

How to use an ABC chart

An ABC chart is an observational tool that allows us to record information about a particular behaviour. The aim of using an ABC chart is to better understand what the behaviour is communicating. The 'A' refers to the *antecedent* or the event that occurred before the behaviour was exhibited. This can include what the person was doing, who was there, where they were, what sights / sounds / smells / temperatures / number of people that were in the environment. 'B' refers to an objective and clear description of the *behaviour* that occurred e.g. X threw item on the floor. 'C' refers to what occurred after the behaviour or the *consequence* of the behaviour e.g. person moved away from X, noise levels in the room decreased. It is important to decide on one or two target behaviours to record initially. Place the ABC chart in an accessible place to make it easier to use after the target behaviour has been exhibited.

Having recorded the behaviour on numerous occasions check for triggers or situations where the behaviour is most likely to occur:

- When / what time is the behaviour most likely to occur?
- During what activities is the behaviour most likely to occur?
- Are there any times or activities during which the behaviour does not occur?
- Where is the behaviour most likely to occur?
- With whom is the behaviour most likely to occur?

It is also important to look at what consequences might be maintaining the behaviour:

- What does the behaviour achieve for the person?
- Does the person avoid or escape any activity by engaging in the behaviour?
- Is the person rewarded in any way by engaging in the behaviour?
- What might the person be attempting to communicate by engaging in this behaviour?

Having identified the triggers for the behaviour and the consequences that may be maintaining the behaviour you are now ready to develop a plan.

1. What alternative or more appropriate skill can you teach the person in order to eliminate their need to engage in this behaviour?
2. What changes can you make to the environment or the person's schedule in order to decrease their exposure to triggers?
3. How have you addressed the need that the person was trying to communicate?
4. Is there any need for a reward / incentive scheme in the short-term?
5. Have you communicated your plan to everyone who will be caring for the person?

