Writing Precise, Useful (!) Behavioral Objectives
SPCD 519
Applied Behavior Analysis

NOTE: Behavioral objectives are not the same as operational definitions. Both require precise language, but an operational definition does not specify criteria – it simply describes a behavior in concrete, observable, measureable terms.

Behavioral Objectives: Why Write Them??

- Behavioral objectives are the precise outcomes desired for an individual
  - i.e., what you want the student to know/be able to do, stated in precise terms so you, the student, and others can evaluate the student’s progress
  - In other words, they clarify for students and others what the target of instruction is.
- Describe a level of performance
- Serve as a basis for evaluation

IDEA 2004 § 1415 (d),(1),(A),(i),(2)-(3)

- “Individual Educational Program… includes…a statement of measurable annual goal, including academic and functional goals designed to meet the child’s needs… in the general educational curriculum; and meet each of the child’s other educational needs that result from the child’s disability [and] a description of how the…progress… will be measured”
Annual Goal (Long-term Goals)

Short-term Objective

Short-term Objective

Short-term Objective

Instructional Goals

Pick a target behavior because it addresses either a:

- **Behavioral Excess**
  - Calls out 20 times in a 40 min class period

- **Behavioral Deficit**
  - Doesn't know to raise had to get teacher's attention

  - Skill Deficits

  - Performance Deficits

  - Knows to raise hand but calls out instead

How do I write them???

Use **Precise** Language
Be sure the behavioral objectives you write specify the:

1. Student
2. Target Behavior
3. Conditions
4. Criterion

Four Components of Behavioral Objectives: STCC:

- **Student** (learner)

Behavioral Objectives should specify STCC:

Specify **Target Behavior** written in terms that are:

- Observable
- Measurable (can be reliably measured)
- Repeatable

Behavioral Objectives should specify STCC:

**Conditions or Context** of the intervention/instruction

- Where, with what, when, or how the response is to occur
- Identify needed age-appropriate materials
- Specify type and amount of assistance

Given 3-digit division problems

Given one verbal prompt,
Behavioral Objectives should specify STCC:

Specify **Criterion for Acceptable Performance**

- Standard used to determine if the objective has been reached
- An acceptable level of performance that a person is to achieve

When selecting the standard, consider:
- Level needed to move to next skill
- Level needed in everyday settings
- Level needed for enjoyment & maintenance

Hierarchy of Learning (response competence)

1. Generalization
2. Maintenance
3. Fluency
4. Acquisition

Consider student’s level of response competence when selecting the criterion.

Give your BO the “Stranger Test”

- Can a stranger walk into a room and observe the behavior accurately?
- Does it have a movement cycle?

Example:
“Tom will reduce his cursing to no more than one occurrence during PE”

Give Your BO the “So-What Test”

- Example
“Lacey will sit upright in her desk with both feet firmly on the ground.”

Does meeting this BO result in learning? Or anything that is meaningful?
Give Your BO the “Fair Pair Test”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate Behaviors</th>
<th>Appropriate Alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill calls out answers</td>
<td>Bill raises his hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann takes objects that do not belong to her</td>
<td>Ann requests permission to borrow items by using the owner’s name, making her request, and saying &quot;please.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter expresses his anger with peers by throwing breakable items</td>
<td>Peter counts to ten, and then asks a peer to discuss a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary cries each time she is given a teacher directive</td>
<td>Mary asks her teacher for clarification of the instructions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Give your BO the “Potato Test”

- Do you have to have a pulse to meet this objective?? If that is all it takes, think again!
- Example: 
  “Jillian will attend music class.”