# LEARN TO WRITE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLANS

Keys for writing an effective plan



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## About the Author

#### Amelia Dalphonse

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Amelia Dalphonse is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), having earned a Master's in ABA from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. She has been working with children since receiving her Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education in 1996, and has been working specifically with children with autism since 2009. Her passion is helping children with autism and their families meet their full potential. You can find the story of how she became involved with children with autism at https://**master**aba.com/about.

Together with her twin sister, Dianna Kelly, she formed **Master ABA** to help professionals learn the skills they need to help children with autism. Dianna has a passion for learning, teaching, writing and helping others that have been instrumental in the success of **Master ABA**.





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#### Behavior Intervention Plan

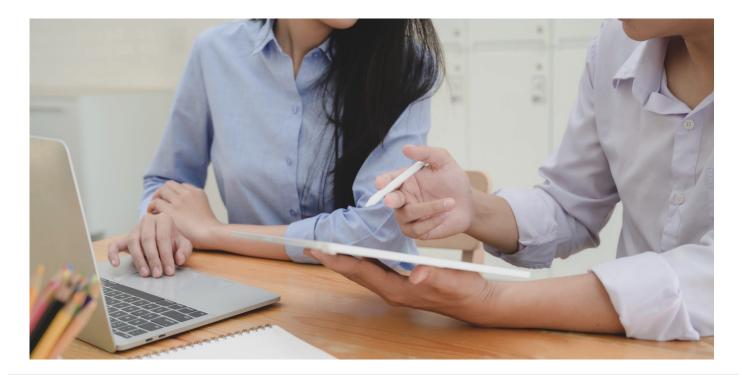
### Introduction

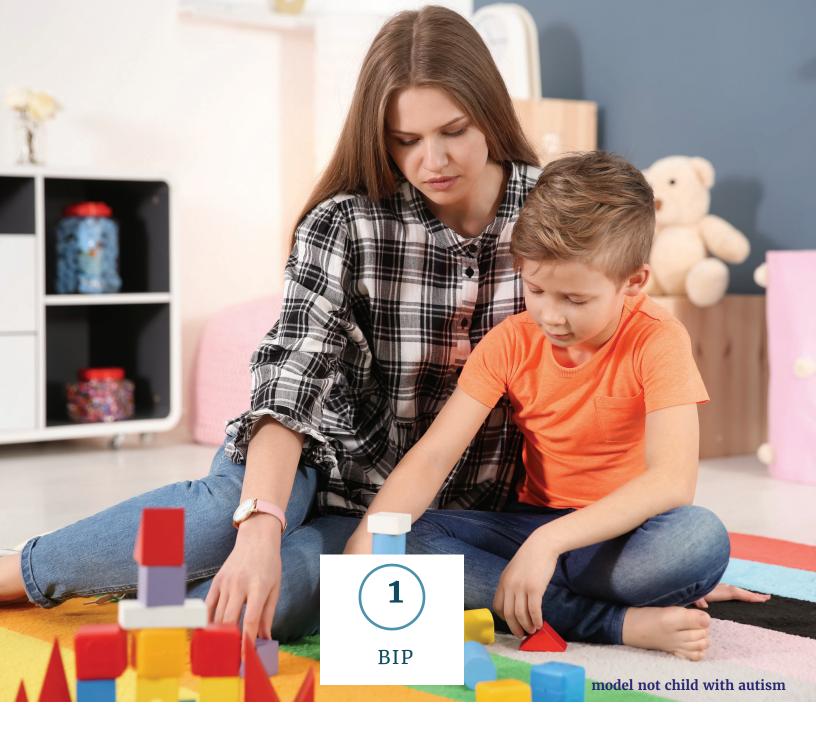
Getting started is sometimes the hardest part to any project and writing a behavior intervention plan often feels like a project, especially in the beginning. This course takes you step by step through the process to make writing your behavior intervention plan simple and efficient. Before you begin writing your plan, gather everything you need to get started. Here's what you need:

- Data from your FBA
- Templates specific to your agency
- Research relevant to the behavior and learner

In addition, the following information allows you to provide details in your plan:

- Baseline data
- Data from a preference assessment
- Information about common setting events
- Your agency's policies for crisis procedures
- Templates for:
  - Data Triangulation Chart
  - Competing Behavior Pathway





## What You Need to Get Started

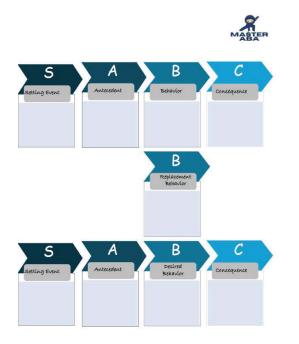
#### **Behavior Intervention Plan**

### **Evaluating Data**

BEHAVIOR

In Applied Behavior Analysis, data drives decision-making. Without data you have no way of knowing where to start, what goals to set or even if you have made any progress. The first step in creating an effective BIP is to evaluate the data you collected.

