3rd Ed. RBT Exam Study Guide

Updated 12/19/25

This study guide is here to help you actually understand the RBT task list, not just memorize it. Use it however it works best for you: highlight things, write notes, doodle, add examples, or flag questions to review later. The more you make it your own, the more helpful it'll be. Take your time, trust yourself, and use this as tool to build confidence for the RBT Exam.

A. Data Collection and Graphing (13 exam questions)

A.1 Implement continuous measurement procedures (e.g., frequency, duration, latency, inter-response time).

Continuous measurement is **recording every instance** of behavior during an observation period. It provides the most complete, accurate picture of how often, how long, or how quickly behavior occurs.

The Four Types of Continuous Measurement

1. **Frequency** – count how many times a behavior occurs
   Use when:
   - The behavior has a clear start and end
   - The behavior occurs at a rate that is countable (not too fast)

   Examples:
   - Counting how many times a learner raises their hand
   - RBT counts 7 instances of eloping

2. **Duration** – measure how long a behavior lasts from start to finish
   Use when:
   - Behavior varies in length
   - You need to know total engagement or time spent

   Examples:
   - Timing how long a tantrum lasts
   - Meltdown lasts 4 minutes, 12 seconds

3. **Latency** – time between the instruction (SD) and when the learner begins the behavior
   Use when:
   - You want to know how quickly a learner responds

   Examples:
   - Measuring how long it takes to start brushing after being told, "It's time to brush your teeth."
   - Leaner begins task 6 seconds after SD.

4. **Inter-response Time (IRT)** – time between two responses of the same behavior
   Use when:
   - You want to increase or decrease the pace of responding
   - Behaviors repeat (e.g., bites of food, rapid scripting)

   Examples:
   - Timing the time between each bite of food
   - 12 seconds between each bite of food

DON'T FORGET

- Continuous measurement = behavior is recorded the whole time it occurs
- Do NOT confuse IRT with latency (IRT is between two behaviors; latency is instruction -> behavior)
- Choose the measurement that provides the most meaningful data, not just any measurement

A.2 Implement discontinuous measurement procedures (e.g., partial & whole interval, momentary time sampling)

Discontinuous measurement **does not record every instance** of behavior. Instead, you observe behavior **during specific intervals** or moments in time.

Discontinuous measurement is useful when:

- You cannot track behavior continuously
- Behavior occurs at high rates
- You need an estimate or sample of behavior
- Three Types of Discontinuous Measurement

1. **Partial Interval Recording** – Record whether the behavior occurred at any time during the interval

   Use when:
   - Behavior is high-rate or rapid
   - You want to reduce a behavior
   - You only need to know if it happens at least once

   ! **Important** - Overestimates total behavior because even 1 second counts for the whole interval

   Example - If the interval is 30 seconds and the child screams for 2 seconds -> mark yes

2. **Whole Interval Recording** – Record whether the behavior occurred for the entire interval

   Use when:
   - Behavior is continuous or long-lasting
   - You want to increase behavior (e.g., engagement, on-task behavior)

   ! **Important** - Underestimates behavior because the learner must do it the whole time

   Example - If the interval is 10 seconds and the student is on-task for 9 of those seconds -> mark no

3. **Momentary Time Sampling (MTS)** – Record whether the behavior is occurring at the exact moment the interval ends

   Use when:
   - You cannot watch the learner the entire time
   - Staff must multitask
   - Useful for group settings or busy environments

   Example
   - Look up at the end of the 1-minute interval:
   - If the student is talking -> mark **yes**
   - If not -> mark **no**

- Partial interval -> overestimates behavior
- Whole interval -> underestimates behavior
- Momentary time sampling -> easiest for multitasking
- Intervals can be any length (e.g., 10 seconds, 1 minute)
- Discontinuous measurement is a **sample**, not a full record.

A.3 Implement permanent product recording procedures.

Permanent product recording involves measuring **the lasting outcome** or **result** of a behavior after it has occurred, **not the behavior itself**. This allows the RBT to check work **after the session**, without needing to watch the behavior in real time.

Behavior	Permanent Product
Completing chores	Clean room, empty trash
Academic tasks	Worksheets, spelling test
Sorting items	Number of items in each bin
Self-care routines	Clean teeth, nails clipped

Key Features of Permanent Product Measurement	
Measures outcomes, not actions • Number of math problems completed • A completed puzzle • Cleaned room • Number of items sorted • Written notes or assignments	You do **NOT** have to be present • This is one of the biggest benefits • If the behavior leaves a traceable result, you can collect data later
Works **best** for • Skill acquisition tasks • Academic tasks • Tasks where the final result can be observed later	**Not** useful when • The behavior itself is the focus (e.g., quality of social interaction) • No product remains after behavior ends

DON'T FORGET

- Permanent product = **end result** of the behavior
- RBT **does not have to observe the behavior directly**
- Only use it when the **product accurately represents** the behavior
- The product must be **produced solely by the learner** (e.g., no one else completed the work)

A.4 Enter data and update graphs

RBTs are responsible for **accurately entering collected data** into the system used by their agency (e.g., electronic data sheets, graphs, software programs) **and ensuring graphs stay current** so the BCBA can make treatment decisions.

1. Enter Data Accurately

- Enter data immediately after or during the session
- Use the correct measurement method (frequency, duration, etc.)
- Ensure the numbers of match what was recorded on paper or digital systems
- Avoid guessing or estimating

Accuracy is critical because BCBAs rely on this data for treatment changes.

2. Update Graphs

- Plot data points correctly on existing graphs
- Ensure the graph reflects the most recent data
- Label axes, dates, and phases if directed by the BCBA
- Notify the supervising BCBA if something looks incorrect or is missing

RBTs should not create new graph formats or modify phase lines without BCBA direction

3. Maintain Professional Data Habits

- Double check entries before saving
- Keep data confidential and secure
- Report any inconsistencies (e.g., missing days, system errors)
- Promptly alert the BCBA if data doesn't make sense or seems unusual

- Entering data = **clerical accuracy**, not analysis
- Updating graphs supports **ongoing data-based decision making**
- If unsure about how to enter or graph data, the RBT should **ask the BCBA**
- RBTs do **not** make treatment changes

A.5 Describe behavior and environment in observable and measurable terms

- **Behavior** -> what a person does, not what they feel or intend
- **Environment** -> what is happening in the surroundings

Descriptions must be objective, measurable, and observable so others can confirm the behavior occurred

1. Measurable Behavior

A behavior is measurable when you can count it, time it, or record it in a reliable way.

	Example (Objective)	Non-Example (Subjective)
Behavior	"Hand-flapping occurred 3 times."	"He keeps getting out of his seat."
	"Tantrum lasted 2 minutes."	"She hit a lot today"
	"Latency to respond was 5 seconds."	"He rarely tantrumed"
Environment	"The teacher placed one math worksheet on the table in front of the learner"	"The classroom felt chaotic"
	"Three peers were talking above speaking volume within 3 feet of the learner"	"The work was too hard for him"
	"The RBT delivered the instruction, "clean up," once every 30 seconds."	"The situation was overwhelming

2. Observable Behavior

You can see or hear it, two people can watch and agree on whether it happened, and it avoids mentalistic terms (e.g., "angry," "stubborn," "trying to get attention")

	Example (Objective)	Non-Example (Subjective)
Behavior	"He hit the table with an open hand"	"He had a meltdown."
	"She cried with tears visible and loud vocalizations."	"She was defiant."
	"He walked away from the desk."	"He acted upset."
Environment	"The teacher placed three math worksheets on the table"	"The teacher gave him too many math worksheets"
	"A peer screamed in the hallway"	"The environment was too loud"
	"A vacuum cleaner turned on"	"They don't like vacuums"

3. Objective Descriptions

Objective descriptions focus only on what can be seen or heard, using clear observable and measurable terms without interpreting thoughts, feelings or intentions.

	Example (Objective)	Non-Example (Subjective)
Behavior	"He kicked the chair two times"	"He became aggressive"
	"She left her seat and walked to the corner of the room"	"She avoided the task"
	"She put her head down and did not respond for 30 seconds."	"She shut down"
Environment	"Music was playing in the classroom."	"The classroom was too noisy"
	"Two peers were seated 3 feet away from the learner"	"The peers were distracting"
	"The RBT instructed the learner to throw the trash away"	"The directions were confusing"

A.6 Calculate and summarize data in different ways (e.g., rate, mean duration, percentage)

RBTs may be asked to calculate simple summaries of data. These calculations help BCBAs review performance trends but RBTs do not make treatment decisions. The RBT's role is to **accurately calculate the numbers** when instructed.

1. **Rate**

   Use when you need to know how often a behavior occurs **per unit of time**

Formula	Example
$Rate = \frac{Number\ of\ responses}{Time\ period}$	Learner hits 12 times in 6 minutes. $12 \div 6 = 2\ hits\ per\ minute$

2. **Mean Duration**

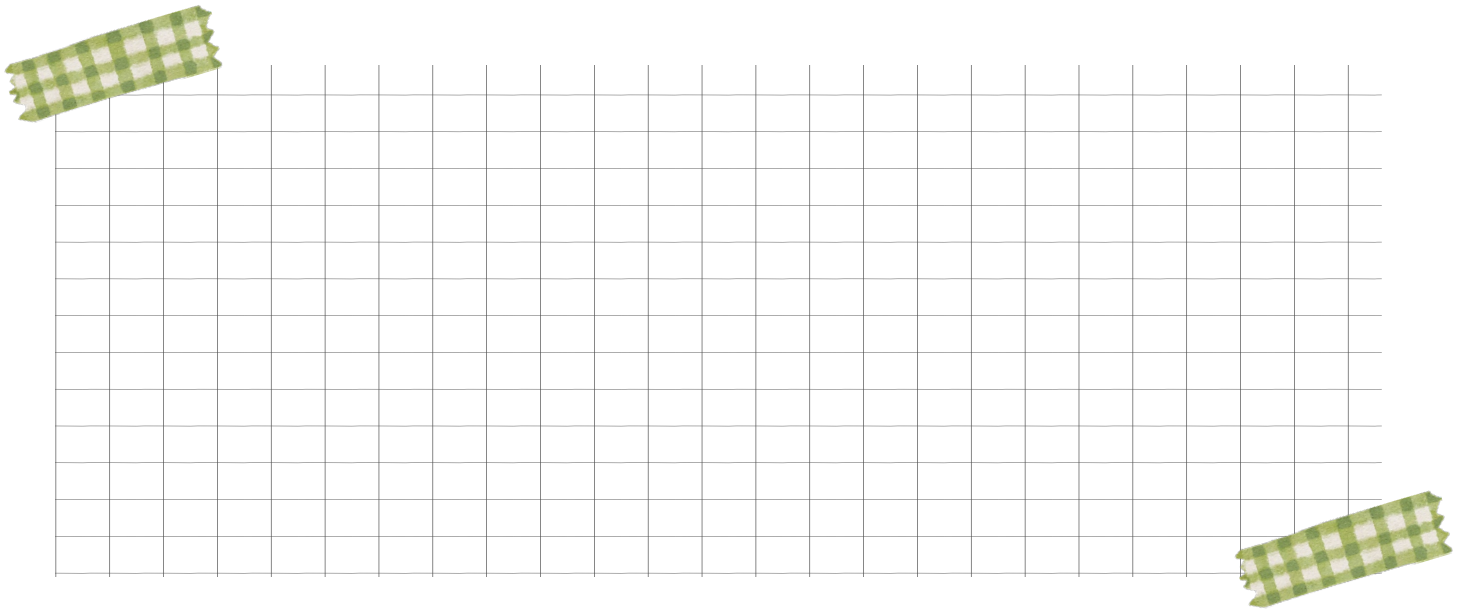
   Average amount of time a behavior lasts

Formula	Example
$Mean\ Duration = \frac{Total\ duration}{Number\ of\ episodes}$	Throughout the session learner engages in tantrums for 3 min, 5 min, and 2 min. $Total\ Duration = 3\ \text{min} + 5\ \text{min} + 2\ \text{min} = 10\ min$ $Mean\ Duration = 10 \div 3$ $Mean\ Duration = 3.33$

3. **Percentage**

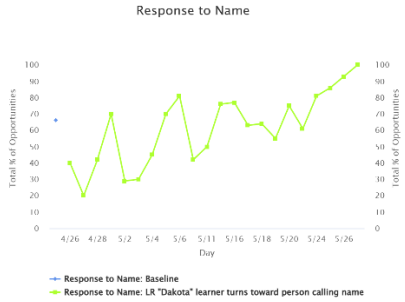
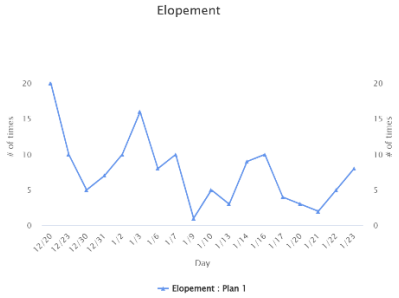
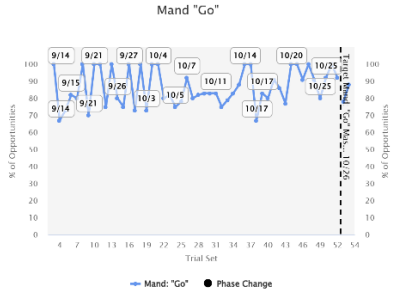
   Percentage is used when calculating correct responses, compliance, or occurrence out of total opportunities

Formula	Example
$Percentage = \left(\frac{Number\ correct}{Total\ opportunities}\right) \times 100$	A learner responds correctly out of 10 trials. $(8 \div 10) \times 100$ $(0.8) \times 100$ $= 80\%$



A.7 Identify trends in graphed data

RBTs should be able to look at a graph and tell whether the data are increasing, decreasing, or stable (no clear change.) RBTs **do not interpret** what the trend means or make treatment decisions, only **describe what the graph shows.**

Ascending (increasing) Trends	**Descending (decreasing) Trend**	**Stable (no change) Trend**
		
The data points move **upward over time.** *RBT Description:* "The data shows an increasing trend over the last five sessions."	The data points move **downward over time**. *RBT Description:* "There is a decreasing trend across sessions."	Data points stay **around the same value** over time. *RBT Description:* "The data appear stable with no clear trend."

