



Based on the TEACCH Autism Program Principles

Behavior Problem Solving

A Proactive Support Guide for Educators



Behavior as Communication

Understand that all behavior is communication. Our goal is to shift from reactive discipline to proactive support by understanding the underlying causes of behavior, particularly learning differences and diagnostic symptoms.

Core Training Objectives

- ✓ Reframe the interpretation of behavior problems through an autism perspective.
- ✓ Implement a proactive and preventative (antecedent-based) approach to behavior management.
- ✓ Apply elements of Structured TEACCHing to address hypotheses and increase student engagement in expected behaviors.

FBA vs. TEACCH Approach



Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

Focuses strictly on the cycle of the **antecedent**, the **behavior**, and the **consequence**.

The primary goal is to identify and understand the **specific function** of the observed behavior.

TEACCH Approach

Focuses heavily on **antecedents** and the proactive **prevention** of behavior problems.

Emphasizes understanding the student's learning differences and providing highly individualized **environmental supports**.



Key Difference

While FBA analyzes the cycle of behavior, the TEACCH method **provides structure and teaches skills** to decrease the behavior proactively. It focuses on teaching the student **what "to do"** rather than relying on a reductionist approach.

Understanding Autism



Autism is a neurodevelopmental difference that impacts:

- Communication and interaction
- Sensory processing
- Flexibility with routines and changes
- Learning and behavior

Remember:

Every student with autism is unique. Supports should be individualized based on the student's strengths, needs, and preferences.



Step 1: Defining & Describing Behavior



Observable & Measurable Terms

Define the behavior in concrete, observable, and measurable terms. Avoid subjective labels like "**stubborn**" or "**lazy**".

Next, clearly describe the expected behavior or activity.

*Using the **Iceberg Analogy**, observed behavior (e.g., kicking, screaming) is visible above the surface, while expected behaviors and challenges remain hidden below.*

Critical Considerations

Is the activity at the student's developmental level? Are the expectations and the activity age-appropriate?



Step 2: Charting Behavior Data

Chart data in a meaningful way to gather useful information and enhance problem-solving.

Analyze Antecedents

Possible Influences

Where: Physical setting and sensory aspects of the environment.

Who: People in the environment or involved in the interaction.

When: Time of day or changes in routine.

What: The specific activity, visual clarity, and difficulty level.

Within: Biological influences like health, hunger, fatigue, or sensory needs.

Analyze Consequences

Observation Target

Document exactly what occurred immediately after the behavior:

The Adults

The Student

The Peers

Step 3: Create a Hypothesis for the Behavior



When generating hypotheses for why a behavior occurs, view the situation through an autism perspective. Consider these potential underlying factors:

✓ **Implicit Learning:** Difficulty understanding things automatically (rule-based learners).

✓ **Auditory Processing:** Challenges processing verbal explanations.

✓ **Attention:** "Sticky" attention, focusing on details rather than the big picture.

✓ **Executive Function:** Struggles with time, sequencing, and organization.

✓ **Sensory Processing:** Difficulty modulating sensory input from the environment.

✓ **Social Communication:** Receptive or expressive language challenges and social cognition deficits.

✓ **Restricted Behaviors:** Strong and narrow interests that interfere with transitions.



Step 4: Implement Interventions to Address Hypothesis

Environmental Modifications

Intervention Principle: Interventions should directly address your hypotheses and help the student engage in the expected behavior. First, assess the current structure and modify the environment by adding developmentally appropriate and meaningful visual cues.



Example: Desk Visual Schedule

Effective visual supports should answer five key questions for the student:

- 1 Where am I going?
- 2 What will I do?
- 3 How will I do it?
- 4 When will I be finished?
- 5 What will I do next?

Predictability reduces anxiety and increases engagement.

Rule of Thumb

"If you cannot draw the expectation, it might be too abstract for the student to understand."

Step 5: Create and Implement a Plan



Develop a structured, actionable support plan to systematically monitor success and reinforce positive behavior.

Key Components of the Plan

- 1. Environmental Supports:** Arrange the physical space and schedules first to optimize predictability and ease transitions.
- 2. Systematic Instruction:** Directly teach the alternative, expected behavior rather than just stopping problem behavior.
- 3. Reinforcement Strategies:** Create highly motivating rewards that actively celebrate small and large milestones of progress.
- 4. Team Coordination:** Ensure all educators, staff, and caregivers align on strategies for complete consistency.

Implementation & Monitoring

Data-Driven Refinement: Establish a clear schedule for reviewing behavioral tracking data to assess if the plan is working.

Team Evaluation Checklists: Keep regular fidelity checks to confirm the intervention is being implemented as originally intended.