There are several tools available to help you process the data you collect. The first is pictured below. This is called the Competing Behavior Pathway. This tool allows you to document the most common setting events, antecedents, behavior and consequences. This form allows you to present the data visually to help you identify the function.





DATE

SOURCE ONE ABC DATA	SOURCE TWO SCATTERPLOT	SOURCE THREE QUESTIONNAIRE
COMMON ANTECEDENTS	COMMON ANTECEDENTS	COMMON ANTECEDENTS
COMMON CONSEQUENCES	COMMON CONSEQUENCES	COMMON CONSEQUENCES
'ES:		-

The form pictured above is the Data Triangulation Chart. This tool allows you to combine information from several sources to compare the results.

During an FBA, it's important to use a variety of sources to determine the most likely function of the behavior. Often, professionals compare data from ABC data collection, scatterplots and questionnaires. Presenting this information visually in the Data Triangulation Chart allows for easy evaluation of all the data collected.

You can find these tools at the end of this guide.



**Behavior Intervention Plan** 

### **Know the Law**

Before writing your behavior plan, you must first learn and understand the applicable laws in your state. Not knowing the law is no excuse for not following the law and not following the law may come with serious consequences.

Many states have laws that address the use of punishment, restraint and seclusion. While the BACB emphasizes the importance of positive interventions prior to the introduction of aversive procedures, the laws in your state take priority over this issue.

Many states have a Disabilities Rights Commission that reviews BIPs that include aversive procedures. Know when this is a required step in your process. Do not plan to implement your BIP immediately if it includes components that need review by the Commission. While it's safe to assume that there are some laws around the use of restraint and seclusion, there may be other relevant laws you need to be aware of.

Look to BCBAs in your area who have more experience than you. Ask for their guidance and if there are any laws you should know about. BCBAs who have been practicing in the same state for several years likely have some experience in this area. This is only a starting place. Do not rely solely on their information.

Spend time researching the laws in your state. Most often a simple internet search will provide most of the information you need. When in doubt, always err on the side of caution and have your plan reviewed by the DRC. Never leave it up to chance.

### **Preference Assessments**

Conducting preference assessments prior to writing your BIP allows you to develop a clear understanding of your client's motivation. This understanding helps you choose a reinforcement rate and guide staff to varying the reinforcers available during sessions.

When a child is only motivated by a limited number of reinforcers, it's likely that you will need to include a way to delay access to reinforcement (such as token economy) to avoid satiation.

If a child's primary reinforcers are edibles, then you will need to consider establishing and abolishing operations as well as the health of your client. Contemplate the need to include a plan for expanding reinforcers for your client.





There are many kinds of preference assessments including:

- Asking questions
- Free operant
- Paired choice
- Multiple stimuli with replacement
- Multiple stimuli without replacement

Identify a hierarchy of reinforcers to use when teaching adaptive alternative behaviors. Having this information before writing your plan allows you to determine if there is preliminary work you need to complete before implementing the BIP.



### Learner-Specific Information

The behavior intervention plan must be specific to the learner for whom you write it. Include this information prominently at the top of the document and include the learner's name in the footer as well to ensure there is no confusion once you print the document. Include identifying information as well as information that helps the audience understand important details.

**Standard information includes:** Learner's name Date of birth Supervising BCBA



This information is the bare minimum of what should be included. Your agency may require that you include other specific information. Include any information relevant to your client's needs and specific circumstances. Also include details that help your audience understand your client more effectively.



### Goal

The goal for the plan reflects what you hope to accomplish. Write your goal so that it is Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART). The goal section helps the reader understand your intentions and encourages them to ask clarifying questions.

Your goal should match the learner for whom you write it. Make the definition precise but avoid including extraneous or obvious information.

