

**A GLOSSARY OF
APPLIED BEHAVIOUR
ANALYSIS (ABA)
TERMS AND STRATEGIES USED IN THE
CLASSROOM**



Special Education Department

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): Are complex neurological disorders that have life long effects on development. ASD is characterized by impairments in communication, social interaction and unusual patterns of behaviours, interests and activities. The term spectrum refers to a continuum of developmental severity. ASD is a subset of PDD that includes Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, and PDD NOS.

Some examples of teaching strategies using ABA Methods include: Prompts, Modeling, Reinforcement, Task Analysis and Shaping.

Antecedent – Behaviour – Consequence (ABC) Assessment: The process of gathering information through direct observation that identifies conditions that precede (antecedent) and follow (consequence) problem behaviour.

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA): An effective approach used to understand and change behaviour, and teach new skills.

Baseline: The repeated measurement of a behaviour before the introduction of an intervention. Baseline data can then be used to compare the effects of the systematic application of a treatment.

Behavioural Assessment: Gathering (through direct observation) and analyzing information about a person's behaviour. The information may be used to help the individual change unwanted behaviour.

Behaviour Plan: Designed to increase skills or decrease undesirable behaviours based on assessment data such as functional analysis.

Break: A strategy to decrease anxiety or unwanted behaviour.

Consequence: An external event that immediately follows a behaviour or response.

Data: Facts from which conclusions can be drawn.

Data Collection: Quantitative, planned recording of controlled observations. It can be collected in many ways, including anecdotal reports, frequency counts, interviews or videotapes.

Direct Instruction: The repetition of one step of a skill until it is mastered. Consists of four steps: Cue (raise hand), Prompt (physically raising the students' hand), Behaviour (student raises hand) and Reinforcement (tangible, social ect.).

Direct Observation: Objective observation and recording of a person's behaviour typically in natural settings.

Errorless Learning: Learning situation is set up so the learner cannot make a mistake.

Fading: The gradual reduction of prompts or cues over time with the goal that prompts are no longer needed to elicit a correct response.

Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA): An approach that incorporates a variety of techniques and strategies to identify the causes (functions) of behaviour and identify likely interventions to address challenging behaviours.

Functions of Behaviour: There are four functions of behaviour: Attention, Tangible, Sensory and Escape/Avoid.

Generalization: The ability to take a skill learned in one setting, such as the classroom, and use it in another setting like the home or community with other people and a variety of materials.

Imitation: Occurs when a child observes another individual and subsequently makes their behaviour similar in form to the observed model. Imitation can be vocal, and/or motor.

Incidental Teaching: Teaching toward specific, predetermined objectives by capitalizing on natural unplanned opportunities.

Joint Attention: Is the ability to share attention between another person, object, and or event to share social awareness.

Modeling: A form of prompting. It provides a visual example of what is expected in a task by having students see the task being performed. It can also help the student see the sequence of steps in the task.

Natural Environment Teaching: Teaching the student in the natural environment, away from the structured teaching setting.

Picture Exchange Communication System: A system often used by individuals with ASD involving the use of picture symbols to initiate communication through exchange of symbols with partners.

Premack Principle: The opportunity to engage in a high probability behaviour will reinforce a lower probability behaviour (i.e. eating dessert reinforces eating broccoli).

Prompt: Cues or assistance that encourages the student to provide the desired response. A prompt may be verbal, gestural, visual, or physical guidance. The prompt may be brief (to get the student started on a task) or intensive (step-by-step through the task).

Redirection: Verbal or silent/gestural, to a specific and positive action.

Reinforcement: Reinforcers increase the probability of the future occurrence of a particular behaviour or response. Reinforcers can be tangible (classroom money or stickers), activity based (computer time), social (smiles, high fives) and/or idiosyncratic (special interests of the child).

Shadowing: An adult providing support to a student in order to facilitate: the acquisition of new skills; maximum participation; interaction and learning as part of a group.

Shaping: Involves the use of reinforcers to change behaviour gradually and systematically. Here, approximations of the desired behaviour are reinforced until the target behaviour is achieved.

Structured Teaching: A systematic approach to teaching new skills and adapting the environment for individuals with ASD.

Social Impairment: Impairment in social skills, including difficulties initiating interactions, engaging in reciprocity, maintaining eye contact, showing empathy, and recognizing or understanding the perspective of others.

Social Reciprocity: Ongoing social-emotional exchange between two or more partners that is mutual, responsive, and contingent on the partner's previous actions.

Social Skills Training: The teaching of social skills. Social skills training can be grouped into three different intervention approaches: contextual, individual, and peer. Contextual is used to make changes in the environment or social activity (i.e. making changes to the physical setting, material or activities that might help to promote social interaction). Individual training is used to change the social skills of individuals through instruction by an adult (i.e. Individual is taught to say "Good Morning"). Peer training is used to change behaviours of others (i.e. Peers involved in a buddy social support network).

Target Behaviour: The desired outcome; the focus of change. Before a behaviour program is developed, the target behaviour is identified and described in precise, countable, observable terms, with an explanation of what the child will do when the targets are attained.

Task Analysis: Involves breaking tasks down into smaller, teachable steps. Each subtask is taught and reinforced in sequence. Forward chaining is used to teach the first step in a task analysis that the student has not mastered, then assist with all the rest of the task. Each step is taught to mastery. In Backward chaining, it is the last step in a task analysis that is taught first.