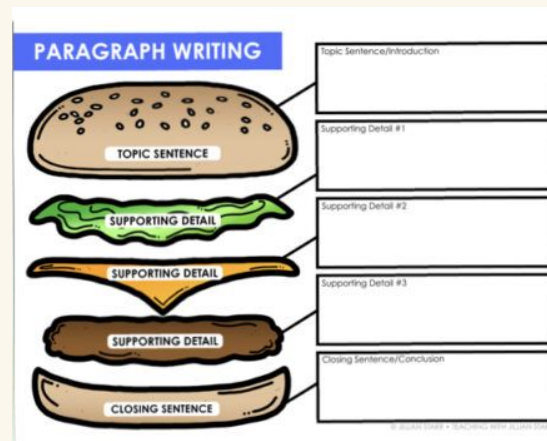
Continuous Adaptation: Prepare to make gradual, structured modifications as the student develops mastery and greater independence.

Increase Academic Access

Students with autism may need support to demonstrate what they know.

Helpful strategies:

- ★ Break assignments into smaller steps
- ★ Provide models and examples
- ★ Use graphic organizers
- ★ Highlight important information
- ★ Offer choices for completing tasks
- ★ Provide alternative ways to respond



Support access while maintaining high expectations.



Teaching Replacement Skills

Beyond modifying the environment, educators must actively teach new skills to address the underlying function of the behavior.

Expressive Communication

Teach the student how to effectively communicate choices and needs to replace the unwanted behavior.

This can be verbally, written, sign, gesturing or using visuals. A child does not have to speak to communicate with you!

Social Understanding & Engagement

Explicitly teach social rules that may be abstract or non-intuitive, such as sharing, taking turns, understanding social perspectives, and initiating social interactions.

Social stories, direct instruction, modeling and video instruction are all great ways to teach social skills.

Coping & Stress Reduction

Introduce relaxing and calming routines. Help the student identify their emotions and develop a concrete plan of action for responding to those feelings.

Leisure time doesn't come naturally for everyone. Having structure, even in your calming area, can reduce stress.

Designing Calming Routines



A successful stress reduction routine must actively engage both the body and the mind.

ENGAGE THE BODY

Incorporate physical strategies like taking five deep breaths, squeezing hands five times, or shaking it off.

ENGAGE THE MIND

Use imagery or positive thoughts, such as thinking about a favorite movie, humming a song internally, or drawing a favorite scene.

PROVIDE STRUCTURE

Ensure every calming routine has a clear beginning and a clear end.

MANTRAS & SELF-INSTRUCTIONS

Use positive self-talk to navigate transitions:

Change is OKAY No Big Deal

Proactive Calming & Relaxation Area

Do not wait for a crisis to use calming strategies. Proactively schedule grounding and calming activities into the student's daily routine.

Implementation Strategies

- ✓ Use visual supports to prompt the routine.
- ✓ Practice the routine in different locations and situations when the student is completely calm.

Setting Up a Relaxation Area

- ✓ Create a dedicated space that allows the student to complete their routine with minimal distractions.
- ✓ Ensure the student always returns to their original activity at the completion of the calming routine to maintain expectations.



Example: Structured Relaxation Space



In-the-Moment Crisis Response

Even with proactive supports, behaviors will still occur. It is critical to have a plan for the moment of crisis.

- ✓ Maintain a calm presence and significantly reduce your language.
- ✓ Redirect the student to meaningful visual structures that clarify "what to do."
- ✓ Reduce demands, lower the sensory load, and simplify instructions to a "first-then" format.
- ✓ Prompt the student to follow their established calming routine.
- ✓ Ignore the unwanted behaviors, but never ignore the student.

"Save processing and consequences for when the student is fully calm."

Behavior Problem-Solving Process

Effective behavior management requires a consistent, proactive approach. Review the five core steps:

- 1 Define the behavior in concrete terms.
- 2 Collect data on antecedents and consequences.
- 3 Generate hypotheses from the perspective of autism.
- 4 Implement interventions to address hypotheses and engage the expected behavior.
- 5 Create a structured plan for when the behavior occurs.

Next Steps

Monitor progress continuously with ongoing data collection. Adjust your visual supports, environmental modifications, and teaching strategies based on the data to ensure long-term success.

Video Observation: Analyzing Behavior

Active Observation

As you watch the video clips, focus on gathering objective data to build your proactive plan. Use your worksheet to note:

- **The Antecedent:** What happened immediately before the behavior occurred?
- **The Behavior:** Define the target action in concrete, observable terms.
- **The Consequence:** What followed the behavior?



Next Step: After the video, you will work in your table groups to define the target behavior, design a calming routine, and outline a sensory-reduction crisis protocol.

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Case Study Activity: Behavior Planning

COLLABORATIVE EXERCISE: Creating a Proactive Behavior Plan

In your table groups, review the provided video clips and student profile to collaboratively construct a mock intervention plan.

- 1. Identify Target Behavior:** Translate raw observations into a concrete, observable definition.
- 2. Proactive Strategy:** Design one calming routine or environmental modification.
- 3. Crisis Response:** Outline an in-the-moment protocol focusing on sensory reduction.

Key Goal: Focus heavily on teaching a replacement skill. Ensure your final plan answers the critical question:
"What should the student do instead?"

