

ABC - GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETION



ABC reports are used to record behaviour that is unwanted or challenging and are to be used with anyone who presents in this way.

Please record incident reports for:

- Grabbing, nipping, hair pulling, head butting, kicking, biting, spitting.
- Environmental damage.
- Near misses (attempts to aggressively make contact with a person).
- Shouting (in a way that causes anxiety/distress to others).
- Aggressive or threatening language/behaviour.
- Indecent exposure.
- **ANY BEHAVIOUR WHICH YOU FEEL IS CHALLENGING TO OTHERS**

All behaviour is a form of communication and it is an effective tool for people with Autism who experience social communication difficulties. Therefore it is up to us to identify and understand the function of the behaviour and substitute it for a more appropriate method of communication.

ABC recording is a way of collecting information to help determine the function of an individual's behaviour. It does this by breaking down your observations into three elements:

- Antecedents (A):** what happened directly before the behaviour occurred.
- Behaviour (B):** the specific action(s) or behaviour of interest.
- Consequences (C):** what happened directly after the behaviour occurred.

Thinking of behaviour in these terms helps to understand why someone is behaving in a particular manner. This allows more meaningful interventions rather than just trying to prevent the behaviour itself.

Once collected, ABC information can provide some valuable insights on its own. It can be used informally to identify patterns of behaviour and subsequently develop effective management strategies.

Some benefits of using an ABC chart include:

- Recording behaviour on multiple occasions, enabling you to see patterns.
- Checking for wider triggering context for problem behaviour, for example, being hungry or tired.
- Identify situations when the challenging behaviour is most likely to occur so you can take steps to avoid these situations, or know what to expect if the situation is unavoidable.
- Identifying and eliminating any positive consequences of inappropriate behaviour.
- Identifying consequences which motivate the individual, which you can then use to encourage desirable behaviours.

This helps form strategies of behaviour management that are person centred and ensures the needs of the individual are fully met. This is important because if the underlying reason for the behaviour is not identified and addressed, then problems may manifest themselves in additional challenging behaviours.

Antecedents

Antecedents are the events that directly precede the observed behaviour and are also known as 'triggers'.

Things to consider when identifying the antecedent are:

- What was happening immediately prior to the behaviour occurring?
- What demands were placed upon the individual?
- What terminology was used?
- Who was present?
- Had there been any issues prior to this?
- How was the person presenting that morning?

Antecedents of triggers may also include:

- Being asked to stop or start specific tasks or activities, e.g. task transition.
- Demand avoidance.
- Being told 'no'.
- Loud noises or bright lighting.
- A comment or action from another individual.
- Absence of attention (e.g. mentor occupied with something or someone else).
- Free time (no instructions or guidance).
- Praise.

It is also important to consider antecedents that are not immediate and include the wider environment. Any potential 'slow' triggers should also be recorded and could include:

- Time of day (influencing hunger and energy levels/tiredness).
- Medication.
- Routine disruption.
- Family events such as new sibling or bereavement.
- Specific people being present.

Behaviours

The behaviour is the action which the individual takes. When describing behaviour in the context of ABC the aim is to be precise and specific and record the facts (do not use terms such as "kicked off" or "had a behaviour". For example, 'threw activity on floor', 'ignored request and carried on with preferred occupation', 'banged loudly on table', 'shouted', 'swore', 'stormed out'. Remember to record what the person said during the incident, and to describe facial expression and non-verbal

communication.

Behaviour is commonly thought of as having one of four functions (often referred to using the acronym SEAT):

Sensory – it feels good.

Escape – from environment or situation.

Attention – from others (adults or peers).

Tangible – access to a specific thing.

When analysing ABC data, you can look to see if the same behaviour often results in a particular consequence and with this knowledge, an appropriate intervention can be devised to encourage the use of a more appropriate behaviour to serve this function.

The same behaviour may serve alternate functions in different contexts. This is why it is important to collect information on the antecedents and consequences each time the behaviour happens, so that the function for each occurrence can be considered.

Getting/Obtaining	Avoiding/Escaping
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention/reaction• Items (tangible)• Activities• Automatic reinforcement• Sensory stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work• Sensory overload• Transitions• Social situations• Sensory stimulation

Consequences

Consequences may serve to maintain, decrease or increase the frequency of behaviour depending on whether they are positive or negative. Typical consequences could include:

- Repeat of request by mentor.
- Being given a choice.
- Behaviour being ignored (no action).
- A favoured item being taken away/received.
- Time-out.
- Negative attention.
- Positive attention in the form of praise or reassurance from a mentor.

When recording the consequence in the context of the ABC, describe how you responded to the incident. If you use time out, specify the length of time that the person was out of the situation for. Describe how the situation was calmed, and what happened following the incident, e.g. Did the

individual return to the task that they were engaged in, was a change of face used, was a change of activity/environment used? You can also at the end of the conclusion, state your opinion as to the function of the behaviour if you feel it was relevant:

e.g. (1) I believe that behaviour was trying to communicate that he was unable to cope with any demands placed upon him as he was in a high state of arousal throughout the morning and his mum advised that he had been attempting to nip and grab her, prior to her dropping him off.

e.g. (2) I believe that was feeling unwell this morning as he indicated that he had a headache using the Makaton sign.

Taking care with conclusions

When using ABC charts, be mindful of the possibility for false conclusions. This is because the ABC data is collected is correlational, not causal, so you can't be totally certain that the associations you make relating behaviours to functions and triggers are correct. In most cases, it is possible to draw meaningful conclusions. If an intervention strategy is not working, it may be necessary to try some other ideas or collect some additional data.

The completed forms should be numbered and recorded in the log book (located in the cabinet in the office), and the form should be filed away in the individual's file.

Guidance updated:	26 October 2022	Review due:	26 October 2025
--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------	-----------------