What is a Functional Observation Assessment?

- The Functional Observation Form combines elements of both the scatterplot and ABC data collection systems.
- This form is similar to the scatterplot format in that the grid allows the interventionist to record the occurrence of challenging behavior relative to the time of day and/or the activity.
- However, it is also similar to the ABC data collection system in that it allows the interventionist to record the occurrence of challenging behavior relative to specific setting events, antecedents, and consequences.
- This form allows the collection of data on the number of occurrences of a behavior (frequency) when behaviors are discrete.
- It also allows the interventionist to identify patterns of occurrence and nonoccurrence of the challenging behavior and identify correlative relationships among different challenging behaviors and various antecedents and consequences.

To complete the observation form, the interventionist begins by recording the activities and/or times of day along the top horizontal axis. The antecedents, behaviors, and consequences of interest should then be filled in along the vertical axis on the left side of the form.

During “Activity 1,” the first occurrence of one of the target behaviors is recorded using the letter ‘A’.

The antecedents and consequences associated with that occurrence of the behavior are also recorded using the letter ‘A’.

Subsequent occurrences of target behaviors are assigned letters sequentially through the alphabet during the remainder of the observation.
In the situation above, there were two instances of challenging behavior during breakfast and three instances during free play. During breakfast, in instance (A), the child hit his teacher. The antecedent was the teacher's request to take his plate to the sink. After the hit, the teacher's consequence was a reprimand.

After the reprimand, the teacher re-delivered the task demand (antecedent B). This
demand was followed by the child attempting to bite his teacher (behavior B). The teacher immediately turned the child’s chair away from the table to deliver a time out (consequence B).

As you can see, this assessment accumulates frequency data and provides some contextual information regarding relevant antecedents and consequences.

The complete Functional Observation Form is on the following page and also contains a summary page to assist with summarizing and interpreting the data that are collected with this observation form.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 1:</th>
<th>Activity 2:</th>
<th>Activity 3:</th>
<th>Activity 4:</th>
<th>Activity 5:</th>
<th>Activity 6:</th>
<th>Activity 7:</th>
<th>Activity 8:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Antecedents**

**Behaviors**

**Consequences**
FUNCTIONAL OBSERVATION FORM SUMMARY

1. Count the number of times each behavior occurs and fill in the “Total Occurrence” box at the end of each row of behaviors.
2. Consider the frequencies of occurrence and needs of the child, then rank order the behaviors in terms of priority for intervention; beginning with 1 for the highest priority behavior.
3. Write the highest priority behavior below and examine the data sheet for the following patterns:

   ❖ **High Priority Behavior to be Targeted for Intervention:**

   ![Table for Antecedents and Consequences]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This behavior is <strong>most</strong> frequently preceded by:</td>
<td>This behavior is <strong>least</strong> frequently preceded by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This behavior is <strong>least</strong> frequently preceded by:</td>
<td>This behavior is <strong>most</strong> frequently followed by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This behavior is <strong>most</strong> frequently followed by:</td>
<td>This behavior is <strong>least</strong> frequently followed by:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   ❖ **Hypothesized function of this behavior:**

4. To assist with intervention planning, examine the data sheet again and consider how this behavior may relate to other behaviors.

   ![Diagram for Cluster and Sequence]

   **Does this behavior occur in a cluster with other behaviors?**

   **Does this behavior occur in a chain or sequence with other behaviors?**

   OR