A.8 Describe the risks associated with unreliable data collection and poor procedural fidelity.

Unreliable Data Collection	**Poor Procedural Fidelity**
Unreliable data occurs when data: • Is recorded inconsistently • Does not accurately reflect the learner's behavior • Is missing, estimated, or influenced by bias	Procedural fidelity means implementing the treatment plan exactly as written. Poor fidelity occurs when: • Not following steps correctly • Adding or removing procedures • Changing prompts, reinforcement, or expectations • Inconsistent delivery of instructions
Risks of Unreliable Data *Incorrect treatment decisions* • BCBAs rely on accurate data to know whether a plan is working • Bad data can lead to keeping ineffective procedures or stopping effective ones *Inability to measure programs* • If data is inaccurate or inconsistent, you cannot see true change over time *Ethical and legal concerns* • Inaccurate data violates BCBA standards for integrity and client welfare *Potential harm to the client* • Wrong decisions can increase problem behavior or reduce skill acquisition	**Risks of Poor Procedural Fidelity** *The intervention may not work* • If the RBT doesn't follow the plan we cannot know whether the plan is effective *Behavior may worsen* • Inconsistent reinforcement or prompting can accidentally strengthen problem behavior *Data becomes meaningless* • If you aren't running the problem correctly, the data collected does not reflect the intended treatment *Reduced safety or increased risk* • Incorrect implementation (especially for behavior reduction plans) can lead to dangerous situations

B. Behavior Assessment (8 exam questions)

B.1 Conduct preference assessments (e.g., multiple stimulus, paired stimulus, free operant)

Preference assessments help identify what items or activities a learner prefers, which may function as effective reinforcers. Different types of preference assessments vary in structure and the amount of information they provide.

Free Operant Preference Assessment – A method in which items are freely available, and the RBT observes what the learner engages with.

How It Works

1. Arrange an area with many activities and/or toys.
2. Allow the learner to explore **without prompts**
3. Record:
    a. What they interact with
    b. How long do they engage (duration) with each item
4. Items with the longest engagement are typically most preferred.

Paired Stimulus (Forced-Choice) Preference Assessment – A structured assessment where **two items** are presented at a time and the learner chooses **one**.

How It Works

1. Present **two items** at a time.
2. Say, "Pick one."
3. Record which item is chosen.
4. Rotate through **all possible pairs**.
5. Rank items based on the number of times they were selected.

Multiple Stimulus Preference Assessment – A structured assessment that presents **several items at once**, and the learner is asked to choose one item during each trial. The RBT records the sequence of selections, which helps generate a **preference hierarchy.**

Multiple Stimulus Without Replacement (MSWO) – presents an array of items creating an efficiently **ranked hierarchy** from the most to least preferred.

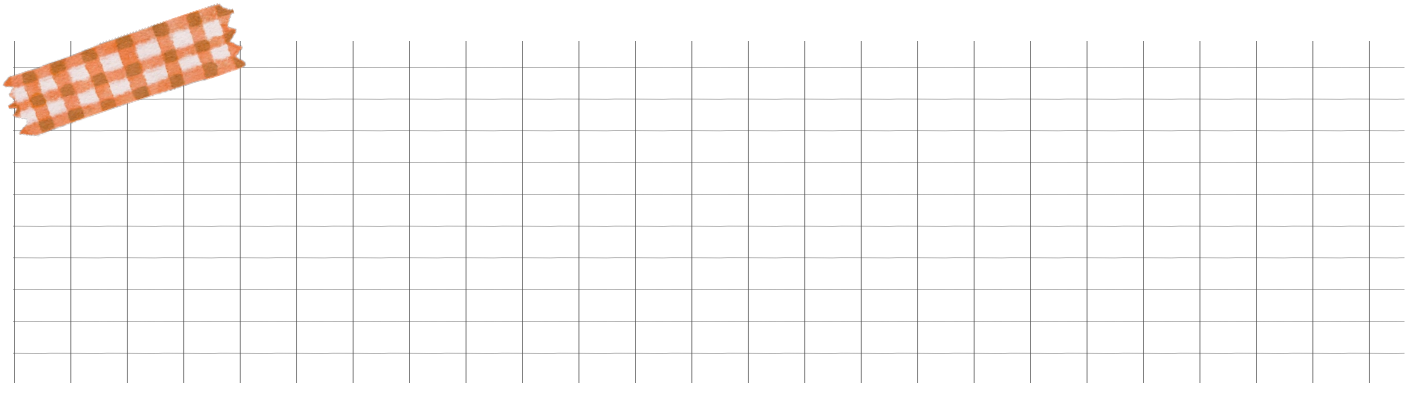
How It Works

1. Present an array of items
2. The learner picks **one**.
3. **Remove the chosen item**
4. Rearrange the remaining items.
5. Present the array again
6. Continue until all items are selected.

Multiple Stimulus With Replacement (MSW) – presents an array of items and helps determine **strength and consistency** of preferences.

How It Works

1. Present an array of items
2. The learner picks **one**.
3. **Put the chosen item back** into the array.
4. Rearrange and present again.



B.2 Participate in assessments of relevant skill strengths and deficits (e.g., curriculum-based, developmental, social skills)

RBTs often assist BCBAs by **supporting assessment activities**, collecting data, and providing observations that help identify a learner's strengths and areas of need. RBTs **do not administer formal assessments independently** unless specifically trained and delegated by the supervisor.

Curriculum Based Assessments	Developmental Assessments	Social Skills Assessments
Evaluate a learner's functional skills as they relate to a specific curriculum or program Examples: • ABLLS-R • VB-MAPP • AFLS	Evaluate skills across broad developmental domains Examples: • Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales • Developmental Milestones Checklist	Evaluate a learner's social strengths and deficits Examples: • Social skills checklists • Play-based assessments • Structured observations

What RBTs Can Do During Assessments	What RBTs Cannot Do
✓ Follow the BCBAs instructions ✓ Run assessment trails (when trained) ✓ Take data on performance ✓ Provide objective descriptions of skills observed ✓ Maintain procedural fidelity	× Interpret assessment results × Select or design assessments × Score formal assessments independently × Diagnose or classify skill deficits

B.3 Participate in components of functional assessment procedures (e.g., descriptive assessment, functional analysis)

RBTs assist BCBAs in the functional assessment process by **collecting data, implementing procedures safely, and providing objective observations.** RBTs **do not design, interpret, or modify** functional assessments. Their role is supportive and implementation based.

Descriptive Assessment	Functional Analysis
Include **observing behavior in the natural environmen**t and recording events that happen **before, during**, and **after** the behavior. They are **non-experimental**, meaning the RBT does not manipulate conditions. Common types: • ABC data (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence) • Frequency and duration tracking in natural settings • Observational notes	A systematic, experimental evaluation in which the BCBA manipulates antecedent and consequences to identify the function of a behavior. Common types: • Synthesized Functional Analysis • Standard (Iwata) Functional Analysis • Brief Functional Analysis
RBT's Role in Descriptive Assessment ✓ Collect ABC data ✓ Record data objectively and accurately ✓ Observe and document antecedents, behaviors, and consequences ✓ Note environmental variables (noises, people present, demands, time of day) ✓ Report patterns to the BCBA	**RBT's Role in Functional Analysis** ✓ Implementing procedures exactly as trained ✓ Delivering the programmed consequences ✓ Following safety protocols ✓ Collecting continuous and accurate data ✓ Remaining calm and consistent ✓ Never changing conditions or procedures independently

C. Behavior Acquisition (19 exam questions)

C.1 Implement positive and negative reinforcement procedures (e.g., immediately, contingently, according to schedules of reinforcement) along a continuum of dimensions (e.g., magnitude, intensity, variety)

Reinforcement is anything that makes a behavior more likely to occur in the future. RBTs must implement reinforcement exactly as written, ensuring it is:

Immediate – within seconds of the behavior • Prevents reinforcing the wrong behavior • Helps the learner link behavior -> consequence	**Contingent** – reinforcement only occurs if the target behavior happens • Strengthens the correct behavior • If **not** contingent, you could accidentally reinforce the wrong behavior	**As Scheduled** – reinforcement delivered according to the correct **schedule of reinforcement**. See below for more details.

Positive Reinforcement	Negative Reinforcement
Occurs when a **stimulus is added** immediately after a behavior, resulting in an **increase in that behavior** in the future. Think: behavior -> **something added** -> behavior increases *Examples* • Giving praise after correct responding • Providing access to a preferred toy after task completion • Delivering tokens after following instructions • Allowing extra play time for appropriate behavior	Occurs when a **stimulus is removed** immediately after a behavior, resulting in an **increase in that behavior** in the future. Think: behavior -> **something is removed** -> behavior increases Negative reinforcement is **not punishment** *Examples* • Removing a task after the learner appropriately requests a break • Turning off loud music when the learner completes a task • Ending a demand when the learner follows instructions

Continuum of Reinforcement Dimensions

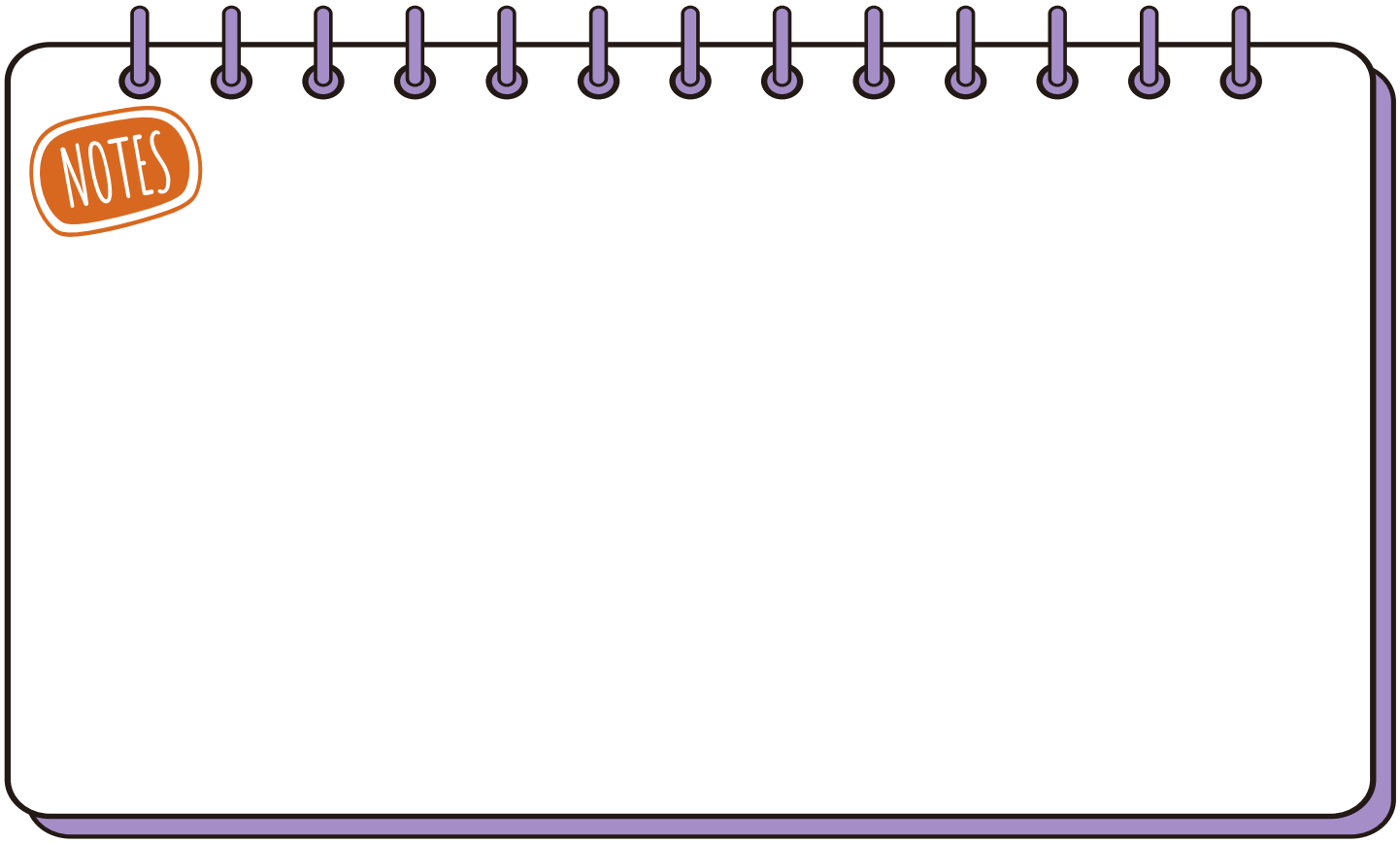
Magnitude – how big, how much, or how long a reinforcer is delivered (*the amount of the reinforcer)* • Larger magnitude = often more motivating • Smaller magnitude = useful for frequent reinforcement • Helps scale reinforcement to match effort or difficulty	**Intensity** – refers to the **strength, enthusiasm**, or **energy** of the reinforcer, especially social reinforcers (*how strong is the delivery of the reinforcer*) • Some learners respond best to high-intensity reinforcement (big praise) • Others prefer low-intensity reinforcement (gentle, calm praise) • Intensity can help tailor reinforcement to the learner's preferences	**Variety** – refers to **having multiple types** of reinforcers available and **switching them up** to maintain motivation (*how many different reinforcers are available?)* • Prevents satiation (getting board for a reinforcer) • Helps maintain motivation during longer sessions • Supports individual preferences differences • Keeps teaching engaging and fun

