. independent work).
- Knowing the elements (antecedents) that trigger a student’s reaction (behavior) and how peers and school teams respond to the behavior (consequences) can provide useful information as to why the behaviors continue.
- When combined, this information can ultimately guide teams in developing effective interventions. Assisting teams in changing the environment and adapting the ways in which they respond to challenging behaviors may prevent or reduce the future likelihood of these behaviors.
- Improve fine motor skills

How is ABC data collected?

- ABC data is collected by one or more staff members who frequently work or interact with the student.
- This type of data can be collected for as few as two or three days or as many as several weeks, depending on how often the student attends school and how often challenging behaviors are observed.
- Data may be collected throughout the day or for specified periods of time in which the behaviors are more likely to occur. The goal is to gather enough information to develop a firm hypothesis regarding the student’s behaviors that will assist with the development of effective strategies or interventions.

TIPS FOR COLLECTING ABC DATA

1. Identify who will be responsible for collecting the data.
2. Identify one or two challenging behaviors that your team will prioritize.
3. Define the behaviors in very specific terms so that everyone collecting the data will know exactly what behaviors to include and when a specific behavior occurred. A good definition is one that could be given to someone who does not know the student but would be able to identify the behavior(s).
4. Decide when and how often data will be collected.
5. When collecting data, try to capture what is happening in as few words as possible (see examples below).
6. Limit your data to what you observe the student or staff doing. Avoid making assumptions about what the student or staff are thinking or feeling.

TIPS FOR COLLECTING ABC DATA

- 7.** Antecedent data: should include information on what occurred directly before the behavior was observed. Consider situations like the following:

 - a.** Student working alone
 - b.** Adult gives a direction (e.g. “Do your math”; “You need to walk”; “Wait your turn”)
 - c.** Teacher tells student to put his phone away
 - d.** Student loses a turn during game with peer
- 8.** Behavior data: should describe the student’s challenging behaviors. Here are some examples:

 - a.** “Threw book”
 - b.** “Ripped school materials off wall”
 - c.** “Punched a student”
 - d.** “Stood on the table”
 - e.** “Knocked the desk over”
 - f.** “Ran out of the classroom”
 - g.** “Spit at teacher”
- 9.** Consequence data: should describe how other adults or peers responded to the student’s behaviors. Some examples:

 - a.** Teacher told the student to stop and discussed behavior
 - b.** Peers laughed
 - c.** Sent to office to talk to principal
 - d.** Removed writing task and redirected to another activity
 - e.** Walked away and ignored student

SCATTER PLOT BASICS

What is scatter plot data?

- Like ABC data, a scatter plot helps teams identify patterns of challenging behaviors.
- A scatter plot provides information about the details of the challenging behaviors: when and during what activities they occur. It also can help teams identify when the student does well or the activities in which no challenging behaviors are observed.
- This information can assist teams in identifying specific factors surrounding school routines that may increase or decrease challenging behaviors (e.g. noisy or less structured routines, academic routines, routines that occur earlier in the day or later, etc.).

How is scatter plot data collected?

- Scatter plot data is collected by one or more staff who frequently work or interact with the student.
- This data is typically collected for one or two weeks across the student's entire school day.

TIPS FOR COLLECTING SCATTER PLOT DATA

1. Make a list or schedule of the student's weekly activities and a timetable of when the activities occur (see attached example).
2. Identify and define one or two challenging behaviors that your team will collect data on.
3. Identify who will be responsible for collecting data throughout the day.
4. If a challenging behavior is observed during an activity. Indicate this by placing an "X" in the timetable that corresponds to that activity or time of day. If no behaviors occur, leave that area blank.
5. If data is not collected during an activity, use a different code to indicate this.

Antecedent/Behavior/Consequence (ABC) Form

Student's Name: _____ School: _____ Date: _____

Individual Completing Form: _____

Time of Day & Activity	Antecedent (A) What occurred before the behavior?	Behavior (B) What did he or she do?	Consequence (C) How did you or others respond?