Use language in your goal that is easily understood by your audience. Help your audience identify the most salient aspects that will guide their implementation of the plan. Look at these examples:

- Charlie will reduce incidence of eloping in the classroom by 50% and increase his ability to mand for a desired activity to 50% independence during measured opportunities by June 30th, 2020.
- Michael will independently mand for a break in response to task demands 3/4 opportunities (as identified by precursor behavior of humming) with a reduction in the duration of flopping to no longer than 15 minutes per session.
- David will reduce the incidents of grabbing toys from peers to no more than 2 times per day and independently mand for a turn during 3/5 opportunities (as identified by precursor behavior of approaching a peer who is engaged with a preferred item).

#### Specific

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?
- How?
- Which?

#### Measurable

- How often will data be collected?
- What metric (i.e. duration, rate, etc.) will you use to collect data?
- What amount of behavior change do you expect to consider the goal mastered?

#### Attainable

- Reasonable for learner's abilities and development
- Feasible given resources available

#### Relevant

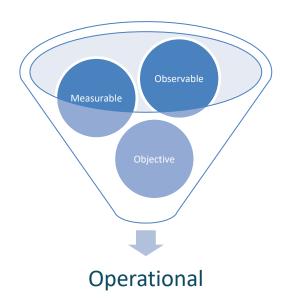
- Related to target behaviors in the natural environment
- Aligns with programming goals

#### Time-Bound

- Achievable within a realistic time frame
- Months, not years

### **Target Behaviors**

Operational definitions are a key component to your BIP. They ensure that anyone reading the plan clearly recognizes when the behavior occurs and when it does not. When your definitions are unclear, your data becomes questionable.



#### Example:

Eloping: Any instance of James moving away from supervising adult more than 5 ft while outside or inside when directed to go to a different location.

**Examples Include:** 

- Going across the room when directed to go to the table.
- Going across the parking lot when directed to get into the car.

#### Non-Examples Include:

- Going across the room to get a toy from the shelf during choice time.
- Running in circles around the structure on the playground during recess.

Avoid the temptation to target a lot of behaviors simultaneously. Prioritize the behaviors you target. When working with families, teachers and staff who feel overwhelmed, they often want you to "fix" all the behavior at once.

Avoid language that discusses what the child feels when engaged in the behavior (i.e. when he's mad). Describe only what is visible to an observer. When defining your behavior include the body, examples and non-examples. Using all 3 of these components creates the clearest definition and reduces confusion.

Learn to write Operational Definitions in this FREE course: <u>Writing</u> <u>Operational Definitions</u>.



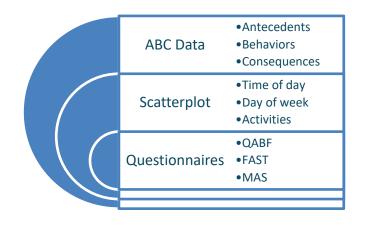


### **Hypothesis of Function**

Before writing your BIP, identify the most likely function of the target behaviors. If you haven't already, conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) or a functional analysis (FA). These assessments provide you with the data you need to identify the function of the behavior(s).

For the purposes of this guide, we focus on data collected during an FBA. These data include:

- ABC Data
- Scatterplot
- Questionnaires



#### **ABC Data and Scatterplot**

Click the image to download the fillable PDF data sheet for each.

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#### Statement of Hypothesized Function:

Your statement should be short and clear. It communicates the primary maintaining variable for your audience.

#### **Example:**

Based on observation, ABC data, scatterplot and interviews with parents and staff, the primary function of Justin's target behavior is escape from lengthy tasks.

A statement like this helps the reader understand why the behavior continues and should link to the interventions you choose later in you plan.

### **Antecedent Interventions**

Antecedent interventions help reduce the likelihood of maladaptive behavior occurring. When choosing antecedent interventions, consider common antecedents and setting events. Choose antecedent interventions that relate to these triggers as well as the function you identified in your statement of hypothesized function.

Common antecedent interventions are listed to the right. Most of these interventions are helpful for changing behavior maintained by escape from task demands. Errorless learning, task interspersal and priming all may make demands appear less aversive. Shared control and behavioral momentum make agreeing to complete a nonprferred task more acceptable. The Premack Principle and schedules allow the learner to know when they can move on to something they enjoy.

Similarly, you can apply many of these interventions to change behavior maintained by access to a tangible or attention. The Premack Principle and schedules allow the learner to know when they will have access to what they want. Whatever antecedent interventions you choose should address common antecedents and relate to the identified function of the target behaviors.



