

BEHAVIOR · ALL GRADES

ABC Behavior Tracking

Find the pattern

What ABC tracking is

ABC stands for Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence. It's a structured way of recording what happens BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER a behavior incident. Most teachers, when asked why a child is behaving in a certain way, give an answer like 'they're just being difficult' or 'attention-seeking.' These aren't real explanations. ABC tracking forces specificity — and specificity reveals patterns. After 2 weeks of consistent tracking, patterns nearly always emerge. The child explodes during transitions. The child shuts down during writing. The child has meltdowns on Mondays. With the pattern visible, you can plan around it.

What to record

Column	Examples
Date / time	Mon 2 Sep, 11:15
Antecedent (what was happening just before)	Transitioning from carpet to writing task. Child had been told 'finish quickly.'
Behavior (what happened — be specific)	Child threw pencil, refused to start, put head on desk.
Consequence (what happened next)	Sent to calm corner. After 10 mins, returned and started work.
Intensity (1-5)	3 — disruption but no harm
Possible function (why did it happen?)	Avoidance — task too hard?



Tracking sheet — Week 1

Day: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ Antecedent: _____

Behavior: _____ Consequence: _____

_____ Intensity (1-5): _____ Possible function: _____ Time: _____

Antecedent: _____ Behavior: _____

_____ Consequence: _____

_____ Intensity (1-5): _____ Possible function: _____ Time: _____

Antecedent: _____ Behavior: _____

_____ Consequence: _____

_____ Intensity (1-5): _____ Possible function: _____

Common functions of behavior**ESCAPE / AVOIDANCE**

Behaviour to get OUT of something — a task, a person, a sensory experience. Look for: behavior spikes during specific activities or with specific people.

ATTENTION

Behavior to get attention from peers or adults. Look for: behavior reduces when calmly ignored AND increases when noticed even negatively.



ACCESS Behavior to GET something — a toy, a place, an outcome. Look for: behavior stops the moment the desired thing is given.	SENSORY Behavior because of sensory needs (overload or under-arousal). Look for: behavior in noisy or quiet settings, or after long periods of stillness.
EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION Behavior because the child is overwhelmed and can't regulate. Look for: behavior after long days, after upsets at home, after specific triggers.	COMMUNICATION Behavior because they can't say what they need. Common in EAL, autistic, or speech-and-language needs children. Behavior IS the communication.

After 2 weeks — analysing

Look across the sheets. What patterns emerge? **TIME PATTERNS:** Are incidents clustered at specific times? (Transitions, lunchtime, end of day?) **ACTIVITY PATTERNS:** Are incidents clustered around specific lessons or activities? **PERSON PATTERNS:** Do incidents involve the same other children? **DAY PATTERNS:** Are Mondays worse? After PE? After Friday assembly? **FUNCTION PATTERNS:** Looking at 'possible function,' is there a recurring theme? (Mostly avoidance? Mostly attention?) The pattern points to the intervention. If incidents cluster around writing tasks, the intervention isn't 'better behavior management' — it's writing support. If incidents cluster around transitions, it's transition routines. Specificity reveals the lever.

Sharing with the SENDCo

If behavior is concerning enough to track, the SENDCo should be involved. After 2 weeks, share:

- The completed tracking sheets
 - Your analysis of patterns
 - What you've already tried
 - What you think might help
- ABC data is the foundation of any genuine behavior plan. Decisions made without it tend to be guesswork.

