

Collecting Accurate and Reliable Data

by Capella Partnered with CARD



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will explore how to collect accurate and reliable data by defining and discussing the following:

1. Behavior Management Guidelines
2. Data Collection Guidelines

1. Behavior Management Guidelines

Understanding data is essential for the intervention that we are implementing to effectively change behavior.

Here are some important guidelines to keep in mind regarding behavior measurement:

- Data should reflect the true nature of the behavior to enable accurate decisions.
- Inaccurate data collection can cause a variety of problems for the patient and jeopardize the effectiveness of intervention procedures.
- Inaccurate data collection can lead to these outcomes:
 - Erroneous decision making for interventions, reinforcement, prompting, etc.
 - Problems with behavior technician consistency; if measurements are not taken regularly, BCBAs cannot ensure everyone is implementing procedures consistently, which leads to confusion for the patient.
 - Inhibited monitoring of actual progress so adjustments cannot be made.

2. Data Collection Guidelines

Here are some important guidelines to keep in mind regarding data collection:

- Data should be taken every session for all target behaviors.
- Collect data immediately as it occurs throughout the session.
- Waiting to take data increases the risk of errors and inconsistencies.
- Have data sheets or other collection device ready to go at the start of the session.



HINT

It may be difficult to collect data immediately in certain situations, especially public settings, so we may choose to gather data in a more discreet way, such as using blank note paper, a clicker or counter, or a recording device. You may discuss other options with the BCBA.

It is imperative to take professional and objective session notes. Use objective language when discussing the patient: avoid using terms like “awesome,” “fabulous,” “awful,” etc. and instead give more helpful information.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Instead of “Terrible day,” write “Problem behaviors occurred at a higher rate than usual.”



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you reviewed tips and techniques for collecting accurate and reliable data in your therapy sessions with patients in ABA. Remember, data is extremely important to understand if the intervention that we are implementing is actually working to change behavior. You reviewed a list of **behavior management and data collection guidelines** and revisited the importance of taking professional and objective session notes.