



VIRTUAL STRATEGIES TOOLKIT

Evidence-based Practices for Individuals with ASD and other Developmental Disabilities

REPLACEMENT BEHAVIORS

Definition

“A functionally equivalent replacement behavior (FERB) is a positive alternative that allows the student to obtain the same outcome that the challenging behavior provided; that is, the student is able to obtain or escape something in their environment in an appropriate, acceptable way” (Pent.ca.gov, n.d.).

Video Demonstration Strategy

[Video](#)

How to Use

Anyone trained in how to teach the replacement behavior(s) and collect the data can do so. This may include teachers, paraprofessionals, school psychologists, or others.

The goal of teaching replacement behaviors is to increase a more appropriate behavior to meet the same function as the target behavior, and to decrease or eliminate a target behavior that is not appropriate for the context.

In order to teach in an effective and efficient way, it is recommended to provide multiple direct teaching opportunities throughout each day with different people across a variety of environments. A Behavior Skill Training (BST) model, consisting of 1) Instruction 2) Modeling 3) Rehearsal and 4) Feedback, is the recommended, empirically supported way of explicitly teaching new behavioral skills (Cooper, et. al.m 2019).

Data on the replacement behavior(s) and the target behavior(s) should be reviewed frequently to monitor progress and make decisions on future teaching plans.

Steps in Determining and Teaching Replacement Behaviors

1. *Identify the target behavior.* Operationally define the problematic / contextually inappropriate behavior so that multiple observers could independently collect accurate data with at least 90% agreement. Be objective, clear, and concise. Describe the behavior in observable and measurable terms. ([See examples in the 'Additional Resources' section of this document](#))



2. *Hypothesize the function(s) of the target behavior.* Analyze the context surrounding the target behavior, including setting events ([See Setting Event examples in the 'Additional Resources' section of this document](#)), and immediate antecedents and consequences, to determine the most likely reason(s) the behavior is occurring. ([See a Summary Statement template in the 'Additional Resources' section of this document](#))
 - a. Common functions of behavior include to:
 - i. **get/obtain:** activities, attention, settings, people, objects, sensory stimuli

and/or to
 - ii. **escape/avoid:** tasks/demands, activities, attention, settings, people, objects, sensory stimuli
3. *Determine a replacement behavior(s).* Choose a more contextually appropriate and acceptable way for the student to meet the same function(s) as the target behavior (i.e. a functionally equivalent replacement behavior). If multiple functions are identified as maintaining the target behavior, then multiple replacement behaviors should be chosen to replace them. ([See examples in the 'Additional Resources' section of this document](#))
 - a. Replacement behaviors should be developmentally appropriate (consider communication and cognitive levels), and should be as effective or more effective, and as easy or easier to do than the target behavior, while meeting the same function. (See more information and examples [HERE](#))
 - b. Desired behaviors, or what you would want any student to do when presented with the specific antecedent (do not have to be functionally equivalent) should also be considered for teaching following mastery of the replacement behavior(s) ([See additional information in the 'Downloads' section of this document](#))
4. *Make a teaching plan.* 1) Determine a goal for the replacement behavior(s) 2) Break the goal into smaller, achievable objectives to teach 3) Decide the criteria for meeting each objective and for mastering the goal 4) Schedule direct replacement behavior teaching opportunities to give the student explicit instruction, practice, and feedback 5) Make a plan for how you will reinforce the replacement behavior and how you will limit reinforcement (when safe to do so) of the target behavior
5. *Monitor progress and make revisions as needed.* Collect data to track and analyze trends of the target behavior(s) and the replacement behavior(s) over time. Make data-based decisions in teaching and revising replacement behavior plans. ([See the Individualized Behavior Rating Scale Tool \(IBRST\) template and example in the 'Additional Resources' section of this document](#))

When to Use

Functionally equivalent replacement behaviors are a critical component of a behavior intervention plan (BIP); however, you can also teach these behaviors without having a formal BIP in place. Any time



there is an inappropriate behavior for the context and a more appropriate way to meet the same need / hypothesized function, there is an opportunity for teaching a replacement behavior.