Schedules of Reinforcement

Continuous reinforcement (CRF) – reinforce every instance of the behavior. Used for teaching new skills. *(FR1 is the same as CRF)*	**Intermittent reinforcement (INT)** – reinforce some instances. Builds maintenance and resistance to extinction.

BCBAs use the following terms to describe how to deliver specific schedules of reinforcement.

	Ratio The reinforcement is delivered based on the **number of correct responses** *Ratio = responses*	**Interval** The reinforcement is delivered for the **first response after a certain amount of time** has passed. *Interval = time*
Fixed The requirement is **constant** and does not change *Fixed = predictable*	Fixed Ratio (FR) Reinforcement is delivered **after a fixed (set) number of responses**. Ex: FR3 = Reinforcement after every 3 correct responses	Fixed Interval (FI) Reinforcement is delivered for the **first response** after a **fixed amount of time** has passed Ex: FI2 min = after 2 minutes, the correct response is reinforced.
Variable The requirement changes round on average *Variable = unpredictable*	Variable Ratio (VR) Reinforcement is delivered **after a variable number of responses**, based on an **average**. Ex: VR5 = on average, every 5 responses (might be 3, 7, 4, etc,)	Variable Interval (VI) Reinforcement is delivered for the **first response** after a **variable amount of time** has passed. Ex. FI 2 min = after 2 minutes, the first correct response is reinforced



C.2 Implement procedures to establish and use conditioned reinforcers

Conditioned reinforcers are learned reinforcers that gain their value by being **paired with existing reinforcement**. The RBT plays a major role in establishing these reinforcers and ensuring they remain effective. This includes both pairing **stimuli** (tokens, praise, sounds) and pairing **yourself** with reinforcement.

A **conditioned reinforcer** is a stimulus that starts neutral but becomes reinforcing because it is repeatedly paired with something the learner already enjoys.
Examples: tokens, stickers, praise, points, high fives, checkmarks, clicker sound, etc.

Pairing Conditioned Reinforcers

Pairing is the process of repeatedly presenting a neutral stimulus immediately before or with a preferred stimulus, so the neutral stimulus gains reinforcement value

How RBTs Establish Conditioned Reinforcers

- Give the neutral stimulus (token, praise, click)
- Immediately follow with a backup reinforcer (high-preference item)
- Repeat many times
- Ensure the learner consistently experiences the neutral stimulus -> reinforcement

Pairing Yourself as a Conditioned Reinforcer

Pairing yourself means making your presence, your voice, and your interactions predict access to good things, so the learner wants to approach and engage with you

How RBTs Pair with Learners

- Acknowledge Vocalizations
- Imitation of Play
- Deliver behavior specific praise
- Initiating by offering preferred items
- Being creative within play

Once Conditioned Reinforcers have been created:

Use Conditioned Reinforcers

- Tokens, praise, or the RBTs presence can reinforce behavior
- Reinforcers must be delivered immediately and contingently
- RBTs must maintain pairing (don't overuse demands or correction)
- RBTs should rotate reinforcers to avoid satiation

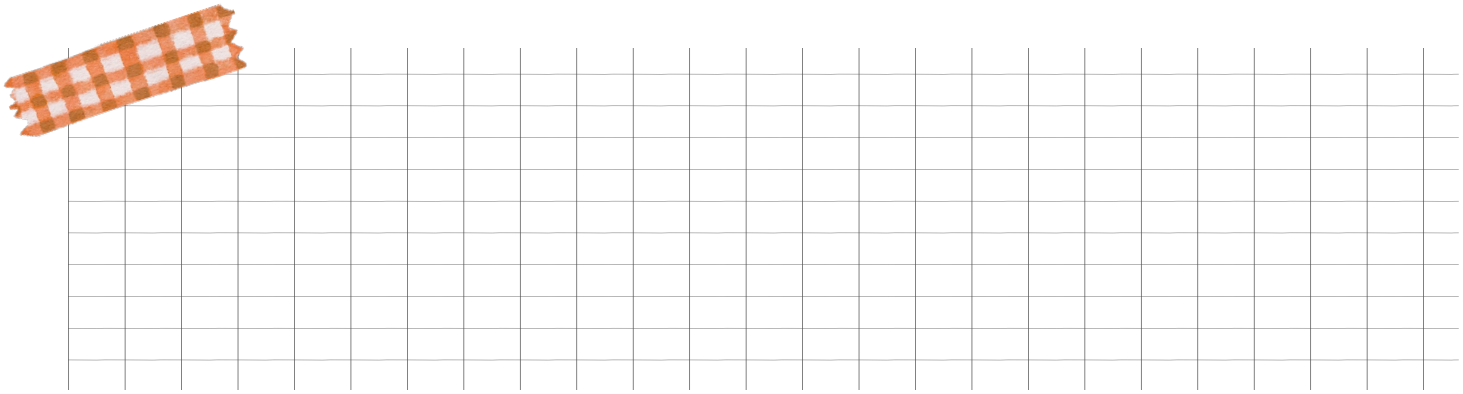
Avoiding Unpairing

Condition reinforcers can lose value if:

- Delivered late
- Delivered without backup reinforcement
- Paired with negative experiences (e.g., constant demands, removal of preferred items)
- Used inconsistently

The RBT must maintain reinforcement strength by:

- Continually pairing
- Making sessions fun
- Keeping reinforcement contingent and immediate



C.3 Implement discrete-trial teaching procedures

Discrete-trial Teaching (DTT) is a structed teaching method that breaks skills into small, clear learning opportunities. Each trial has a **beginning, middle, and end,** allowing the learner many chances to practice and receive reinforcement.

Why DTT Works	
• Provides many learning opportunities • Ensures predictable teaching structure • Helps learners acquire new skills efficiently	• Promotes repetition and mastery • Allows for easy measurement of progress

Components of a Discrete Trail (4 parts)	

1 **Antecedent (SD or Instruction)** – a clear direction or cue that tells the leaner what to do
• Must be simple, consistent, and delivered the same way each time
• *Examples*: "Touch red," "Do this." Holding up a picture and saying, "What is it?"
• Massed vs Random Trials
  ○ **Massed**: teaching the same target many times in a row
  ○ **Randomized**: mixing mastered skills with new skills
(The BCBA will determine which to use)
	2 **Prompt (if needed) –** helps the learner respond correctly
	• Only used if the learner needs it
	• Prompts must follow the prompt hierarchy selected by the BCBA
	• *Examples*: gestural, verbal, physical, model
	See C.7 for more details on prompts and prompting

3 **Leaner Response** – whatever the learner does after the SD
• May be correct, incorrect, or no response
• The RBT must record responses **accurately and objectively**
	4 **Consequence** – delivered immediately after the learner's response
	• If the response is correct
	  ○ Provide the programmed reinforcer
	  ○ Use enthusiastic social reinforcement unless otherwise specified
	  ○ Reinforce according to the correct schedule
	• If the response is incorrect:
	  ○ Follow the error-correction procedure selected by the BCBA
	See below for more details of error correction

Prompt and Move On	Short Error Correction (ECT)	Long Error Correction (ECTER)
1. Immediately provide the correct answer. 2. Transition smoothly to the next trial or question.	1. Immediately provide the correct answer. 2. Re-present the original instruction or question. 3. Allow the learner to respond again	1. Immediately provide the correct answer. 2. Re-present the original instruction or question with errorless prompt. 3. Present 2–3 known or mastered targets 4. Re-present the original instruction or question. 5. Allow the learner to respond again.

C.4 Implement naturalistic teaching procedures (e.g., incidental teaching, natural environment training)

Naturalistic teaching focuses on teaching skills during **everyday routines and play**, using the learner's **interests and motivation** to guide learning opportunities. Unlike DTT, naturalistic procedures are **child-led, flexible, and based on real-life contexts**.

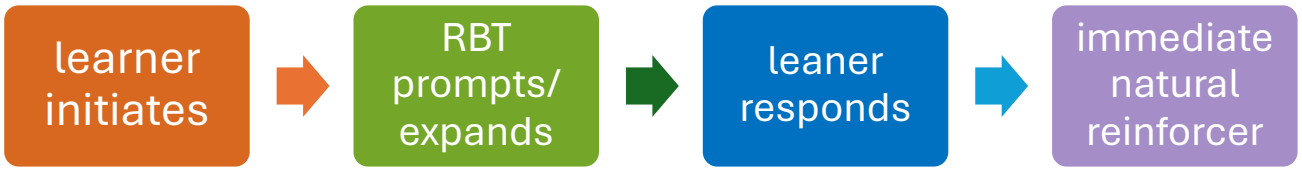
Natural Environment Teaching (NET) – occurs in the **learner's natural environment** (playroom, classroom, community) and teaches skills within the learner's **natural routines and play**, using naturally occurring reinforcement and the learner's motivation. RBTs use these procedures to teach communication, play, social, and functional skills in ways that feel natural to the child. NET can include BOTH:

- **Naturally occurring opportunities** (captured in the moment)
- **Contrived opportunities** (the RBT intentionally arranges/engineers the situation to create a chance to practice a skill)

Key Features of NET	Common NET Example
• **Child-led** (follow the learner's motivation) • Uses **natural reinforcers** • Reinforcement is **directly related** to the skill • Flexible timing and teaching opportunities • Targets **functional** and **generalized** skills	Teaching manding (requesting): 1. RBT has placed bubbles on a shelf out of reach of child. 2. Child reaches for bubbles 3. RBT pauses and prompts the mand: "Say 'bubbles,'" 4. Child says "bubbles 5. RBT immediately gives the child the bubbles (**natural reinforcer**)

Incidental Teaching is a naturalistic teaching procedure where the RBT **captures a naturally occurring opportunity** (the learner shows interest/initiates) and then **prompts/expands** the target response and **reinforces with the requested item/activity**.

- The opportunity is incidental – it "comes up" in the moment because the learner is interested.
- It **does not require** the RBT to pre-arrange materials (though you can still be prepared with good items available)
- Typical Flow:



What Naturalistic Teaching Is Not
• It is not free play with no goals • It is not random – it is intentional and strategic • It is not unrelated to the treatment plan • It is not the same as DTT (which is adult-led and structured)

C.5 Implement task analyzed chaining procedures (e.g., forward, backward, total task)

Chaining procedures are used to teach **complex skills** that consist of **multiple steps completed in a specific order**. Before chaining can occur, the skill must be broken down into a task analysis.
A task analysis is a step by step breakdown of a complex skill into **small, teachable tasks**.

Chaining is the process of teaching the steps of a task analysis in a systematic order using reinforcement.