### Skill Development Interventions

Skill development interventions help teach adaptive alternative behavior to replace the target behavior(s). Whenever you target a behavior for reduction, you must teach adaptive alternative behaviors that serve the same function. Ensuring the functional equivalence of the replacement behavior is key to ensuring the success of your intervention.

We all fill 100% of our time engaged in some type of behavior. When you reduce one behavior, another slides in to take its place. If you don't choose what behavior that will be, then you leave it up to the learner to choose.

These interventions are not only critical to the success of your plan, they help reduce the likelihood that other maladaptive behavior take the place of your target behaviors. Without appropriately including a plan to teach adaptive replacement behaviors, you run the risk of your BIP resulting in behaviors that are more disruptive or more dangerous than the behaviors initially targeted for reduction.

Avoid the temptation to focus only on the maladaptive behavior. Spend as much or more effort on teaching skills.



### **Consequence Interventions**

Consequence interventions increase or decrease the likelihood of behavior occurring. Consequences that follow a behavior and result in the behavior occurring more frequently (or with more intensity or for longer durations) are reinforcing. Consequences that result in the behavior occurring less frequently (or with less intensity or for shorter durations) are punishing.

The BACB tasks us with choosing interventions focused on reinforcing behavior rather than relying on punishment. Although some interventions intended to reduce challenging behavior are common (i.e. time out, extinction, response blocking, etc.), you must understand the implications of using them in your BIP. Punishment may produce negative, unintended consequences including:

- Retaliatory behaviors such as aggression
- Negative relationship between the adult and the learner
- Reduction in behavior only in the presence of the punisher
- Unintended reinforcement of maladaptive behavior when the function is incorrectly identified

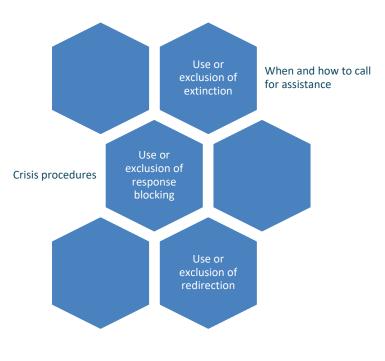
In addition to the above consequences, regulatory or legal processes may exist in your state that prohibit the use of punishment without approval from the Disabilities Rights Committee.



### Response to Target Behavior

Your BIP should provide clear guidance to your interventionist as to how they should respond to the target behavior. Although some (or even all) of this information may be included in other sections, having a specific section for this may help ensure a clear understanding of expectations.

Format this section for easy reference. Despite training and coaching, it's likely your interventionist may need to reference the section as behavior occurs. Avoid unnecessary language and descriptions. Use bullet points and include information such as:



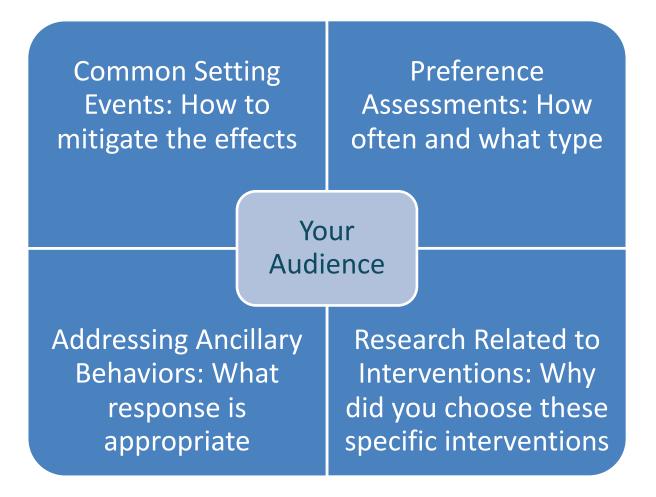
Here's an example:

- Do not allow access to preferred items/activities (i.e. swing, weighted blanket, iPad, kitchen toys, etc.) in response to target behaviors.
- Do not attempt to de-escalate him using head squeezes or another activity staff may feel is calming.
- Do not attempt to soothe Christian or "figure out" what he wants.
- If he attempts to aggress toward a staff, staff should immediately use the walkie-talkie to call for assistance.
- Do not attempt to move him away from peers. Remove peers from his general area to ensure safety.
- Block any attempts he may make to aggress toward other staff or peers using Safety Care. If possible, have others leave the room rather than trying to move Christian.
- Staff should monitor for safety while keeping a safe distance if possible.
- Do not approach Christian until he appears calm.
- Once he is calm, reintroduce any demand that had been placed.
- Present reinforcement only once he has completed some part of the initial task or some other task presented by staff (if no demand was initially present).
- Trained staff may use Safety Care approved release techniques when needed. Never use a restraint without a supervisor present.