Variations

Functionally equivalent replacement behaviors are a more contextually appropriate and acceptable way for the student to meet the same function(s) as the target behavior. If multiple functions are identified as maintaining the target behavior, then multiple replacement behaviors should be chosen to replace them. (See examples in the 'Additional Resources' section of this document)

Downloads

(You will need to choose 'File' > 'Make a Copy' to edit)

[Pathway for Planning Replacement and Desired Behaviors](#)

Additional Resources

(These examples and lists are not exhaustive, but can be used to start team discussions around these topics.)

1. Describe the target behavior(s) in specific observable and measurable terms so that it is clear enough that 2 independent observers would collect occurrences with at least 90% accuracy.
Example 1- [Operational Definitions of Common Target Behaviors](#)
Example 2- [Operational Definitions of Common Target Behaviors](#)
2. [Setting Events Checklist](#)
3. [Summary Statement Template](#)
4. [Functionally Equivalent Replacement Behavior Examples](#)
5. [Individualized Behavior Rating Scale Tool \(IBRST\)](#)
Example- [IBRST Data Sheet](#)

Research

Cooper, J. O., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (2019). Applied Behavior Analysis (3rd Edition). Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Education.



D'Eramo, K. (2013). Functionally equivalent alternative behavior. In: Volkmar, F.R. (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 1379–1380. Springer, New York, NY.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1698-3_1038

Drew, C. (2023, June 13). *Replacement behavior: Definition and 10 examples*. Helpful Professor. <https://helpfulprofessor.com/replacement-behavior/>

Dubie, M., & Pratt, C. (2008). Observing behavior using abc data.

Dunlap, G., Iovannone, R., & Kincaid, D. (2011). Individualized Behavior Rating Scale Tool. In *Prevent, teach, reinforce: the school-based model of individualized positive behavior support*. essay, Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Dwyer, K., Rozewski, D., & Simonsen, B. (2012). A comparison of function-based replacement behaviors for escape-motivated students. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 20(2), 115-125. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426610387432>

Ellingson, S. A., Miltenberger, R. G., Stricker, J., Galensky, T. L., & Garlinghouse, M. (2000). Functional assessment and intervention for challenging behaviors in the classroom by general classroom teachers. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2(2), 85. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/functional-assessment-intervention-challenging/docview/218795806/se-2>

Flippin, M., Clapham, E. D., & Tutwiler, M. S. (2021). Effects of using a variety of kinesthetic classroom equipment on elementary students' on-task behaviour: A pilot study. *Learning Environments Research*, 24, 137-151.

Lanovaz, M. J., Argumedes, M., Roy, D., Duquette, J. R., & Watkins, N. (2013). Using ABC narrative recording to identify the function of problem behavior: A pilot study. *Research in developmental disabilities*, 34(9), 2734-2742.

McKenna, J. W., Flower, A., Falcomata, T., & Adamson, R. M. (2017). Function-based replacement behavior interventions for students with challenging behavior. *Behavioral Interventions*, 32(4), 379-398. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/bin.1484>

O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Sprague, J. R., Newton, S., & Storey, K. (1997). Functional assessment and program development for challenging behavior: A practical handbook (2nd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brookes/Cole.

Reeves, L. M., Umbreit, J., Ferro, J. B., & Liaupsin, C. J. (2017). The role of the replacement behavior in function-based intervention. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 52(3), 305-316. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/role-replacement-behavior-function-based/docview/2011634171/se-2>

Replacement *behavior*. Replacement Behavior - Behavior Intervention (PENT). (n.d.). <https://www.pent.ca.gov/bi/overview/replacement-behavior.aspx>



Credits

The contents of this handout were developed under a grant from the Nebraska Department of Education, IDEA parts B and C from the U.S. Department of Education. However, this content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.