Forward Chaining	Backward Chaining	Total Task Chaining
The learner is taught to complete the **first step** of the task independently. The RBT completes the remaining steps. **How It Works** • Step 1 -> learner completes -> reinforced • RBT completes remaining steps • Once Step 1 is mastered, learner completes Steps 1 and 2 • Continue until the entire chain is completed independently **When To Use** • When the learner can easily access the first step • When early steps are simple or motivating	The RBT completes all steps **except the last step**. The learner completes the **final step.** **How It Works** • RBT completes Steps 1-6 • Learner completes step 7 – reinforced • Once mastered, learner completes steps 6 and 7 • Continue backwards until the full chain is completed **When to Use** • When the **natural reinforcement** occurs at the end • When the learner benefits from immediate success • Often used for self-care skills	The learner attempts **all steps** of the task during every teaching opportunity. The RBT provides **prompts as needed** for any step **How It Works** • Learner completes entire task analysis • RBT prompts steps the learner cannot yet do • Reinforcement occurs after task completion • Prompts are faded over time **When To Use** • When the learner can already perform some steps • When the task is short • When continuous practice of the whole task is beneficial

C.6 Implement discrimination training

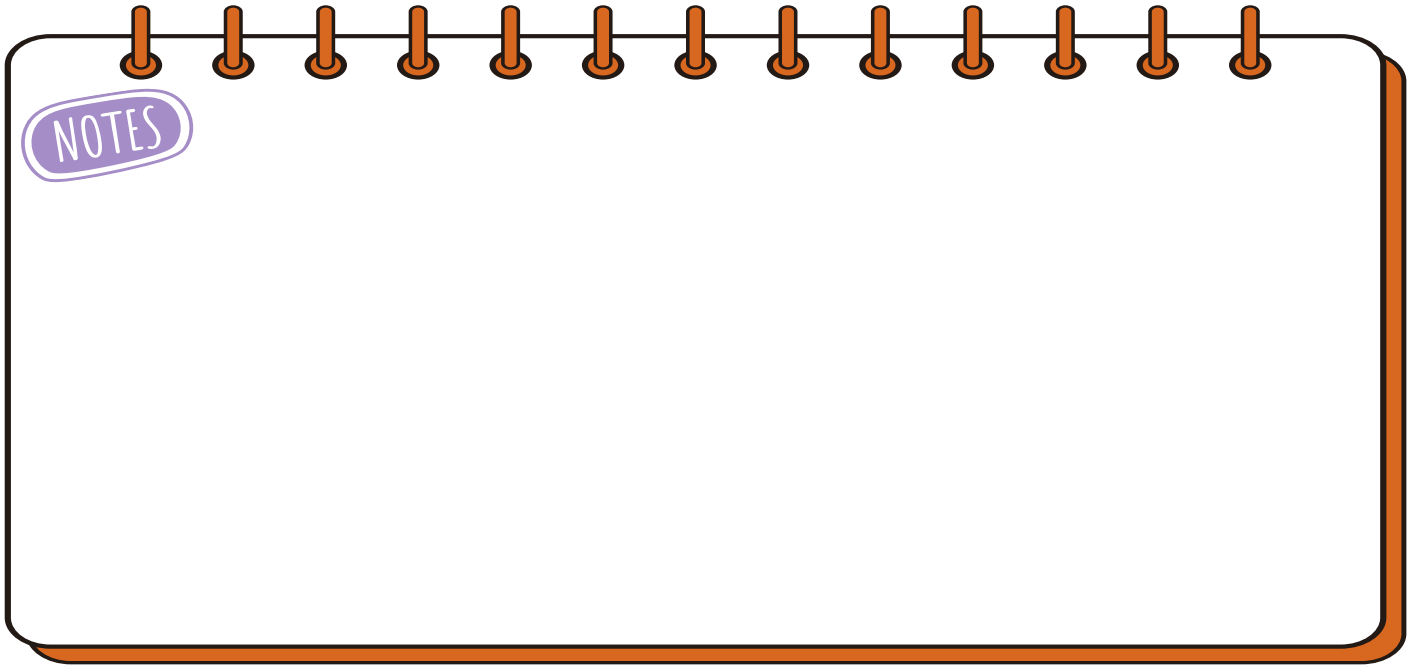
Discrimination training teaches a learner to **respond differently to different stimuli**. Specifically, the learner needs to:

- Respond to the **correct stimulus** (SD)
- Not respond (or respond differently) to other stimuli (SΔ)

Discrimination training is a teaching procedure in which **reinforcement is provided for responses to one stimulus (SD)** and **withheld for responses to other stimuli (SΔ).** Over time, the learner learns to **tell the difference** between stimuli and respond correctly.

Key Components of Discrimination Training		
SD (Discriminative Stimulus) – The stimulus that signals **reinforcement is available** if the learner responds correctly • RBT says, "Touch red," while showing a red card • Touching red -> reinforced	**SΔ (Delta Stimulus)** – the stimulus that signals **reinforcement is not available** for that response • Blue card shown when the instruction is "Touch red" • Touching blue -> not reinforced	**Differential Reinforcement** – this difference is what teaches the discrimination • Correct response -> reinforced • Incorrect response -> not reinforced (follow error-correction procedure) *See D.3 for more info on differential reinforcement*

Examples of Discrimination Training		
Visual Discrimination	**Auditory Discrimination**	**Object Discrimination**
• Identify colors, letters, shapes, pictures • "Touch the dog" when dog and cat pictures are presented	• Responding to name • Following different verbal instructions ("clap" vs. "stomp")	• Selecting the correct item from an array • Choosing fork vs. spoon when asked



C.7 Implement procedures using stimulus and response prompts that include appropriate fading procedures (e.g., errorless, least-to-most, stimulus fading, time delay)

Prompting is used to **increase correct responding** during skill acquisition. Fading is the systematic removal of prompts so the learner responds **independently**. It is important to use prompting procedures to gradually **fade prompts** (by removing or reducing assistance) to prevent **prompt dependence**.

A **prompt** is an added stimulus or assistance that helps the learner produce the correct response. Prompts should increase success, prevent repeated errors, and be faded as quickly as possible.

Types of Prompts

Stimulus Prompt – change the **stimulus itself** to make the correct response more obvious

- Highlighting or enlarging the correct item
- Placing the correct item closer
- Using brighter colors or bold text
- Underlining the correct answer

Response Prompts – directly help the learner **perform the response**

- Verbal prompt ("Say 'cat'")
- Gestural prompt (pointing)
- Model prompt (demonstrating the response)
- Physical prompt (hand-over-hand)

Common Prompting & Fading Procedures

Errorless Learning – a teaching approach to **prevent errors** by providing prompts immediately

How it works

- Strong prompt is giving right after the SD
- Learner responds correctly
- Prompts are gradually faded

Used to:

- Reduces opportunities for errors
- Builds confidence
- Common for early learners or new skills

Time Delay – increasing the **time between the SD and the prompt** to encourage independent responding

- Constant time delay (same delay each trial)
- Progressive time delay (delay gradually increases)
- Examples
  - SD -> independent prompt
  - SD -> 2 second delay -> prompt
  - SD -> 5 second delay -> prompt

Least-to-Most Prompting – start with the **least intrusive** prompt and increase assistance only if needed

Prompt Hierarchy

Independent -> verbal -> gestural -> model -> physical

Used to:

- Encourages independence
- Allows the learner a chance to respond without help

Most-to-Least Prompting – Begin with the **most intrusive** prompt to ensure a correct response, then **systematically fade** to less intrusive prompts

Prompt Hierarchy

Physical -> model -> gestural -> verbal -> independent

Used to:

- When teaching a new skill
- When errors are likely or problematic
- When success is important early on

Stimulus Fading – gradually changing the **stimulus prompt** so the natural stimulus controls the response

- Gradually making highlighted text lighter
- Shrinking picture size
- Removing visual cues over time

C.8 Implement generalization procedures (e.g., conduct intervention procedures across settings, people, and stimuli)

Generalization occurs when a learner uses a learned skill in new situations, without needing to be directly taught again.

Generalization is the transfer of a learned behavior to new **settings**, new **people**, new **stimuli or materials**. A skill is not considered fully learned until it **generalizes beyond the original teaching conditions**.

As an RBT you may be instructed to:

- Teach and practice skills in multiple environments
- Rotate instructors and caregivers
- Vary materials, examples, and instructions
- Embed skills into natural routines
- Use natural reinforcement
- Fade prompts systematically
- Continue data collection across settings

Types of Generalization RBTs Help Implement		
Across Settings	**Across People**	**Across Stimuli**
The learner performs the skill in different locations • Requesting items in the classroom, at home, and in the community • Following instructions in both the therapy room and the playground	The learner performs the skill with different individuals • Responding to parents, teachers, peers, and other RBTs • Using communication skills with unfamiliar adults	The learner performs the skill with different materials, cues, or examples • Identifying different types of cups, dogs, or chairs • Following instructions given in different tones or wording

C.9 Distinguish between maintenance and acquisition procedures

Behavior analytic programs include procedures for both **teaching new skills** and **maintaining skills that have already been learned.** RBTs must understand the difference so they can implement programs as written and support long-term skill use.

Acquisition Procedures	Maintenance Procedures
Used to **teach new skills** that the learner does **not yet demonstrate independently.**	Used to **keep skills strong** over time **after the skill has already been learned.**
Key Features • High levels of prompting • Frequent reinforcement (often continuous) • Structured teaching (e.g., DTT, errorless learning) • Focus on accuracy and skill development	**Key Features** • Reduced prompting • Thinner reinforcement schedules • Practice across time, settings, people, and materials • Focus on independence and retention of skills
Examples • Teaching a learner to label colors for the first time • Teaching a new mand using prompts • Teaching a new self-care routine step	**Examples** • Practicing mastered sight words weekly • Having the learner continue using known mands during play • Reviewing previously mastered self-help skills

C.10 Implement shaping procedures

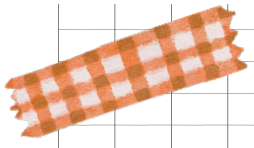
Shaping is used to teach new behaviors by reinforcing small, gradual improvements toward a target behavior. Rather than waiting for the final behavior to occur, the RBT reinforcers successive approximations – responses that are closer and closer to the goal.

Shaping is a procedure in which **reinforcement is delivered for successive approximations** of a target behavior until the final behavior is achieved. In shaping: early, imperfect responses are reinforced. As the learner improves, reinforcement is **withheld for earlier forms** and only responses closer to the goal are reinforced.

Key Components of Shaping	
Target Behavior • The final behavior the learner is expected to perform • Clearly defined and observable • *Example*: Saying "water" to request a drink	**Differential Reinforcement** • Reinforce better approximations • Do not reinforce earlier approximations once a higher level is expected • This is what drives improvement *See C.6 for further details on differential reinforcement*

Successive Approximations
• Small steps that move the learner closer to the target behavior
• Each step must be:
  ○ Observable
  ○ Achievable
  ○ Clearly defined
Example: any vocal sound -> "wa" -> "wuh" -> "water"	

Examples of Shaping		
Communication	**Motor Behavior**	**Academic**
Target: saying "help" Reinforce: vocalizations -> "he" -> "help"	Target: raising hand Reinforce: lifting arm slightly -> arm halfway -> arm fully raised	Target: writing name Reinforce: Frist letter -> partial name -> full name



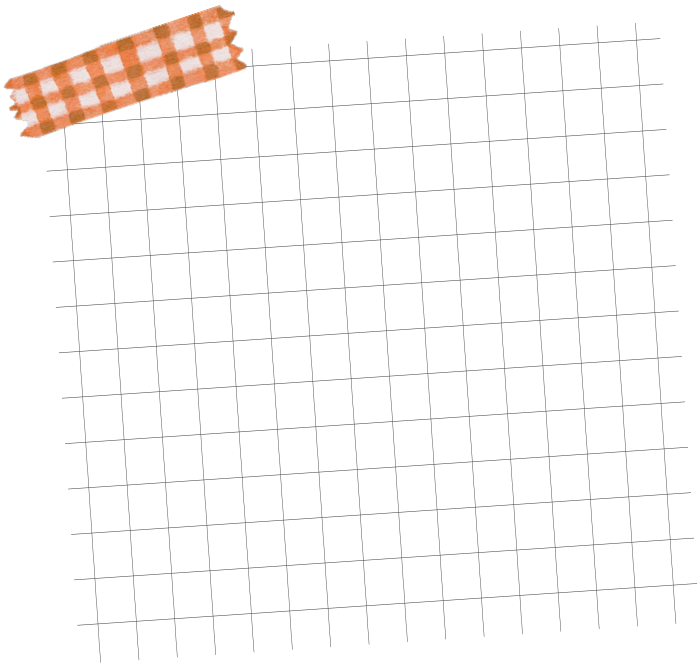
C.11 Implement token economies

A token economy is a **conditioned reinforcement system** in which learners earn **tokens** for target behaviors and later **exchange** those tokens for backup reinforcers.