### Additional Strategies and Information

This section is completely optional and dependent on the individual circumstances of your learner. This is the section for everything else you want to include in your BIP but that doesn't fit into the other sections. Include information that helps your interventionist understand your learner or interventions more thoroughly.

Provide strategies and information related to:



Include information important to your audience. Some agencies or payers require the inclusion of references to research, but this information might feel overwhelming to a parent or paraprofessional. Only include as much information as needed for effective implementation of the BIP.



## Writing the Behavior Intervention Plan



Writing the Behavior Intervention Plan

### **BIP Structure and Formatting**

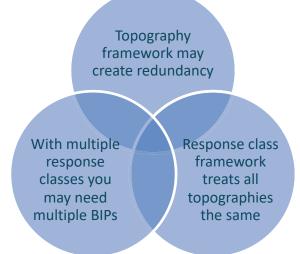
There are many ways you can structure your BIP. If you work for an agency, they specify exactly how they want them formatted, although they may offer some flexibility if you have strong preferences for a different structure. Often BCBAs use a structure like that of their supervisor without much thought as to how the structure impacts implementation.

Important aspects to consider when choosing a structure for your BIP include:



When building your BIP, you can create a framework around a whole response class or individual topographies of behavior. Choose the framework that you are most comfortable with, but make sure that your interventionist understands your plan. Although there isn't one correct framework, it's difficult to switch between them for different learners. Constantly changing the structure of your BIPs becomes confusing for your interventionist. Choose one that is appropriate to most of your learners and stick with it.

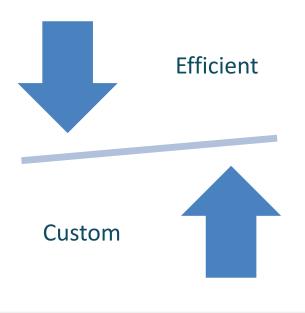
Consider the following when choosing a framework:



#### Writing the Behavior Intervention Plan

### Increasing Efficiency in Your Writing

Developing well-crafted BIPs takes practice. Most of us lack the time needed to dig into the research and create a truly custom plan, yet that is the essence of what makes ABA different from other fields. The interventions we choose must be specific to the learner and your whole plan must be customized to meet the needs of the specific context within which the BIP will be implemented. If this is true, and it is, then how do you meet the needs of your learners in the time allotted for BIP development? The answer lies in taking steps to improve your efficiency. Depending on your environment (i.e. school, clinic, home, etc.), you likely encounter similar situations with some of your learners. Finding ways to capitalize on the similarities will improve your efficiency.





Through this guide you received multiple different examples of each part of the BIP. Use these to begin to build your library of templates. Create documents that include definitions for common target behaviors, interventions and crisis plans. Each time you use one of these, you must customize it to your learner and that learner's specific situation, but having the structure and formatting gives you a head start.

Whenever you take the time to define a new target behavior or intervention, copy it into your template document. Replace the learner's name with a single word such as "learner" or "client" to maintain confidentiality and allow you to use the "find and replace" option in Word.

Reducing redundancy and creating replicable systems is the best way to improve your efficiency. While it takes time to build a library of resources, the amount of time this step saves you later in your career will be worth the investment.



