Behavioral Functions Assessment Tool (B-FAT)

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A Screening and Interview Instrument Combining the Functional Assessment Screening Tool (FAST) and Questions About Behavioral Function (QABF)

Assessment Purpose: The B-FAT is an indirect functional assessment instrument designed to identify the environmental variables maintaining one specific problem behavior. It synthesizes 12 screening items from the Functional Assessment Screening Tool (FAST; Iwata et al., 2013) with 25 rating items from Questions About Behavioral Function (QABF; Paclawskyj et al., 2000). Use this tool during caregiver, teacher, or staff interviews to formulate testable hypotheses regarding behavioral function (Attention, Escape, Sensory/Automatic, Physical Pain/Discomfort, or Tangible Access) prior to direct observation, functional analysis, and positive behavioral intervention planning.

1. Assessment Information & Case Identification

Client / Student ID: _____ (6-char LASFIR)	**Date of Assessment:** _____
Informant / Rater Name: _____	**Relationship / Role:** _____
Target Problem Behavior: _____	**Typical Frequency:** [ ] Hourly+ [ ] Daily [ ] Weekly [ ] < Weekly

2. Operational Definition of the Target Behavior

What does the behavior look like when it happens? *Describe specific, observable, measurable motor or vocal actions (e.g., hitting with closed fist, throwing chairs, vocal protesting/screaming, elopement from instructional area). Avoid subjective motives or diagnostic labels.*

3. Setting Events & Common Antecedent Triggers

When is the behavior most likely to occur? *List common setting events (e.g., lack of sleep, illness, hunger), immediate antecedents (e.g., presentation of academic demands, transition between tasks, adult attention shifted to peer, denial of preferred item/activity), and environmental conditions (e.g., noisy cafeteria, unstructured recess).*

Part 1: Functional Assessment Screening Tool (FAST)

12 screening statements adapted from Iwata, DeLeon, & Roscoe (2013). Determine whether each statement typically describes the environmental conditions surrounding the target behavior. Indicate **Yes** or **No** for each item.

#	Screening Statement	Yes	No
1	The behavior usually occurs when other people are in the environment (e.g., adults and/or children/peers).	[ ]	[ ]
2	The behavior usually occurs soon after you or others interact with him/her in some way, such as delivering a direction or demand, walking away, shifting attention to someone else, or taking away a preferred item.	[ ]	[ ]
3	The behavior is often accompanied or preceded by yelling, crying, complaining, or protesting.	[ ]	[ ]
4	The behavior occurs frequently when he/she is alone or unoccupied.	[ ]	[ ]
5	The behavior occurs at relatively high rates regardless of what is going on in his/her immediate surrounding environment.	[ ]	[ ]
6	There are very few reinforcers that he/she really seems to value; he/she rarely engages in appropriate play or use of objects.	[ ]	[ ]
7	He/she doesn't usually respond to social stimulation or efforts to engage in social interaction.	[ ]	[ ]
8	He/she often engages in repetitive, stereotyped behaviors such as body rocking, hand or finger waving, object twirling, mouthing, etc.	[ ]	[ ]
9	When he/she engages in the behavior, you and others usually ignore the behavior and withhold attention from the behavior.	[ ]	[ ]
10	The behavior occurs in cycles. There may be relatively long periods of time when the behavior does not occur, but at other times it is frequent, doesn't respond to intervention, and is difficult to interrupt or stop.	[ ]	[ ]
11	The behavior seems to occur more often when he/she is not feeling well (e.g., because of illness, allergies, GI issues, etc.).	[ ]	[ ]
12	He/she has a history of recurrent illness (e.g., ear or sinus infections, allergies, GI issues, dermatitis).	[ ]	[ ]

FAST Functional Category Mapping & Tally

Functional Subscale Category	Associated FAST Items	Yes Count	Screening Indication
Social Positive Reinforcement	Items 1, 2, 3 (Attention / Preferred Items)	___ / 3	Behavior mediated by attention, interaction, or tangibles
Social Negative Reinforcement	Items 4, 5, 6 (Escape / Task Avoidance)	___ / 3	Behavior maintained by escape or delay of nonpreferred tasks
Automatic Positive Reinforcement	Items 7, 8, 9 (Sensory / Self-Stimulation)	___ / 3	Behavior produces internal sensory or perceptual reinforcement
Automatic Negative Reinforcement	Items 10, 11, 12 (Pain Attenuation / Physical)	___ / 3	Behavior alleviates physical discomfort, pain, or illness symptoms

Informant Observations & FAST Qualitative Notes: _____

_____

_____

_____

Part 2: Questions About Behavioral Function (QABF)

25 items adapted from Paclawskyj, Matson, Rush, Smalls, & Vollmer (2000). For the single target behavior identified on Page 1, select a rating indicating how often each statement describes the behavior.