A **token economy** is a reinforcement system in which tokens (conditioned reinforcers) are delivered for target behaviors. Tokens are later **exchanged for backup reinforcers** (e.g., toys, activities, snacks.) Tokens have value because they have been paired with backup reinforcers *(see C.2 for more details on pairing)*

Core Components of Token Economy		
Target Behaviors – clearly defined behaviors that earn tokens *Examples: task completion, following instructions, using communication skills*	**Tokens** – conditioned reinforcers (e.g., stars, points, stickers, chips) Must be easy to deliver, clearly visible, and consistent	**Backup Reinforcers** – items or activities the learner can exchange tokens for *Examples: preferred toys, breaks, snacks, screen time*
Exchange Rate – How many tokens are required to earn a backup reinforcer Set by the BCBA (e.g., 5 tokens = 3 mins tablet time)	**Exchange Opportunities** – When the learner can trade tokens for reinforcers Can be after earning all tokens, at set times, at the end of a session	

How RBTs Implement Token Economies	Why are Token Economies Are Useful
1. Deliver tokens immediately after the target behavior 2. Deliver tokens contingently (only when the behavior occurs) 3. Pair token deliver with specific praise 4. Keep token delivery consistent 5. Allow exchange exactly as schedules 6. Continue pairing tokens with backup reinforcers	• Reduce reliance on constant tangible reinforcement • Support motivation across longer tasks • Increase independence • Allow reinforcement to be delivered efficiently • Help learners tolerate delayed reinforcement



Common Errors to Avoid

- Change the exchange rate
- Add or remove backup reinforcers
- Take away earned tokens unless explicitly written
- Give tokens late
- Give tokens for non-target behaviors
- Use tokens as punishment

D. Behavior Reduction (14 exam questions)

D.1 Identify common functions of behavior

The function of behavior refers to **why a behavior occurs**. All behavior serves a purpose, and identifying the function helps guide effective intervention. A behavior's function is identified by examining **patterns of consequences** and whether those consequences **increase or maintain** the behavior.

Important: Just because something happens after a behavior does **not** mean it is the function. A consequence is only the function **if it consistently strengthens the behavior**.
See B.3 for more information on functional assessments.

What "Function" really means?

A behavior's function answers this question: **What does the learner reliably get or avoid that makes the behavior more likely to happen again?**

To identify function, we use functional assessments to look at:

- What **consistently follows** the behavior
- Whether the behavior **increases, persists, or strengthens** over time
- What happens **across situations,** not just once

The Four Common Functions of Behavior	
Attention – the behavior is maintained because **social attention functions as reinforcement** for that behavior • Behavior occurs **more often when attention is limited** • Behavior **decreases** when attention is provided for replacement behaviors • Behavior **increases** when attention follows it consistently Not all attention is reinforcing. Some learners find **verbal attention, eye contact**, or **physical proximity** reinforcing; others do not.	**Escape (or Avoidance)** – the behavior is maintained because it **removes, delays, or reduces an aversive demand or situation** • Behavior reliably results in **task removal, breaks, or delays** • Behavior occurs **most often during demands** • Behavior decreases when demands are modified or skills are taught The function is escape only **if the removal of the demand strengthens the behavior** over time
Access to Tangibles – the behavior is maintained because it **produces access to a specific item or activity** • Behavior occurs when preferred items are unavailable • Behavior decreases when appropriate requesting is reinforced • The **same item or activity** reliably follows the behavior	**Automatic (Sensory)** – the behavior is maintained by **internal reinforcement**, independent of other people • Behavior occurs **across settings and situations** • Behavior occurs **when alone** • Behavior continues **even when others do not respond** Automatic reinforcement is identified when **external consequences do not reliably change the behavior**

D.2 Implement antecedent interventions (e.g., NCR, high-probability request sequences, demand fading)

Antecedent interventions change what happens **before** behavior to reduce problem behavior, promote appropriate behavior, and create a supportive, predictable environment. Unlike consequence-based strategies that react after behavior, antecedent interventions **prevent problems** by modifying conditions, cues, or expectations to influence the likelihood of behavior.

Antecedent Interventions Work By:		
Reducing motivation for problem behavior	Increasing readiness to respond appropriately	Making expectations clearer and more manageable

Noncontingent reinforcement (NCR) –reinforcement is given at set times, no matter what the learner is doing. *(reinforcement is **NOT** contingent on behavior)*

- Reduces the learner's motivation to engage in problem behavior to receive reinforcement
- Breaks the response-reinforcement relationship maintaining problem behavior
- NCR does not teach a new skill by itself, it reduces problem behavior by altering motivation

Important Clarification

- NCR is not "giving in" to behavior
- Reinforcement is delivered **before** problem behavior occurs, not after
- Reinforcement must still be **appropriate** and planned

Example: The learner yells to get attention. The RBT gives short, regular attention every 2 minutes. Since attention is easy to get, yelling doesn't work as well and happens less often.

High Probability (High-P) Request Sequences –involves presenting several easy requests the learner is very likely to follow before presenting a more difficult (low-probability) request.

- Builds **behavioral momentum**
- Increases compliance with more difficult demands
- Reduces escape-maintained problem behavior

Important Clarification

- High-p requests must be known, easy, and reinforced
- Requests are delivered rapidly
- Reinforcement occurs after compliance

Examples: "Clap your hands" -> "touch your nose" -> "give me five" -> "Sit at the table"

Demand Fading – gradually increasing task demands over time to build tolerance and success

- Prevents overwhelming the learner
- Reduces escape-maintained problem behavior
- Builds skills and persistence gradually

Important Clarification

- Start with minimal demands
- Increase difficulty, duration, or number of demands slowly
- Reinforce success at each level

Ways to alter task demand: task length, task difficulty, number of steps, time on task

Example

- *Start with 1 math problem -> reinforcement*
- *Increase to 3 problems -> reinforce*
- *Gradually work up to a full worksheet*

Predictability & Clarity of Expectations – these strategies reduce problem behavior by making expectations clear and predictable

Visual Schedules – clarify what is happening now and next

First-Then Statements – clarify task and reinforcement relationships

Review of Rules or Expectations – reminds the leaner what behavior is expected

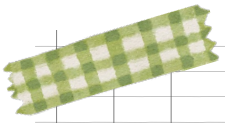
D.3 Implement differential reinforcement procedures (e.g., DRO, DRA, DRI, DRL, FCT)

Differential reinforcement reduces problem behavior by shifting reinforcement to **alternative, incompatible,** or **appropriate behaviors**, or to **lower rates of behavior**. In this approach, some behaviors are reinforced while other behaviors are **not**.

Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior (DRO)	Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behavior (DRA)
Reinforcement is **delivered if the target problem behavior does *not* occur** during a specified time interval • Breaks the reinforcement history of the problem behavior • Encourages periods of appropriate behavior • DRO does **not teach a replacement skill** by itself	Reinforcement is **delivered for a specific, appropriate alternative behavior** that serves the same function as the problem behavior. • The learner gets the same outcome in a more appropriate way
Example – if the learner does not hit for 5 minutes -> reinforcement is delivered	*Example – reinforce requesting a break instead of escaping through tantrums*
Differential Reinforcement of incompatible Behavior (DRI)	**Differential Reinforcement of Low Rates (DRL)**
Reinforcement is **delivered for a behavior that is physically incompatible** with the problem behavior • Makes the problem behavior impossible while the alternative is occurring	Reinforcement is **delivered when the behavior occurs at a reduced rate**, not eliminated. • Appropriate when the behavior is acceptable sometimes, but occurs too often
Example – reinforce sitting in a chair to reduce elopement	*Example – reinforce raising a hand no more than 3 times in 10 minutes*
Functional Communication Training (FCT)	
FCT is a function-based DRA that **teaches a communication response** to replace problem behavior • directly replaces problem behavior with communication, highly effective across functions • Using a device to request a break instead of eloping • FCT always requires knowing the function of the behavior *Examples – Saying "help" instead of engaging in aggression*	

Comparison of Differential Reinforcement Types

Procedure	Reinforces	Teaches a Skill ?	Eliminates Behavior
DRO	Absence of behavior	✗	✓
DRA	Alternative behavior	✓	✓
DRI	Incompatible behavior	✓	✓
DRL	Lower rates of behavior	✗	✗
FCT	Communication response	✓	✓



D.4 Implement extinction procedures

Extinction is a behavior-reduction procedure in which a **previously reinforced behavior no longer produces reinforcement,** resulting in a **decrease in that behavior over time.**

Extinction works by breaking the **response – reinforcer** relationship that has historically maintained the behavior.

- Extinction is not ignoring behavior by default
- Extinction is function based – to implement extinction correctly, the function of the behavior must be known. *(see D.1 for more details on functions of behavior)*
- If reinforcement is still occurring – even occasionally – extinction is not happening

Types of Extinction	
Attention Extinction – withhold attention that previously reinforced the behavior *Example – if yelling was maintained by attention, staff no longer respond to yelling with attention*	**Tangible Extinction** – access to the item or activity is not provided following the behavior *Example – if crying previously resulted in an ipad, the ipad is not delivered following crying*
Escape Extinction – the learner is not allowed to escape or avoid the demand *Example – if tantrums previously resulted in task removal, the task remains in place.* Escape extinction should only be implemented with BCBA guidance due to safety concerns.	**Automatic Extinction** – blocking or reducing access to the sensory reinforcement maintaining the behavior *Example – covering surfaces to reduce tactile stimulation*

Common Effects of Extinction		
Extinction Burst – temporary increase in frequency, intensity, duration, and variability of behavior	**Spontaneous Recovery** – reappearance of the behavior after a period of reduction	**Emotional or Aggressive Responding** – escalation, or new behaviors may occur

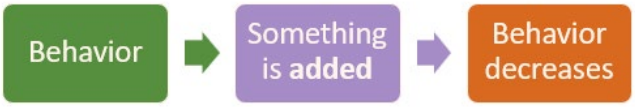
Consistency is crucial. Extinction is highly sensitive to inconsistency. If reinforcement occurs occasionally, accidentally, by different staff, in different settings… the behavior may become more persistent (intermittent reinforcement effect)

Extinction should never be used alone. Extinction is most effective when combined with differential reinforcement, antecedent interventions, and skill building. We reduce behavior best by teaching what to do instead, not just by removing reinforcement.

D.5 Implement positive and negative punishment procedures (e.g., time-out)

Punishment procedures are used to **decrease the future likelihood** of a behavior by either adding or removing a stimulus following the behavior. Punishment is defined by its effect on behavior (decrease), not by intent or how it feels.

Punishment procedures are **highly regulated**, **ethically sensitive**, and are used only when written into a BCBA-designed behavior plan.

Positive Punishment	Negative Punishment
Occurs when a stimulus is added after a behavior and the behavior decreases in the future	Occurs when a stimulus is removed after a behavior and the behavior decreases in the future.
	
Examples • Adding a verbal reprimand that reduces behavior • Presenting an aversive sound following a behavior and reduces that behavior • Assigning additional effort tasks that reduces behavior *Many "added" consequences do not function as punishment and may actually reinforce behavior (positive reinforcement)*	Examples • Removal of access to a preferred item • Loss of tokens or points (response cost) • Time out from reinforcement

Time Out is a negative reinforcement procedure in which access to reinforcement is temporarily removed following problem behavior.

For time-out to function as punishment:

- The learner must have access to reinforcement before time out
- Time out environment must be less reinforcing than the current environment

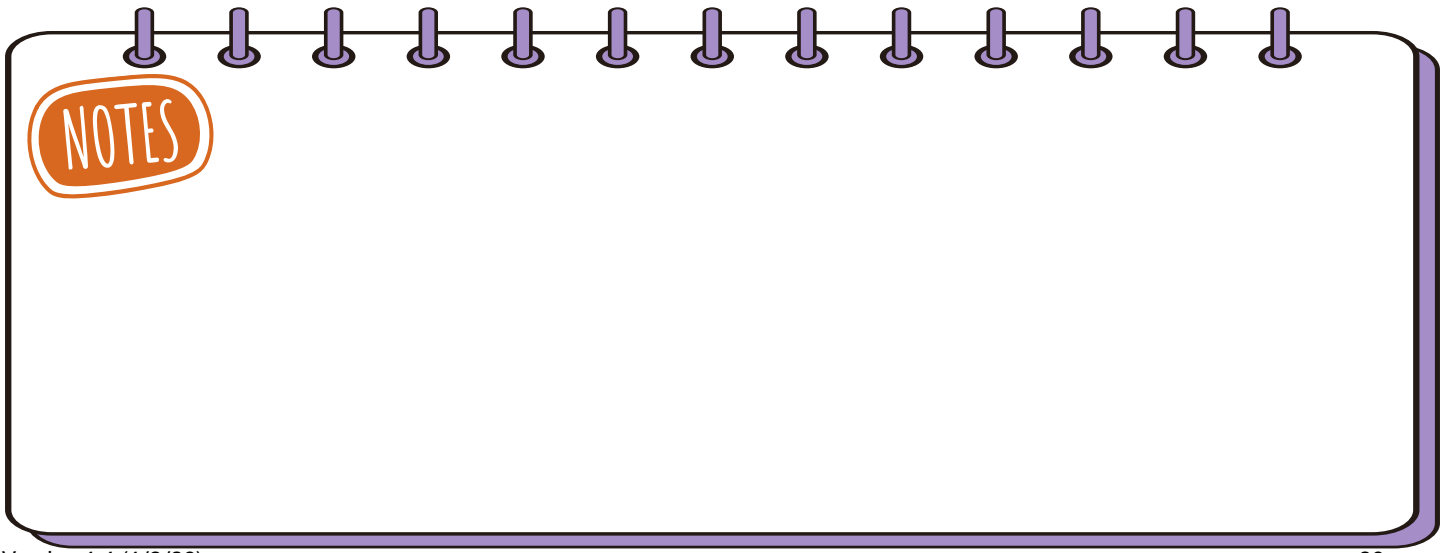
Punishment procedures do not teach replacement skills, can increase emotional responding, and must be paired with skill acquisition, differential reinforcement, and antecedent supports.

