Functions of Behavior At-A-Glance

This document provides definitions and examples for the four functions of behavior, along with some dos and don'ts to help plan a strategic response.

Function: Escape

Definition	An individual can escape or avoid difficult or unpleasant tasks, activities, or interactions by engaging in problem behaviors.
Example	Many students who transition to school for the first time struggle with readiness behaviors and following transitions/directions that are not student-directed.

Do. . .	Do NOT. . .
- Teach functional communication - Represent the original demand (In some cases) provide alternative choices - Deny access to reinforcing items (if student wants access) - Ask the student to do a task they are really great at and then deliver the original demand	- Remove the original demand - this does not mean 'force' them to comply in the moment - Provide attention for the undesired behavior - Place the student in a 'time-out' - Use a programmed reinforcer (like tokens or points) as an incentive to change the behavior

Function: Access to Tangible Items

Definition	An individual engages in behaviors to obtain access to tangible items and/or gain access to desired activities.
Example	Many younger students struggle with adaptive skills like waiting or appropriately tolerating when a requested item is not available right away.

Do. . .	Do NOT. . .
- Teach functional communication - Allow the student to 'work' for the item - Deny access to the requested item until the student completes the original demand - Provide access to item/ activity on schedule separate from behavior	- Give the student the item immediately following the problem behaviors - Provide additional attention for the behavior

Function: Attention-Seeking

Definition	An individual may engage in a behavior to gain social attention or a reaction from peers or adults around him/her (this can be positive or negative attention).
Example	Many students may engage in calling out to get their peers to look at them or laugh at them.

Do. . .	Do NOT. . .
- Teach appropriate replacement behaviors to gain attention - Provide attention for any positive behaviors you observe from the class (e.g., positive narration) - Redirect the student back to the original demand - Remain neutral in your interactions with the student	- Provide attention to the behavior - Comment on the behavior directly to the student or to others - Ignore the student... ignore the behavior

Function: Automatic/Sensory

Definition	An individual may engage in behavior because of the way it makes the person feel. The function may be to add something pleasing or remove something displeasing and does not rely on anything external.
Example	Some students engage in behaviors to engage different senses - these behaviors are often automatic (e.g., tapping a wall, rolling on the floor, shaking their head, etc.).

Do. . .	Do NOT. . .
- Teach appropriate, functionally equivalent replacement behaviors - Develop a classroom culture that recognizes the different ways needs are met and allows the behavior to be less disruptive	- Simply block the behavior - Put the student in "time-out"