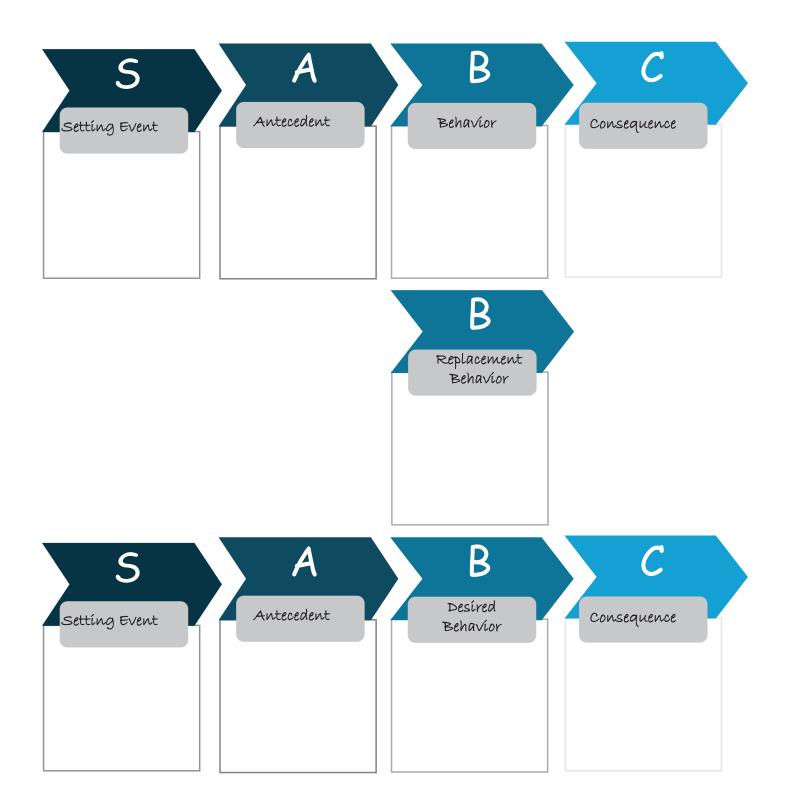
#### DATA TRIANGULATION CHART

#### **BEHAVIOR:**

DATE:

SOURCE ONE ABC DATA	SOURCE TWO SCATTERPLOT	SOURCE THREE QUESTIONNAIRE
COMMON ANTECEDENTS	COMMON ANTECEDENTS	COMMON ANTECEDENTS
COMMON CONSEQUENCES	COMMON CONSEQUENCES	COMMON CONSEQUENCES
NOTES:		







A	В	С
Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
<ul> <li>Demand</li> <li>Item Restricted</li> <li>Attention Restricted</li> <li>Unstructured Time</li> <li>Transition</li> </ul>	☐ Tantrum ☐ Eloping ☐ Flopping ☐ Refusal ☐ Aggression ☐	Offered Choice Reprimand Discussion Removed Item Ignored
Demand Item Restricted Attention Restricted Unstructured Time Transition	☐ Tantrum ☐ Eloping ☐ Flopping ☐ Refusal ☐ Aggression ☐	☐ Offered Choice ☐ Reprimand ☐ Discussion ☐ Removed Item ☐ Ignored ☐
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<ul> <li>Demand</li> <li>Item Restricted</li> <li>Attention Restricted</li> <li>Unstructured Time</li> <li>Transition</li> </ul>	☐ Tantrum ☐ Eloping ☐ Flopping ☐ Refusal ☐ Aggression ☐	Offered Choice Reprimand Discussion Removed Item Ignored
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A	В	Consequence
Antecedent	Behavíor	Consequence

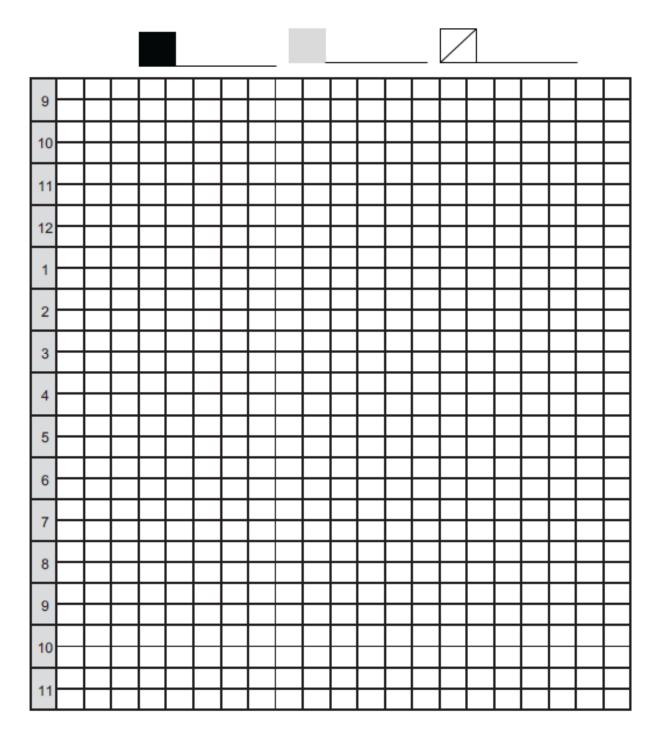


S	A	В	С
Setting Event	Antecedent	Behavíor	Consequence



#### SCATTER PLOT FORM

CHILD/BEHAVIOR: \_\_\_\_\_ STARTING DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



Time of the day (30 min. intervals)

Successive days www.masteraba.com