

Overview of Applied Behavior Analysis

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the science of behavior. This resource provides an overview of what ABA is, how it works and its basic components.

HOW DOES ABA WORK?

ABA focuses on learning new skills and reducing challenging behavior to bring about meaningful and positive change in behavior. There are several methods to applying ABA. All methods use a three-step process.

WHAT IS THE THREE-STEP PROCESS?

The three-step process is also called the three-term contingency, or sometimes the ABC's of behavior. This process shows how behavior is elicited by the environment and how the consequences of behavior can affect its future occurrence. This process accounts for much of what has been learned about predicting and changing behavior.

The three-step process involves the following components:

Antecedent

The antecedent is something that happens before the behavior, such as a verbal or physical command, the presence or absence of an object, change in lighting or temperature, a sound, and many other possibilities. The antecedent can come from another person, the individual's environment, or something internal to the individual.

Behavior

The behavior is the individual's response or lack of response to the antecedent.

Consequence

The consequence follows the behavior. Consequences are either categorized as reinforcement or punishment.

- Reinforcement increases the chance of a behavior happening again under similar circumstances.
- Punishment decreases the chance of a behavior happening again under similar circumstances.

1
2
3

EXAMPLE OF THE THREE-STEP PROCESS

Andrew's teacher would like him to choose the green item when presented with a green item and a yellow item.

Antecedent: Andrew's teacher puts a green toy and a yellow toy in front of him and asks him which one is green.

Behavior: Andrew touches the green toy.

Consequence: Andrew's teacher gives him a raisin. (Andrew loves raisins)