D.6 Describe secondary effects of extinction (e.g., extinction burst, response variation, resurgence, emotional responding) and punishment (e.g., emotional response, escape, and avoidance.)

Secondary effects are not just "side notes" – they are **key reasons why extinction and punishment must be used cautiously, sparingly**, and within a broader, reinforcement-based framework.

Secondary Effects of Extinction	
Extinction Burst	**Response Variation**
A **temporary increase** in the frequency, intensity, duration, or magnitude of the behavior. The behavior worked in the past, so the learner escalates when it stops working.	The learner engages in **new or different behaviors** when the original behavior no longer contacts reinforcement Variations may include changes in intensity, form, or completely new responses in an attempt to contact reinforcement.
Resurgence	**Emotional Responding**
A previously reinforced behavior reappears when the current behavior no longer produces reinforcement The individual "goes back" to an old behavior that worked in the past.	Increases behaviors like **crying, yelling, and aggression.** Reinforcement is no longer available, which can be emotionally upsetting.

Secondary Effects on Punishment	
Emotional Response	**Escape and Avoidance**
Punishment introduces **aversive experiences** that may elicit emotional reactions May consist of crying, fear, aggression, withdrawal, increased agitation	Learner **attempts to avoid or escape** the person delivering punishment, avoid the setting where punishment occurs, avoid tasks or situations associated with punishment Punishment can make people, environments, or tasks aversive, leading to avoidance rather than learning



D.7 Implement crisis/emergency procedures

Crisis or emergency procedures are used only when there is immediate risk of harm to the learner or other and less intrusive strategies are not effective or feasible in the moment. **Crisis procedures are about safety, not behavior change.**

What is a Crisis or Emergency?	Purpose of Crisis Procedures	Ethical Foundations of Crisis Procedures
A crisis is a situation involving • Immediate danger to the learner or others • Severe aggression, self-injury, or property destruction Crisis procedures are **time-limited** and end once safety is restored	Crisis procedures are designed to: • Protect the leaner, protect staff and others, de-escalate the situation, stabilize the environment They are not designed to teach skills, punish behavior, replace long-term intervention plans	• Crisis procedures must follow the principles of **least restrictive alternative**, client dignity, **safety first**, and time-limited use. • If a procedure is being used routinely, it is no longer a crisis procedure and must be reevaluated.

Common Types of Crisis/Emergency Procedures

De-escalation Strategies

Can consist of calm, neutral voice, reducing demands, increasing physical space, removing triggering materials, using simple, supportive language. **These are often the first step in crisis response.**

Environmental Safety Procedures

Can consist of clearing the area of dangerous objects, moving peers away, blocking access to unsafe spaces, positioning for safety

Protective or Physical Management Procedures

Physical blocking, protective positioning, approved physical holds

These procedures require formal training and certification, are used only as a last resort, must follow strict guidelines for duration and release.

Emergency Protocols

Consist of calling for additional staff support, following site-specific emergency steps, contacting supervisors or emergency services when required.

RBT Responsibilities During a Crisis

RBTs must

- ✓ Follow the written crisis plan exactly
- ✓ Use only procedures they are trained in
- ✓ Remain calm and neutral
- ✓ Prioritize safety over compliance
- ✓ Call for help when required
- ✓ End crisis procedures as soon as it is safe

RBTs must not

- ✗ Improvise or create new procedures
- ✗ Use physical intervention without training
- ✗ Continue crisis procedures longer than necessary
- ✗ Use crisis procedures as punishment

Ignore signs of distress or injury

Once the situation is safe, RBTs may be required to

- Document the incident accurately
- Report details to the supervising BCBA
- Participate in debriefing
- Resume reinforcement-based strategies
- Post crisis reflection helps prevent future crises

E. Documentation and Reporting (10 exam questions)

E.1 Communicate concerns and suggestions from the intervention team (e.g., caregivers, teachers, service providers) with a supervisor in a timely manner.

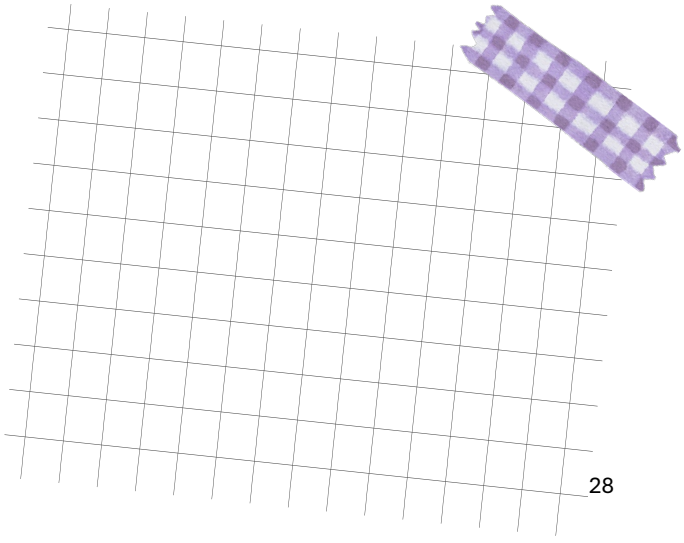
RBTs are a **critical link** between the **intervention team** (caregivers, teachers, therapists, service providers) and the **supervising BCBA**. They are responsible for **accurately, objectively, and promptly** communicating relevant information that may impact **treatment, safety, or progress**.

What Should Be Communicated RBTs should communicate any information that could affect client outcomes, include:	
Concerns	**Suggestions From the Team**
• Changes in behavior (increase in intensity, frequency, or duration) • Safety risks or near misses • Signs of distress, avoidance, or emotional responding • Side effects of intervention (e.g., extinction burst, avoidance) • Lack of progress or regression • Inconsistencies across settings or staff	• Caregiver observations • Teacher concerns or patterns noticed at school • Feedback from other service providers (SLP, OT, PT) • Environmental changes affecting the learner • Scheduling, transition, or routine challenges *RBTs pass along suggestions, they do not evaluate or approve them.*

How RBTs Should Communicate			
Timely	**Objective**	**Professional**	**Complete**
Communicate as soon as concerns are identified Safety concerns should be reported immediately	Describe what was observed, not interpretations or opinions Use measurable language	Use appropriate channels (email, supervision meetings, documentation systems) Maintain confidentiality Avoid emotional or accusatory language	Who observed the concern What happened When and where it occurred Any patters noticed Actions already taken (if any)

What RBTs Should NOT Do

- Ignore concerns because they are unsure
- Attempt to solve clinical issues independently
- Change interventions without approval
- Filter or minimize team concerns
- Delay communication unnecessarily



E.2 Seek and prioritize clinical direction from a supervisor in a timely manner (e.g., training needs, data irregularities, following chain of command)

RBTs are responsible for implementing treatment, not designing or modifying it. When uncertainty, risk, or inconsistency arises, **RBTs must seek guidance from their supervisor** promptly and follow the appropriate chain of command.

When RBTs Should Seek Clinical Direction	
Training Needs • Uncertainty about how to implement a procedure • New targets, programs, or data collection methods • Lack of competency of confidence with a procedure • Introduction of crisis, extinction, punishment, or physical management procedures	**Data Irregularities** • Data that does not match observed behavior • Sudden increases or decreases in behavior • Data patterns that conflict with expectations • Missing, incomplete, or unclear data • Discrepancies between staff members' data
Implementing Concerns • Difficulty implementing procedures as written • Barriers in the environment • Caregiver or teacher resistance • Conflicting instructions from different team members	**Safety or Ethical Concerns** • Increased aggression, self-injury, or risk • Emotional distress or escalation • Potential harm from procedures • Procedures being implemented inconsistently or incorrectly

Prioritizing Clinical Direction – not all concerns have the same urgency		
Immediate (same day) • Safety risks • Crisis situations • Severe escalation • Use of emergency procedures	**Quick (within day or two)** • Data irregularities • Repeated implementation difficulties • Concerns about effectiveness	**Routine (next supervision session)** • Clarification questions • Skill refinement • Efficiency improvements

Following the Chain of Command

The **chain of command** refers to reporting concerns through the correct supervisory structure. RBTs are required to follow the appropriate chain of command when seeking clinical direction, resolving concerns, or addressing ethical issues. The **BACB is not part of the day-to-day clinical chain of command**, but it **is part of the ethical escalation pathway**.

Primary Clinical Chain of Command	
Supervising BCBA – first point of contact for clinical questions, training needs, data irregularities, safety or escalation concerns, clarification of procedures	**Clinical Leadership** – Lead BCBA, Clinical Director, Regional BCBA Used when the supervisor is unavailable, concerns are not addressed, there are conflicting directives

When the BACB Becomes Part of the Chain of Command
The BACB is not contacted for routine clinical guidance. The BACB becomes relevant **only in ethical situations** such as: • Ethical violations • Failure of supervisors to address serious concerns • Supervision requirements not being met • Requests to act outside scope of practice • Continued risk of harm to clients • Falsification of data or credentials In these cases, the RBT must: 1. Attempt resolution through supervision and organizational channels 2. Document concerns and efforts to resolve them 3. Follow BACB guidance for ethical reporting if issues remain unresolved

E.3 Report/document variables that might affect client progress in a timely manner (e.g., illness, medication, schedule changes)

Client progress is shaped not only by **intervention procedures** but also by **contextual variables** that may temporarily or significantly affect **behavior** and **learning**. **RBTs must observe, document, and report** these variables **promptly** and **objectively** so supervisors can make **informed clinical decisions**. **RBTs do not interpret** their impact; they report them for the **BCBA** to evaluate.

Common Variables RBTs Must Report	
Health Related Variables • Illness (e.g., fever, couch, vomiting) • Fatigue or lack of sleep (if reported) • Injury or physical discomfort • Changes in appetite ✓ Report observable facts or caregiver-reported information × Do not diagnose or speculate	**Medication-Related Variables** • New medications • Missed doses • Dosage changes • Time medication was taken (if relevant) RBTs document reported changes, not medical opinions
Schedule or Routine Changes • Changes in session time or duration • School schedule disruptions • Substitute staff • Missed sessions • Travel or major routine changes	**Significant Life Events (when shared)** • Family changes • Stressful events reported by caregivers • Changes in living situations • Document only what is shared and relevant • Avoid personal judgement or unnecessary detail

How RBTs Should Report and Document Variables			
Timely – Document variables as soon as they are known. Safety or health-related changes should be reported immediately	**Objective** – Stick to observable facts or reported information, avoid assumptions, opinions, or casual statements.	**Accurate and Complete** – Include what the variable was, when it occurred, who reported it (if applicable), any observable effects (without interpretation)	**Professional and Confidential** – Use approved documentation systems, follow HIPAA + organizational policies, share only with authorized team members

E.4 Communicate objectively what occurred during the session in accordance with applicable legal, regulatory, and workplace requirements

RBTs are responsible for documenting and communicating **what actually happened** during a session, using **objective, factual, and professional language**, and doing so in accordance with **legal, regulatory, and workplace requirements. Session documentation should describe observable events – not opinions, interpretations, or assumptions.**

Objective communication includes **observable** (can be seen or heard), **measurable** (counted, timed, or clearly described), **factual** (what occurred, not why it occurred), **neutral** (free of judgement or emotional language)

What RBTs Should Document in Session Documentation

Services Provided

- ✓ Session start and end times
- ✓ Programs or targets worked on
- ✓ Teaching procedures used (e.g., NET, prompts)

Significant Events

- ✓ Illness or fatigue reported
- ✓ Schedule changes
- ✓ Crisis procedures used
- ✓ Injuries or safety incidents

Interventions Implemented

- ✓ Reinforcement delivered
- ✓ Prompting used and faded
- ✓ Error correction procedures
- ✓ Antecedent or differential reinforcement strategies

✅ A verbal prompt was provided on 3 trials.

👎 The learner needed a lot of help.

Learner Behavior

- ✓ Target behaviors (frequency, duration, intensity if applicable)
- ✓ Skill acquisition performance
- ✓ Observable affect or engagement (when relevant and defined)

✅ The learner completed 8 out of 10 trials.

👎 The learner did well today.

Data Summary

- ✓ Objective summary of performance
- ✓ No interpretation or treatment recommendation

RBTs to not include

- × Diagnosis or medical opinions
- × Assumptions about motivation or intent
- × Emotional judgements (“defiant” “lazy” “manipulative”)
- × Blame towards caregivers, teachers, or learners

✅ Aggression occurred 4 times during transitions.

👎 Transitions were triggering.

