



## Handout #16: Function-Based Intervention Strategies

The following tables provide possible intervention strategies to incorporate into a comprehensive behavior intervention plan based on the function of the problem behavior. Additional resources are listed at this end of this handout.

### Negatively Reinforced Behaviors—Escape or Avoid Task or Environment

Intervention Strategy	Example(s)
Adjust the difficulty of the task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide easier work</li> <li>• Decrease the amount of work</li> </ul>
Offer choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the student to choose               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Which task to complete</li> <li>○ The sequence of tasks to be completed</li> <li>○ Which materials to use</li> <li>○ Where to complete the task</li> <li>○ When to complete the task</li> <li>○ With whom to complete the task</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Increase student preference/interest in the activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate student hobbies/interests into activities</li> </ul>
Assure that activities are functional or relevant for the student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a rationale for school tasks or activities that is relevant to the student's everyday life or future goals</li> <li>• Use functional tasks to teach or practice academic skills</li> </ul>
Alter the length of the task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorten the activity</li> <li>• Provide frequent breaks</li> </ul>
Modify the mode of task completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the student to choose between response methods (e.g., oral, written, typed)</li> </ul>
Use behavioral momentum, task dispersal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present easy requests prior to a difficult request</li> </ul>
Increase predictability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide cues for upcoming activities or a change in activities (instructional, visual, auditory; e.g., a 5-minute warning, schedule posted and reviewed regularly, picture schedule)</li> </ul>
Modify instructional delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the complexity of the language used</li> <li>• Alter the rate of speech</li> <li>• Use a pleasant tone of voice</li> <li>• Present instruction in the student's preferred modality (e.g., with interactive technology or more visual supports)</li> </ul>



Extinction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ignore the problem behavior and continue presenting the task regardless of the behavior</li> </ul>
Differential negative reinforcement of alternative behavior (DNRA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow a break from instruction based on an alternative appropriate response (e.g., compliance) while placing the problem behavior on extinction</li> </ul>
Differential negative reinforcement of zero rates of responding (DNRO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow a break when the problem behavior has not occurred for a specific period of time and place the problem behavior on extinction</li> </ul>
Non-contingent escape (NCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide breaks from work on a time-based schedule, irrespective of the problem behavior</li> </ul>

## **Positively Reinforced Behaviors**

### **Gain Sensory Reinforcement**

<b>Intervention Strategy</b>	<b>Example(s)</b>
Provide alternative sensory reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer stimuli matching the type of sensory reinforcement that is maintaining the problem behavior (e.g., auditory, visual, tactile)</li> </ul>
Enrich environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fill the environment with interesting and stimulating objects and activities</li> </ul>

### **Gain Tangible or Activity Reinforcement**

<b>Intervention Strategy</b>	<b>Example(s)</b>
Schedule a transitional activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule a moderately preferred activity between highly preferred and highly non-preferred activities</li> </ul>
Increase accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put highly preferred items within the student's reach</li> <li>Make preferred activities more frequently accessible</li> <li>If practical, consider non-contingent reinforcement (NCR), providing the preferred item or activity on a time-based schedule, irrespective of the problem behavior</li> </ul>
Differential reinforcement of alternative behavior (DRA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide the desired item or activity contingent on an alternative appropriate response and place the problem behavior on extinction</li> </ul>
Differential reinforcement of other behavior (DRO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide the desired item or activity when the problem behavior has not occurred for a specific period of time and place the problem behavior on extinction</li> </ul>



## Gain Attention

Intervention Strategy	Example(s)
Schedule attention (adult/peer)/NCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an adult periodically provide attention</li> <li>• Have an adult work with the student</li> <li>• Have a preferred peer(s) work with the student</li> </ul>
Increase proximity to the student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change the seating arrangement</li> <li>• Periodically move around the classroom</li> </ul>
Provide a preferred activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the adult is occupied and unable to provide attention, assign a preferred activity</li> </ul>
DRA/DRO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place the problem behavior on extinction and provide attention contingent on acceptable behavior (DRA) or non-occurrence of problem behavior (DRO)</li> </ul>

## Resources

Bambara, L. M., & Kern, L. (2005). *Individualized supports for students with problem behaviors*. New York: Guildford Press.

Geiger, K. B., Carr, J. E., & LeBlanc, L. (2010). Function based treatments for escape-maintained problem behavior: A treatment selection model for practicing behavior analysts. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 3(1), 22–32.

Knoster, T., & Llewellyn, G. (2007) Screening for understanding of student problem behavior: An initial line of inquiry (3rd ed.). Retrieved from [http://www.apbs.org/membersArea/files/ILI\\_Publisher\\_Edition.pdf](http://www.apbs.org/membersArea/files/ILI_Publisher_Edition.pdf)

March, R. E., Horner, R. H., Lewis-Palmer, T., Brown, D., Crone, D., Todd, A. W., et al. (2000). *Functional Assessment Checklist for Teachers and Staff (FACTS)*. Eugene, OR: Educational and Community Supports. Available from <http://www.pbis.org/tools.htm>

O'Neill, R. E., Horner, R. H., Albin, R. W., Storey, K., & Sprague, J. R. (1990). *Functional analysis of problem behavior: A practical assessment guide*. Sycamore, IL: Sycamore Publishing Company.

School of Psychology at Mizzou. (2011). *Evidence Based Intervention Network* (<http://ebi.missouri.edu>). Columbia, MO: University of Missouri.