

Functional Communication Training (FCT)

WHAT IS IT?

Functional Communication Training (FCT) is an evidence-based antecedent intervention used to select and teach a replacement alternative skill(s) that serves the same purpose as a problem behavior (Carr & Durand, 1985). The replacement skills allow the individual to contact reinforcement quicker, easier, and/or more consistently than the problem behavior. It is used with individuals who require a more intensive intervention approach because they continue to exhibit challenging behaviors even when prevention strategies are in place.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

FCT is a positive behavior support (PBS) used to reduce problem behavior and increase communication skills for those with language delays. These procedures can help individuals generalize appropriate communicative behaviors and access wants and needs in a socially acceptable way.

WHEN DO I USE IT?

FCT is used to target many problem behaviors that might be interfering with a learner's ability to function in a variety of settings (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2020). This also may be used to improve generalization of new communicative behaviors to different communication partners, settings, or activities.

HOW DO I IMPLEMENT IT?

1. Identify and operationally define a target problem behavior.
2. Use ABC Data to hypothesize the most likely cause (function) of the problem behavior.
3. Based on the hypothesis of the function, replacement behaviors that are socially relevant and appropriate should be selected. These replacements can involve speech, gestures, signs, or pictures. Replacements should be easy to use and simple to observe and reinforce by a variety of communication partners.
4. Select a data collection method to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, tracking the replacement behavior **or** both the problem and replacement behaviors.
5. List situations and environments where the problem behavior is likely to occur. Set up multiple opportunities to teach the replacement behaviors and identify prompts necessary to perform the skills. Make certain that all of the child's new communicative requests are honored.
6. Create a plan to withhold reinforcement for the problem behavior (extinction) while reinforcement is used for the replacement behavior. An initial spike in the problem behavior is possible, but with consistency it fades.

HOW DO I IMPLEMENT IT (cont.)?

7. After the student learns to use the replacement behaviors, create opportunities for generalization to people and environments.
8. Observe regularly to make sure staff implement FCT consistently.
9. Fade prompts as the student learns to use the replacement behavior. Begin thinning the schedule of reinforcement by allowing more time between the new behavior and reinforcement and/or requiring more instances of replacement behavior before reinforcing.

QR CODES FOR MORE LEARNING



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EXAMPLE



1. A physically disruptive behavior is any instance of throwing or shoving classroom materials, furniture, or items without permission. Examples include throwing paper materials, shoes, or chairs and shoving work boxes off the desk. Nonexamples include pushing a toy across the desk to a staff person when asked to return it, removing shoes and leaving them under the desk in class, and throwing a ball while playing a game of catch.
2. During an interview, the teacher reports that physically disruptive behaviors happen during tasks that require writing or drawing. Past behavior plans indicate that the student often will tear up a paper or throw things if he makes a mistake.
 - a. Completed ABC data sheets on disruption show it occurs most often when given a written task to do or when a novel task is presented. Most of the time, the student is given a period of 5-10 minutes to calm down after each incidence of disruption.
 - b. The function is hypothesized to be escape from demands.
3. A replacement behavior of requesting "white board" (which the student enjoys writing on) is taught. This would allow the student to point to the white board and later to give an icon of a white board to staff to request the board where the student can write short answers and the staff will transcribe onto the paper.
4. Intervention data is collected and compared to baseline, including level of prompts needed and frequency of disruption and requesting behaviors to identify how well the intervention is working.
5. Multiple opportunities for requesting "white board" are set up during times when more writing demands are present. Staff make certain that all of the child's new communicative requests are honored.
6. Physically disruptive behaviors are given no attention (unless the staff person feels the behavior is dangerous to self or others). All attempts to request white board are heavily reinforced.
7. Opportunities to practice with the SLP, OT, and PE teacher are set up. Then math class and social skills class are added.
8. The teacher observes staff implementing FCT 4-5 times per week.
9. Prompts are faded as the student independently starts requesting white board. The reinforcement is gradually stretched out as well.

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