

Describing your child's behaviour

Describing your child's behaviour well is like taking a picture of what is happening. Using the "telephone test" will tell you how well you have described the behaviour.



Telephone Test

Imagine you are describing your child's behaviour to a friend on the phone.

Will your friend 'see in their mind' what you have seen?

Example

"He is being aggressive to his sister."

Fails the telephone test because it is too general.

But ...

"He is hitting his sister with a stick."

Passes the telephone test, because your friend will be able to 'see in their mind' what he is doing.

Measuring the behaviour

We need to measure the behaviour so we can know if there is any improvement.

There are 3 simple ways we can measure behaviour:

1. **Counting the frequency** of the behaviour
How often does it happen?
2. **Measuring the duration** of the behaviour
How long does it last?
3. **Counting the permanent products**
How many are there?

Some behaviours result in something that can be counted. For example if your child has been breaking windows, counting the number of windows broken each day or week will give a good picture of the extent of the behaviour.

Identify your child's skills strengths

Skills strengths are things your child does well.

Hint: think about what your child does at home or other places:

Motor skills

- e.g. Can point to objects.
- e.g. Can run.

Communication skills

- e.g. Says yes and no.
- e.g. Can ask for things he wants.

Self help skills

- e.g. Can drink from a cup by himself.
- e.g. Can use a spoon to feed himself.

Academic skills

- e.g. Can understand simple directions.
- e.g. Can take turns.
- e.g. Can use a pencil to draw.

Triggers – happen before

Events that occur before a behaviour and bring on that behaviour are called triggers. For example, a child has become upset: the trigger for that might have been that another child has taken away their toy.

Consequences – happen after

Events that result from a behaviour are called **consequences**. For example, if a child helps wash the dishes the consequence for this might be that their parent thanks them. If a behaviour results in:

- a **positive consequence** it is likely the behaviour will occur more often in the future.
- a **negative consequence**, the behaviour is less likely to occur in the future.
- **no consequence** this reduces the likelihood the behaviour will occur in the future.

Effects of consequences on behaviour

For behaviour to occur MORE OFTEN in the future

- Behaviour occurs then
- something pleasant is provided, or
 - something unpleasant is removed

For behaviour to occur LESS OFTEN in the future

- Behaviour occurs then
- something unpleasant is provided, or
 - something pleasant is removed, or
 - there is no consequence

Using triggers and consequences in your interactions with your child

You interact with your child many times during each day. Now that you know about triggers and consequences, you can use them in your interactions to teach your child new skills.

To make the behaviour you want to see happen more often, make sure you provide a positive consequence whenever it happens naturally. If it does not happen naturally, provide a trigger to make it happen and then provide the positive consequence.

Remember: Do not follow difficult behaviour with positive consequences. Use no consequence or a negative consequence.

Think of each interaction you have with your child as an opportunity to teach them something. If you use triggers and consequences carefully, you can make big changes in your child's behaviour.

How to give effective instructions

The way the instruction is delivered is important.

How you use your body

- get up close (within arms reach)
- get down to their level
- establish eye contact

How you use your voice

- start with child's name
- use a firm but pleasant tone of voice
- use "please"
- tell the child what you want them to do (do not give a choice)

Wait for a response

- if your child does not respond immediately, do not repeat the instruction
- wait about 5 seconds for your child to comply
- don't leave, stay close, keep looking at your child and wait for them to respond

Give positive consequences for compliance

- the best positive consequence is labelled praise: "That's great, you have done what I asked you to do"

Giving instructions to stop doing something

Stop or don't instructions are more effective if the child is also told what to do instead of just the thing they are doing wrong. For example, rather than saying "Stop jumping on the couch", say "Stop jumping on the couch and sit on it".

Labelled praise

Giving praise is one of the easiest positive consequences to provide for your child's good behaviour. When you also tell him what he has done, this is called "labelled praise".

Examples

"That's great the way you are packing up all the toys."

"I like the way you are helping Maria carry all the bags."

"It is great the way you are finding the things on the supermarket shelves."

"I like the way you are holding onto the shopping trolley. Well done!"

"It is nice the way you are sharing your toys."

