

Glossary of Behavior Terms



There are so many terms and acronyms thrown your way when you have a child with a disability or special healthcare need. The Parents' Place of Maryland has created this cheat sheet to help you understand behavior terms.

A-B-C Data Collection	A behavioral method through which to select interventions by analyzing events that occur antecedent (before) to, concurrent (at the same time) with, or consequent (after) to a target behavior.
Antecedent	Any situation, action, or event that immediately precedes a behavior. Example: "in a classroom setting, a teacher giving a direction (the antecedent) may trigger a student to raise their hand (the behavior) to ask a question."
Baseline Data	Baseline data is the measure of a student's academic or behavioral performance before implementing a change, such as an instructional or behavioral intervention. This information serves as a reference point for evaluating student progress, comparing their performance before and after the intervention.
Behavior	An observable or measurable act.
Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)	A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is a set of strategies aimed at addressing the function of a student's behavior to modify it effectively. It is based on a functional behavioral assessment and includes individually tailored procedures for prevention and intervention.
Behavior Support Plan (BSP)	Also referred to as the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). See definition above.
Chronic Behaviors	Chronic behaviors refer to persistent patterns of behavior that are repeated or occur over an extended period. These behaviors have endured for a significant amount of time.
Consequence	Refers to the immediate event or outcome that follows a behavior. It can influence the likelihood of future behavior by either increasing, maintaining, or decreasing its occurrence.
Data	Data refers to information used in decision-making processes, encompassing records of behavioral incidents, attendance, tardiness, academic achievement, as well as perceptions of both staff and students, among others.
Data-Based Decision Making	Analyzing information to inform actionable steps.
Environment	Environment encompasses the physical, social, academic, and emotional conditions that surround the student. This includes the people in settings that can include the classroom, school, home, and other settings.
<u>Emotional disability</u>	Refers to a condition characterized by disruptive or inappropriate behaviors that significantly disrupt a student's learning, interpersonal relationships, or personal well-being to the extent that intervention is necessary.

Existing Information	Information that already exists or is known about a student. This information may come from any of the individuals who work with a particular student, the parent or other caregivers.
Behavior Expectations	Broad goals for behavior or the general ways that parents and teachers want children to know and/or do; guidelines for behavior that apply to all children and adults across all settings.
Extinction burst	In behavior intervention, an elevation or increase in the rate of an undesirable behavior in response to a teacher's or parent's use of an extinction consequence.
Extinguish	Refers to the fading away and eventual elimination of undesirable behaviors. If a problem behavior no longer occurs, it's said to be extinct, and the therapeutic process of accomplishing this is referred to as extinction.
Fidelity/Fidelity of Intervention	The degree to which an intervention is implemented accurately, following the guidelines or restrictions of its developers.
Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)	A behavioral evaluation technique that determines the exact nature of problem behaviors, the reasons why they occur, and under what conditions the likelihood of their occurrence is reduced.
Function of Behavior	In behavior assessment, term used to describe the motive for particular behaviors.
Generalization	The transfer of learned information from particular instances to other environments, people, times, and events.
Hypothesis	Refers to a proposed explanation based on limited evidence, serving as a starting point for further investigation. In the context of an FBA, a hypothesis statement addresses the likely function of the problem behavior and the relevant social and environmental conditions in which it is most likely to occur.
Least restrictive environment (LRE)	One of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's six guiding principles; requires that students with disabilities be educated with their non-disabled peers to the greatest appropriate extent.
Measurable	Actions that are clearly defined so that it is easy to determine whether and when it has been met.
Behavior Modification	Systematic control of environmental events, especially of consequences, designed to produce specific changes in observable responses. May include reinforcement, modeling, self-instruction, desensitization, guided practice, or any other technique for either strengthening or eliminating a particular response.
Negative Reinforcement	A means by which teachers can increase the probability that a behavior will occur in the future. A teacher uses negative reinforcement when he or she removes something that is unpleasant. Negative reinforcement is often thought of as relief from something aversive (e.g., boring class work).
Observable	Clearly defined behaviors that can be easily detected and assessed because they are visible or measurable.
Operational Definition	A behavior is explicitly or clearly defined such that it is measurable, can be identified by two or more observers, and can be identified across time and in different settings or context.

Parent counseling and training	Assisting parents in understanding the special needs of their child, by (i) Providing parents with information about child development; and (ii) Helping parents to acquire the necessary skills that will allow them to support the implementation of their child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) (and Behavior Intervention Plan).
Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS)	A three-tiered framework (i.e., primary, secondary, tertiary) that provides a continuum of supports and services designed to promote appropriate behaviors and to prevent and address challenging behaviors.
Positive Reinforcement	A means by which teachers and parents can increase the probability that a behavior will occur in the future. A teacher uses positive reinforcement when he or she provides something that is pleasant. Positive reinforcement is often thought of as a reward.
Problem Behavior	In behavior intervention, the behavior that a parent or teacher wishes to reduce or eliminate; also called the target behavior or interfering behavior.
Problem Solving Process	The method by which individuals seek answers or solutions to situations that lack immediate resolution.
Response to Intervention (RTI)	A multi-tiered method for delivering instruction to learners through increasingly intensive and individualized interventions.
Setting Event	A setting event doesn't immediately lead to behavior, but instead establishes conditions that make certain behaviors more or less likely. For example, being hungry (setting event) might make a child more likely to scream when denied a snack (trigger).
Stimulus	Any condition or input that evokes a response from an individual.
Target Behavior	In behavior intervention, the behavior that a teacher wishes to reduce or eliminate; also called the problem behavior.
Trigger Behavior	An immediate event that directly leads to the occurrence of behavior, sometimes referred to as an antecedent.

Resources:

- The Iris Center at Vanderbilt Peabody College [Glossary of Terms in Special Education](#)
- [Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports](#)
- [Key Terms to Know in Special Education](#) from the Center for Parent Information and Resources