Antecedent/Behavior/Consequence (ABC) Form

Student's Name: Alex School: Martin Luther King Day MS Date: 12-2-17

Individual Completing Form: Teacher

Time of Day & Activity	Antecedent (A) What occurred before the behavior?	Behavior (B) What did he or she do?	Consequence (C) How did you or others respond?
Bathroom 10:00	Directed to use bathroom from adult	Scratched adult's arm Layed on floor/took off shirt	Moved away; gave a sensory toy and waited for him to stand-up
Individual Work Time 9:30	Asked to identify numbers "Give me 5"	Tried to bite adult's arm and took off shirt	Told, "no biting." Removed the task for a minute then tried again.
Individual Work Time 10:15	Asked to sort categories of pictures	Tried to bite and head-butt teacher in arm	Told, "No biting". Removed task and then kept trying and removing task until he ran away. Ended activity.
Lunch 12:00	Given a choice of water or sandwich	Dropped to floor and laid down	Gave another choice and let eat on floor
Bathroom 12:20	Directed to go to bathroom.	Hit teacher	Told, "We don't hit." Continued to walk him to bathroom.
Individual work time 2:00	Asked to trace his name.	Tried to bite teacher	Allowed to take a brief break and bounce on the ball.

ABC CHECKLIST DATA SHEET

Student Name: _____ Observer: _____

Date: _____ Time or Length of Observation: _____ Activity/Routine: _____

Behavior – What did the student do?										
Antecedent – What happened before the behavior (triggers)?										
Demand	Verbal reprimand (e.g., told no, stop)									
	Provided instruction/task (e.g., asked to do something, corrected student errors)									
	Transition to new activity or setting									
	Change/interruption in routine, activity, setting									
Restricted Access	Denied or delayed access to item/activity									
	Removed item or stopped activity									
	Ignored or removed attention (e.g., walked away)									
High/Low Attention	Talking to or interacting with student									
	Student alone or not engaged with others									
High/Low Stimulation	Noisy, crowded, high stimulating environment									
	Quiet, low stimulating environment									
Other										
Consequence – What happened after the behavior (response from others)?										
Attention	Verbal reprimand (e.g., told no, stop, etc.)									
	Adult/peer talked to, comforted, laughed at									
	Provided help or assistance									
Escape	Removed task, stopped instruction or activity, asked other students to respond or finish task									
	Removed from activity or setting									
Tangible	Provided or allowed continued access to preferred item/activity									
Ignored (Extinction)	Ignored behavior and continued with instruction/task									
	Ignored or withheld attention (e.g., continued to help other students)									
	Withheld or blocked student from accessing preferred items/activities									
Other										
Hypothesized Function – What is the student trying to achieve?										
Attention (Gain)										
Tangible (Gain)										
Escape (Avoid)										
Automatic/Sensory										

Activity-Routines Scatter Plot

Student Name: Alex School: Martin Luther King MS Grade/Age: 8th/14 years

Person Completing Data Sheet: Teacher and Classroom Assistant

Description of Behavior(s) (be specific):

(a) Aggression - bites or scratches staff on arms; head-butts (bangs head on staff's body); (b) lays on floor (c) disrobes - takes all or part of clothes off

Directions: List the student's daily activities/routines in chronological order in the left column. For each activity, fill in the box according to the key provided. If you were unable to collect data leave the box blank.

KEY Behavior occurred Behavior did not occur N/A No data collected

	Activity/Routine									
Activity/Routine	Dec 2nd- 6th and 9th-13th									
	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
Arrival Routine										
Free Time										
Bathroom		x	x	x		x	x		x	x
Individual Work			x	x		x	x		x	x
Snack										
Vocational Work										
Free Time										
Individual Work	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lunch	x	x		x		x	x	x		
Bathroom			x	x	x			x	x	x
Specials (PE/Music)										
Individual Work	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Departure Routine/Home										