ABC Data Collection Cheat Sheet

Quick-reference guide for Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence data collection

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The 4 Functions of Behavior

Function	What Student Gets	Common Consequences
Attention	Reaction from others	Ignoring, peer interaction, raised hand
Escape	Removal of demands/tasks	Sent out, task removed, break given
Tangible	Items or activities	Gets iPad, snack, preferred activity
Sensory	Internal stimulation	Self-stimulation, automatic reinforcemen

Common Antecedents by Function

Attention-Seeking Behaviors

- Teacher helping other students
- Independent work time
- Low adult interaction periods
- Peer ignoring student

Escape-Maintained Behaviors

- Difficult academic task presented
- Non-preferred activity begins
- Transition to demanding activity
- Extended work period

Tangible-Maintained Behaviors

- Preferred item visible but unavailable
- Peer has desired item
- Told "no" to a request
- Preferred activity ending

Sensory-Maintained Behaviors

- Under-stimulating environment
- Over-stimulating environment
- Physical discomfort
- Anxiety or stress

The Quick Function-Check Formula

Ask yourself: "What does the student GET after the behavior?"

* Gets attention = Attention function
* Gets out of something = Escape function
* Gets an item/activity = Tangible function
* Gets nothing external = Consider sensory function

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Red Flags: Wrong Function

Important

- Intervention makes behavior worse
- Behavior occurs across ALL settings equally
- No clear pattern after 15+ observations
- Multiple functions may be at play

ABC Data Collection Best Practices

1. Record immediately (within 2 minutes of incident)
2. Be specific: "Given math worksheet" not "During class"
3. Include setting events when known (sleep, illness, conflicts)
4. Collect minimum 12-15 data points before forming hypothesis
5. Look for patterns in BOTH antecedents AND consequences

Track ABC Data Digitally

Classroom Pulse makes ABC data collection simple with one-tap logging, automatic pattern detection, and function analysis. Start your free 14-day trial.

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