Legal, Regulatory, and Workplace Requirements

Confidentiality Laws (HIPAA)

- Protect client information
- Use approved systems only
- Share information only with authorized individuals

BACB Ethics

- Document accurately and honestly
- Avoid falsification or exaggeration
- Report only what you observed or were told

Workplace Policies

- Use required note formats
- Meet documentation deadlines
- Follow incident reporting procedures

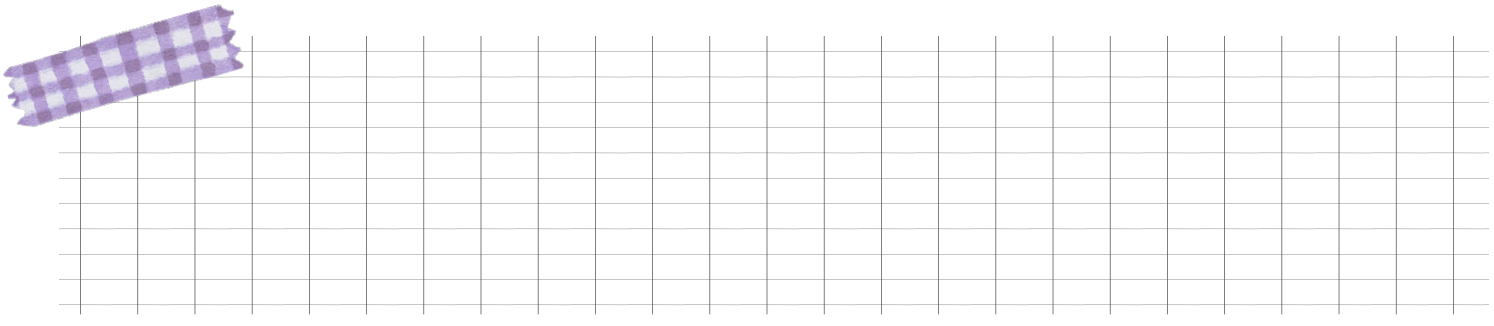
Documentation is a legal record and may be reviewed by supervisors, auditors, funders, or courts.

F. Ethics (11 exam questions)

F.1 Identify and apply core principles underlying the BACBs ethics code for RBT certificants (e.g., benefit others, treat others with compassion, dignity, and respect; behave with integrity)

The BACB Ethics code for RBTs is grounded in core principles that guide **professional behavior, decision making, and interactions** with clients, families, and colleagues. RBTs are expected to understand these principles and **apply them in daily practice**, not simply memorize the rules. Ethical practice in ABA is about protecting people, not just following policies

Benefit Others (Do No Harm) – RBTs act in ways that promote client well-being and avoid harm. • Prioritizing client safety always • Using least restrictive, evidence-based interventions • Reporting concerns that could impact progress or safety • Avoiding practices that cause unnecessary distress *Application Example: An RBT notices increased aggression during extinction and reports it promptly rather than continuing without guidance.*	**Behave With Integrity** – RBTs are honest, accurate, and accountable in all professional activities. • Recording data truthfully and accurately • Admitting mistakes or uncertainty • Following supervision and scope of practice • Avoiding falsification of records or credentials • Seeking clarification rather than guessing *Application Example: An RBT notices data inconsistencies and reports them instead of adjusting data to "look better."*
Treat Others with Compassion, Dignity, and Respect – all individuals are treated as whole, valued humans, regardless of behavior, ability, or circumstances • Using respectful, person-centered language • Avoiding labels like "manipulative" or "noncompliant" • Preserving privacy and confidentiality • Being mindful of cultural, family, and individual differences • Supporting autonomy and choice when possible *Application Example: An RBT explains procedures calmly and respectfully, even during challenging behavior, and avoids shaming or punitive language.*	**Maintain Professional Competence and Boundaries** – RBTs work within their training and certifications, maintaining appropriate boundaries with clients and families • Seeking training before implementing new procedures • Avoiding dual relationships • Not providing advice outside one's role • Following supervision requirements *Application Example: An RBT directs a caregiver's clinical questions to the BCBA instead of offering personal opinions*



F.2 Provide behavioral technician services only after demonstrating competency

RBTs are ethically required to provide services only for tasks, procedures, and populations for which they have been **adequately trained and demonstrate competence**. Being assigned a task does not automatically mean you are competent to perform it.

An RBT is competent when they have
• Received training on the procedure • Demonstrated correct implementation (e.g., modeling, role play, observation) • Received supervisor approval to implement independently • Ongoing supervision and feedback

RBT Responsibilities – RBTs Must
• Accurately self-monitor their competency • Seek supervision when unsure • Accept feedback and coaching • Maintain required supervision hours • Participate in ongoing professional development

Why is this an Ethical Requirement

Providing services without competence can harm clients, yield misleading data, heighten risk during escalation, and violate BACB ethics. **Ethical ABA practice** prioritizes **client welfare**, accurate implementation, and ongoing professional development.

F.3 Provide services only under ongoing supervision from supervisors who meet the BACB requirements

RBTs may provide behavioral technician services **only when they are receiving ongoing supervision** from supervisors who **meet BACB supervision requirements**. RBT certification does not allow independent practice.

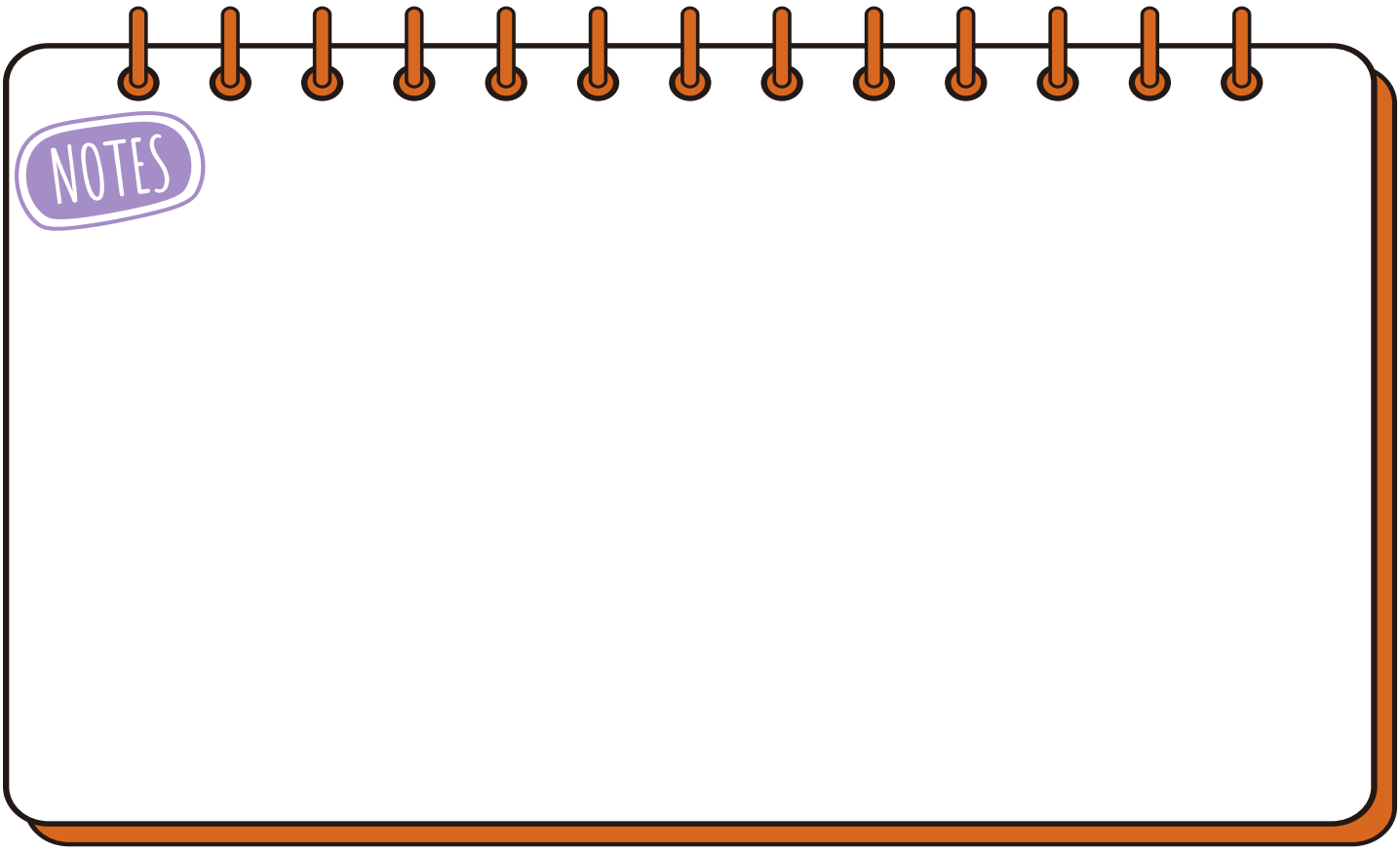
Supervision Requirements
• An RBT must be supervised by a qualified BCBA/BCaBA/BCBA-D for at least 5% of their ABA service hours monthly. • At least two face-to-face, real-time contacts monthly (i.e., not via phone or email). • At least one of them must be individual (vs. group), and the supervisor must see you implementing ABA services with a patient in at least one of them.

RBT Responsibilities Related to Supervision	
RBTs must	**RBTs must not**
✓ Ensure they are assigned a qualified supervisor (listed on BACB website) ✓ Participate in scheduled supervision sessions ✓ Be open to feedback and coaching ✓ Communicate concerns and questions promptly ✓ Maintain required supervision documentation ✓ Notify supervisor if in need of supervision to maintain requirements	× Provide services independently × Accept direction from unqualified individuals × Continue services if supervision requirements are not being met × Falsify supervision records
If Supervision requirements are not met RBTs must 1. notify their supervisor 2. Prioritize meeting supervision requirements ASAP 3. Escalate ethically if unresolved (including BACB self-reporting when necessary)	

F.4 Identify effective supervision practices (e.g., receive training that includes instructions, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback; observation of RBT service delivery)

Effective supervision ensures the RBT services are ethical, competent, and beneficial to clients. Supervision is not just oversight, it is an **active teaching** and **quality-assurance** process. Good supervision improves **performance, protects clients, and supports professional growth**.

Key Components of Effective Supervison (also called Behavior Skills Training-BST)	
(1) Instruction – clear explanation of procedures, expectations, rationale for interventions, data collection methods. • RBTs must understand what to do and why before implementation	**(2) Modeling** – the supervisor demonstrates the correct implementation of a skill or procedure • Seeing the procedure performed correctly increases accuracy and confidence.
(3) Rehearsal (Practice) – the RBT practices the skill, can be with a learner, through role-play, or guided practice. • Practice allows the RBT to build fluency and demonstrate competence	**(4) Feedback** – specific, timely information about performance • Effective feedback is immediately or timely, behavior specific, balanced (strengths and areas for improvement), and actionable. • Feedback shapes accurate implementation and prevents drift
Supervision should also include **observation of the RBT during service delivery**. The supervisor directly observes RBT working with clients. This may include in-person observation, or live remote observation. Observation includes procedural fidelity, client safety, ethical implementation, accurate data collection.	

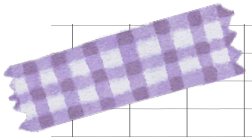


F.5 Identify and comply with requirements for collecting, using, storing, protecting, and disclosing confidential information

RBTs are ethically and legally **required to always protect client confidentiality**. Confidential information must be collected, used, stored, protected, and disclosed only in ways that comply with BACB ethics, laws (e.g., HIPAA), and workplace policies.

Confidential Information Includes Any Information That Could Identify a Client, such as:	
• Names, photos, videos • School or insurance information • Session notes and data	• Diagnosis, treatment plans • Medical or medication information • Addresses, schedules, or locations

Collecting **Confidential Information**	
RBTs Must	**RBTs Must NOT**
✓ Collect only information required for service deliver ✓ Follow approved data collection method ✓ Ensure accuracy and objectivity ✓ Avoid collecting unnecessary personal details	× Collect information outside their role × Record personal opinions or assumptions × Collect data casually or informally
Using **Confidential Information**	
RBTs Must	**RBTs Must NOT**
✓ Only for authorized professional purposes ✓ Only for appropriate team members ✓ In ways that directly support client services	× Use client information for personal reasons × Discuss clients in public or social settings × Share identifying information with unauthorized individuals
Storing **Confidential Information**	
RBTs Must	Examples
✓ In approved systems or platforms ✓ In password protected or locked locations ✓ According to organizational policies ✓ Only for the required retention period	• Secure electronic health records • Locked cabinets for paper data • Encrypted devices (when applicable)
Protecting **Confidential Information**	
RBTs Must	**RBTs Must NOT**
✓ Log out of systems when not in use ✓ Keep devices secure ✓ Position screens away from public view ✓ Use initials or IDs when required ✓ Follow device and data security policies	× Leave data unattended × Share passwords × Use personal devices without authorization × Store client data on unsecured platforms



F.6 Identify and comply with requirements for making public statements about professional activities (e.g., social media activity, misrepresentation of professional credentials, behavior analysis, and service outcomes.)