Setting up household rules

Advantages of household rules:

- help you to be consistent
- help ensure all adults in the family treat the child in the same way
- household rules can be a trigger for behaviour – help children to better understand what is expected of them

Types of rules

There are "do rules" and "don't rules"
Be as specific as possible

Generally there should be more **Do rules** than **Don't rules**

DO RULES

- Pack up your toys when you are finished
- Take your shoes off before coming inside

DON'T RULES

- Don't write on the walls

Dealing with difficult behaviour

When the purpose is acceptable

- Select an alternative behaviour to replace your child's difficult behaviour
- Provide a trigger for the alternative behaviour to occur
- Provide a positive consequence for the alternative behaviour
- Provide no consequence for the difficult behaviour, or provide a negative consequence for the difficult behaviour

Selecting an alternative behaviour

Alternative behaviour has the same purpose as the difficult behaviour but is much more useful

2 TYPES OF ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOUR

1. **A communication skill**
e.g. asking for something instead of whining
2. **A skill of independence**
e.g. getting your own cup when you want a drink

Dealing with difficult behaviour

When the purpose is not acceptable

There will be some times when the purpose of your child's behaviour is not acceptable. For example, your child throws a tantrum because he wants to ride his bike on a busy road and you have stopped him. You are not going to allow him to do this even if he asks nicely.

The best way to handle this would be:

- Tell the child that he cannot do what he wants to because it is dangerous.
- If he continues to tantrum, make sure no consequence follows the tantrum, or follow it with a negative consequence.

There are times when children have to learn to accept "no" for an answer.

Planned ignoring

When the purpose of the difficult behaviour is to gain attention, you need to make sure that the behaviour never results in attention, and you have to work hard to ignore it. This is **planned ignoring**. You have to pretend that the child is not there and get on with your business.

This is not an easy task.

It will not always be possible to use planned ignoring. If the child is in a dangerous situation they cannot be ignored.

Caution

When you ignore a behaviour, it will usually get worse for a short time. If you can't put up with it getting worse and eventually give in, your child will learn that the way to get attention is to increase the level of the difficult behaviour.

Developing daily routines

Every family is different, but most have some sort of routines. Routines are just certain activities that usually happen at particular times of the day.

You might have routines around getting children up and ready for school, or around preparing meals, eating and cleaning up.

Routines help parents get their daily tasks done, and children are easier to manage and learn more skills if there are predictable routines for them to follow.

Developing Planned Activities Routines

1. Identify a particular high-risk situation for your child.
2. Select interesting activities for your child to do in this situation.
3. Decide on behaviours you expect from your child during this situation; pick 2-3 of the most important.
4. Decide on behaviours you do not want from your child in this situation.
5. Select positive consequences for your child for engaging in the desired behaviours.
6. It is useful to have a special treat, such as an ice cream or a play in the park. You will need to do it often so don't make the treat too big.
7. Select negative consequences for your child engaging in prohibited behaviours.
8. Practise in a lower risk situation. For example, if long car trips are a problem, you could practise during a short trip.

Implementing a Planned Activities Routine

1. Prepare in advance.
2. Talk to your child about rules.

Tell your child:

- what is going to happen
- the behaviours you expect
- the behaviours that are forbidden
- positive consequences for behaving well
- negative consequences for behaving poorly.

3. Just before entering the high-risk situation, remind your child of the rules.
4. Complete the activities associated with the high-risk situations
Remember to praise your child for good behaviour during the high-risk situation.
5. Hold a follow up discussion with your child.
Talk about how things went. Praise them for things that they have done well and draw their attention to things that they could improve on.
6. Refine and review your planned activities routine.
 - Think about any improvements you might make next time.
 - Practise.
 - Show your child how the routine works.
 - Set easy goals at first and work up to more difficult situations.

Teaching your child new skills

Each skill we learn becomes the building block for the next skill. By building on your child's strengths, learning is likely to be successful, and there will be an improvement in your child's self esteem and motivation to learn more.

Think of your child's strengths as the stepping stones toward the development of new and more advanced behaviour

1. Build on your child's existing skills.
2. Choose skills your child needs in their daily activities.
3. Choose skills your child will use often.
4. Choose skills that build on a positive social image of your child.
5. Choose skills your child wants to learn.
6. Choose skills that increase your child's independence.

Writing objectives

You need to write objectives for the skills you want to teach your child so you will be able to:

- accurately measure the progress of your child.
- know when your child has learnt a skill.

Written objectives have 3 parts:

1. A description of the skill to be learned.
2. A statement of the conditions under which your child will use the skill.
3. A statement of how well the child uses the skill.

Here is an example of how it looks when we put the 3 parts together:

1. Given what	A spoon with a built up handle and food cut up into bite size pieces
2. Does what	Suresh will feed himself
3. How well	Without spilling any food

Objectives are generally written in a sentence:

Using a spoon with a built up handle and food cut up into bite size pieces, Suresh will feed himself without spilling.

My Family Card



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