Transition: Process of change. In the school setting, transitions may include: entry to school; transition between activities and settings or classrooms; transitions between grades; moving from school to school or from an outside

agency to school; transition from elementary to secondary school; transition from secondary school to post secondary destinations and/or workplace.

Transition Cue: Visual, auditory, or physical prompts used to indicate a change in setting or activity.

Video Modeling: Instructional technique where a child observes a videotape of a model engaging in a target behaviour and then they attempt to imitate the behaviour.

Visual Supports: One of the most widely recommended teaching strategies for those with ASD as they tend to have difficulty processing verbal information. Visuals are used for the following purposes: improving communication; provide information; support routines; teach skills; prevent problems and intervene when there is a problem. There exists a hierarchy of visuals that is dependent on the students' comprehension level.

Commonly used visual tools:

Visual Schedule – Shows a sequence of steps, events, activities, and/or routines in a visual form.

Calendar – Used to prepare the student for what is upcoming or may be changing in his/her weekly or monthly schedule. Calendars may be for the entire class or individual for the student.

Social Narratives and Social Scripts: Used to describe social situations and define appropriate responses based on the conventions of the world we live in. Written, after observation, in response to the ASD student clearly "misreading" a situation.

First /Then Strips – Indicates the current task and the transition to the next task. Can also act as a reinforcer.

Choice Boards – Presents preset options from which a student can choose. Choice boards may include choices of activities, reinforcers or behaviour.

Task Organizers/checklists – Step-by-step prompts to help a student complete a task more independently and generalize that task/skill to other settings.

Comic Strip Cartooning – Promotes social understanding by incorporating simple figures and other symbols in a comic strip format.

Power Cards – A visual aid that uses a child's special interest to understand social situations, routines and hidden curriculum in social interactions.

HERE ARE 10 THINGS EVERY CHILD WITH AUTISM WISHES YOU KNEW

1. I am a child with autism. I am not “autistic.” My autism is one aspect of my total character.
2. My sensory perceptions are disordered. This means the ordinary sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches of everyday life that you may not even notice can be downright painful for me. I may appear withdrawn or belligerent to you, but I am really just trying to defend myself.
3. Please remember to distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I'm not able to). Receptive and expressive language are both difficult for me. It isn't that I don't listen to instructions. It's that I can't understand you. When you call to me from across the room, this is what I hear: *&^%\$#@, Billy. #\$\$%^*&^%\$&*. Instead, come speak directly to me in plain words: “Please put your book in your desk, Billy. It's time to go to lunch. ” Now it's much easier for me to comply.
4. I interpret language literally. It's very confusing for me when you say, “Hold your horses, cowboy!” when what you really mean is “Please stop running.” When you say, “It's pouring cats and dogs,” I see pets coming out of a pitcher. Please just tell me, “It's raining very hard.” Idioms, puns, nuances, double entendres and sarcasm are lost on me.
5. Be patient with my limited vocabulary. It's hard for me to tell you what I need when I don't know the words to describe my feelings. I may be hungry, frustrated, frightened or confused, but right now those words are beyond my ability to express. Be alert for body language, withdrawal, agitation, or other signs that something is wrong. There's a flip side to this: I may sound like a little professor or a movie star, rattling off words or whole scripts well beyond my developmental age. These are messages I have memorized from the world around me to compensate for my language deficits, because I know I am expected to respond when spoken to.
6. Because language is so difficult for me, I am very visually oriented. Show me how to do something rather than just telling me. And please be prepared to show me many times. Lots of patient repetition helps me learn.

7. Focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do. Trying anything new when I am almost sure to be met with criticism, however constructive, becomes something to be avoided. Look for my strengths and you'll find them. There's more than one right way to do most things.
8. Help me with social interactions. It may look like I don't want to play with the other kids on the playground, but sometimes it's just that I simply don't know how to start a conversation or enter a play situation. If you can encourage other children to invite me to join them at kickball or shooting baskets, I may be delighted to be included.
9. Try to identify what triggers my meltdowns. This is termed "the antecedent. "Meltdowns, blowups, tantrums or whatever you want to call them are even more horrid for me than they are for you. They occur because one or more of my senses has gone into overload. If you can figure out why my meltdowns occur, they can be prevented.
10. If you are a family member, please love me unconditionally. Banish thoughts such as, "If he would just ..." and "Why can't she ... ?", I didn't choose to have autism. Remember that it's happening to me, not you. With your support and guidance, the possibilities are broader than you might think. I promise you I'm worth it.

A NOTE TO MY EDUCATORS:

It all comes down to three words: Patience. Patience. Patience. Work to view my autism as a different ability rather than a disability. Look past what you may see as limitations and see the gifts autism has given me. Be my advocate, be my friend, and we'll see just how far I can go.

I probably won't be the next Michael Jordan, but with my attention to fine detail and capacity for extraordinary focus, I might be the next Einstein. Or Mozart. Or Van Gogh. They had autism too!

- Ellen Notbohm



The use of ABA strategies is a proven approach to teaching those with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

"IT'S AN EVOLUTION, NOT A REVOLUTION."

This glossary was inspired by all the ASD students
we have the privilege to work with everyday.

- Debbie Dignan



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