RBTs must ensure that any **public statements** including social media posts, online comments, or verbal statements in public settings **are accurate, ethical, and within scope of practice**.

Public statements include social media posts, comments, or likes; blogs, videos, podcasts, public presentations or trainings, marketing or promotional content, and statements made in public spaces (online or in person).

Requirements for Ethical Public Statements	
Protect Confidentiality • Never share identifying client information • Never post photos, videos, or stories about clients • Avoid indirect identifiers (location, details, timelines)	Avoid Misrepresentation of Credentials • Accurately represent their credential • Clearly identify themselves as Registered Behavior Technicians, not supervisors or analysts • Avoid implying independent practice or clinical decision making
Avoid Misrepresentation of Behavior Analysis • Describe ABA accurately and respectfully • Avoid oversimplifying or sensationalizing behavior change • Avoid claims that contradict evidence-based practice	**Avoid Misrepresentation of Service Outcomes** • Avoid guarantees or exaggerated claims • Avoid implying universal success • Avoid presenting personal experiences as typical outcomes

F.7 Identify types of and risks associated with multiple relationships and how to mitigate those risks when they are unavoidable

Multiple relationship occurs when an RBT has more **than one type of relationship** with a client, caregiver, or colleague (e.g., processional and social, financial, or personal)

Multiple relationships are **ethically risky** because they can **impair professional judgement, create conflicts of interest, and/or harm client dignity and trust.**

Types of Multiple Relationships	
Social Relationships • Friendships • Social media connections • Attending social events together	**Financial Relationships** • Accepting gifts, money, or services • Providing paid services outside of employment
Family or Pre-Existing Relationships • Being related to or previously knowing a client or caregiver	

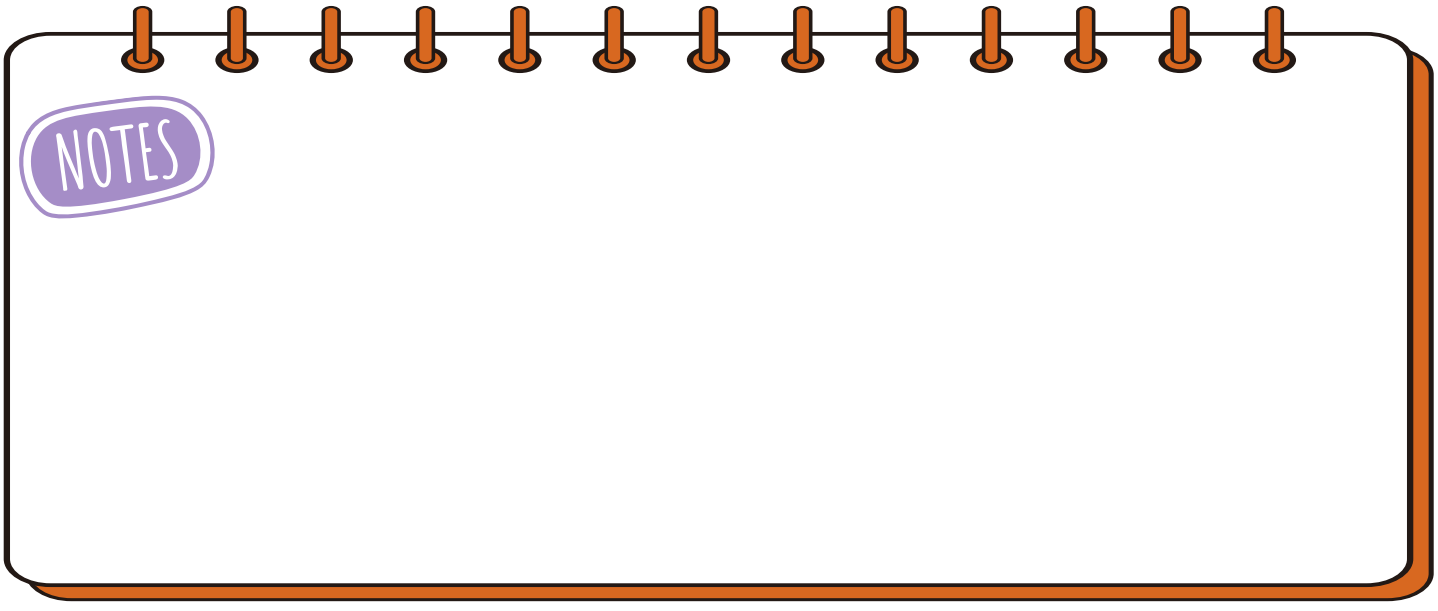
Risks Associated with Multiple Relationships
• Bias decision-making • Reduce objectivity • Increase emotional involvement • Create pressure to bend rules • Lead to confidentiality breaches • Make it harder to enforce boundaries

When Multiple Relationships Are Unavoidable	
Some multiple relationships cannot reasonably be avoided such as: • Working in small or rural communities • Pre-existing relationships before services begin • Overlapping community settings (schools, churches, activities)	
How to Mitigate Risks when Unavoidable	
Disclose the Relationship • Inform the supervising BCBA or employer promptly • Be transparent about the nature of the relationship	**Maintain Professional Boundaries** • Keep interactions task-focused and professional • Avoid sharing personal information • Avoid special treatment
Seek Supervision and Guidance • Follow supervisor direction on boundaries	**Avoid Exploitation or Harm** • Do not accept gifts, favors, or additional toles • Do not use the relationship for personal gain

F.8 Adhere to the gift of giving and receiving guidelines provided by the BACB's ethics code for RBT certificates. *Ethical code 1.11*

Per the BACB, **RBTs may not accept gifts** from clients, caregivers, or supervisors if the gift has a monetary value gr**eater than $10, results in financial benefit, or becomes ongoing, cumulative, or expected**. If an employer prohibits all gift exchange, sets a lower monetary limit, or requires documentation or approval RBTs must follow the stricter policy.

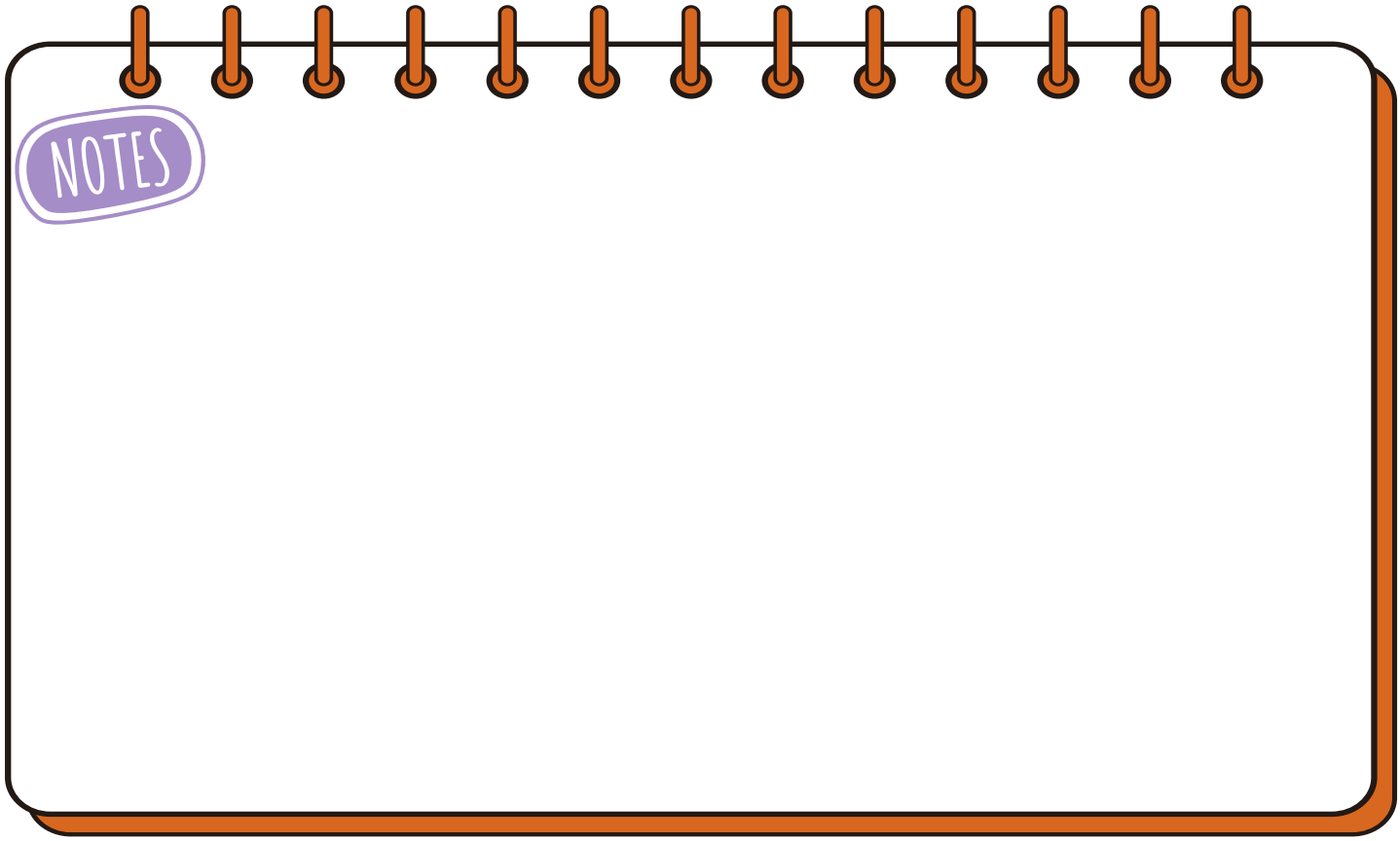
What RBTs Should Do When Offered a Gift
1. Politely assess whether it meets BACB + employer guidelines 2. When unsure, decline or pause acceptance 3. Inform the supervisor 4. Follow organizational direction
Example response: "Thank you so much for thinking of me. I need to check our policy before accepting, but I really appreciate the gesture."



F.9 Identify and apply interpersonal and professional skills (e.g., accepting feedback, listening actively, seeking input, collaborating) when representing oneself as an RBT

RBTs represent the field of behavior analysis through how they **communicate, collaborate, and respond to others**. Professional and interpersonal skills are essential for **ethical service delivery, effective teamwork, positive client and caregiver relationships, and accurate implementation of treatment plans**.

Key Interpersonal and Professional Skills	
Accepting Feedback – receiving feedback openly and professionally, even when it is corrective. • Listening without becoming defensive • Asking clarifying questions • Implementing feedback consistently • Viewing feedback as skill development, not criticism	**Active Listening** – fully attending to what someone is saying to understand, not just to respond • Maintaining appropriate eye contact • Avoiding interruptions • Paraphrasing or confirming understanding • Asking relevant follow-up questions
Seeking Input – proactively asking for guidance, clarification, or perspective when needed • Prevents errors • Supports ethical practice • Demonstrates professional responsibility	**Collaborating with Others** – working cooperatively with supervisors, other RBTs, caregivers, teachers, and related service providers. • Sharing objective observations • Respecting different roles and expertise • Staying within scope of practice • Maintaining professionalism even during disagreement



F.10 Engage in ongoing cultural humility and responsiveness (e.g., identify personal biases) in service deliver and professional relationships.

Cultural humility and responsiveness **require RBTs to continually reflect** on their own beliefs, biases, and assumptions, and to adapt their professional behavior to respectfully serve individuals and families from diverse backgrounds. Cultural humility is an ongoing process, not a one-time skill or training.

Cultural Humility	Cultural Responsiveness
Humility = mindset	**Responsiveness = action**
Cultural humility involves: • Ongoing self-reflection • Recognizing that one's own experience are not universal • Remaining open to learning from clients, families, and colleagues • Acknowledging power differences in service deliver	Cultural responsiveness is the behavioral application of cultural humility. • Adapting communication and interaction styles • Respecting family values, routines, and priorities • Collaborating with caregivers as partners • Ensuring services fit within the client's cultural context
RBTs Demonstrate Cultural Humility by: • Reflecting on how their own background influences their reactions • Avoiding assumptions about values or intentions • Asking respectful, open-ended questions • Accepting feedback without defensiveness • Adjusting their approach when appropriate	**Cultural Responsive Behaviors by RBTs:** • Using respectful, person-centered language • Adapt examples and materials when appropriate • Be flexible with routines when clinically appropriate • Respect differences in communication and interaction styles • Share observations objectively, not judgmentally

Identifying Personal Bias	
Biases are automatic assumptions or preferences that can influence: • How behavior is interpreted • How caregivers are perceived • How expectations are set	Common Areas Where Bias Can Appear • Communication styles • Parenting practices • Eye contact or body language • Beliefs about behavior or disability • Cultural norms around authority or independence
Having biases does not make someone unethical, but failing to reflect on them does.