

Function Identification Quick Guide

Determine the why behind the behavior

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The Four Functions of Behavior

All behavior serves one (or more) of these purposes:

Function	Student Gets...	Key Question
ATTENTION	Reactions from others	Does someone respond?
ESCAPE	Away from something	Does something stop/go away?
TANGIBLE	Object or activity	Do they get something?
SENSORY	Internal stimulation	Does it feel good?

Function Identification Flowchart

Step 1: Look at what happens AFTER the behavior

- Does someone respond (look, talk, redirect)? ! Consider ATTENTION
- Does a demand stop or get reduced? ! Consider ESCAPE
- Does the student get an item or activity? ! Consider TANGIBLE
- None of the above? ! Consider SENSORY

Step 2: Check the pattern

A behavior maintained by a specific function will show consistent patterns:

- Attention: Occurs when attention is low, stops when attention given
- Escape: Occurs when demands present, stops when demands removed
- Tangible: Occurs when desired item unavailable, stops when obtained
- Sensory: Occurs regardless of environment, often rhythmic/repetitive

Red Flags: Multiple Functions

Important

The same behavior can serve different functions in different contexts. Example: A student may hit to escape math (escape function) but also hit to get peer reaction at recess (attention function). Analyze each context separately.

Quick Function-Check Questions

1. What happens right BEFORE the behavior? (Antecedent)
2. What happens right AFTER the behavior? (Consequence)
3. What does the student GET from this behavior?
4. Does this pattern repeat consistently?

Hypothesis Statement Template

When [antecedent], [student] engages in [behavior] in order to [function: obtain/avoid] [specific outcome].

Example: When given independent writing tasks, Maria tears her paper in order to escape the non-preferred academic demand.

Pro Tip

Confirm your hypothesis by testing: If the function is escape, providing breaks contingently should reduce the behavior. If it doesn't, reconsider your hypothesis.

AI-Powered Function Analysis

Classroom Pulse analyzes your ABC data to suggest likely functions. Pattern recognition without the guesswork.

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