0 = Never 0% of the time	1 = Rarely 1% to 10% of the time	2 = Sometimes 11% to 50% of the time	3 = Often More than 50% of the time	X = Does Not Apply Condition never occurs

#	QABF Behavioral Statement	0	1	2	3	X
1	Engages in the behavior to get attention.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2	Engages in the behavior to escape or avoid work or learning situations.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3	Engages in the behavior as a form of “self-stimulation.”	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4	Engages in the behavior because he/she is in pain.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5	Engages in the behavior to get access to preferred activities, items, or food.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6	Engages in the behavior because he/she thinks it's funny, or because he/she wants to irritate others.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7	Engages in the behavior when expected to participate in a nonpreferred task or activity (independent work, group activity, direct instruction, etc.).	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8	Engages in the behavior even if he/she thinks no one is paying attention.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9	Engages in the behavior more frequently when he/she does not feel well.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
10	Engages in the behavior when you take something away from him/her.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
11	Engages in the behavior to get attention from others.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
12	Engages in the behavior when he/she does not want to do something.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
13	Engages in the behavior because there is nothing else to do.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
14	Engages in the behavior when there is something bothering him/her physically.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
15	Engages in the behavior when someone has something that he/she wants.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Continued on Page 4 (Items 16–25 and QABF Subscale Scoring Matrix). Sum item scores for each function into the matrix on the next page.

Part 2: QABF (Continued) & Subscale Scoring Matrix

Complete ratings for Items 16 through 25, then transfer all numerical scores (0, 1, 2, or 3; X = 0) into the Subscale Scoring Matrix below.

#	QABF Behavioral Statement	0	1	2	3	X
16	Engages in the behavior to get a reaction from you or other adults.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
17	Engages in the behavior to try to get people to leave him/her alone.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
18	Engages in the behavior in a highly repetitive manner, ignoring his/her surroundings.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
19	Engages in the behavior because he/she is physically uncomfortable.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
20	Engages in the behavior when a peer has something that he/she wants.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
21	Does he/she seem to be saying, “look at me” or “come over and talk to me” when engaging in the behavior?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
22	Does he/she seem to be saying, “don't bother me” or “leave me alone” or “stop asking me to do this” when engaging in the behavior?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
23	Does he/she seem to enjoy the behavior, even if no one is watching?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
24	Does the behavior seem to indicate to you that he/she is not feeling well?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
25	Does he/she seem to be saying, “give me that (toy, food, item)” when engaging in the behavior?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

QABF Function Scoring Matrix & Subscale Totals

Transfer each item's numerical rating (0, 1, 2, or 3; X counts as 0) into the corresponding cell. Sum each row across to find the subscale total (possible range 0–15). Rank the functions from 1 (highest raw score) to 5 (lowest).

Behavioral Function	Endorsed Item Ratings (0–3)	Subscale Total (0–15)	Rank (1–5)
Attention	Item 1: [ ] + Item 6: [ ] + Item 11: [ ] + Item 16: [ ] + Item 21: [ ]	_____ / 15	[ ]
Escape / Avoidance	Item 2: [ ] + Item 7: [ ] + Item 12: [ ] + Item 17: [ ] + Item 22: [ ]	_____ / 15	[ ]
Nonsocial / Sensory	Item 3: [ ] + Item 8: [ ] + Item 13: [ ] + Item 18: [ ] + Item 23: [ ]	_____ / 15	[ ]
Physical / Pain	Item 4: [ ] + Item 9: [ ] + Item 14: [ ] + Item 19: [ ] + Item 24: [ ]	_____ / 15	[ ]
Tangible Access	Item 5: [ ] + Item 10: [ ] + Item 15: [ ] + Item 20: [ ] + Item 25: [ ]	_____ / 15	[ ]

Primary Hypothesized Behavioral Function: _____

Secondary / Co-occurring Maintaining Variables: _____

FAST and QABF Consistency: [ ] Concordant (both tools agree) [ ] Partially Concordant [ ] Discordant / Multimodal

Functional Assessment Synthesis & Intervention Planning

Assessment Interpretation & Next Steps: An indirect assessment tool like the B-FAT provides informant-reported hypotheses. It does not prove functional relations on its own. Use these findings to target direct observation methods (e.g., ABC narrative recording, scatterplot analysis, or brief functional analysis probes). When planning intervention, ensure that replacement behaviors match the verified function, are functionally equivalent, require less effort than the problem behavior, and are reliably reinforced.

Replacement Behavior (FERB): *What functionally equivalent skill will be taught?*

_____

Antecedent Accommodations: *How will triggers, demands, and environments be modified?*

_____

Consequence Strategy: *How will reinforcement be withheld for target behavior and provided for FERB?*

_____

References

Iwata, B. A., DeLeon, I. G., & Roscoe, E. M. (2013). Reliability and validity of the Functional Analysis Screening Tool. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 46(1), 271–284. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaba.31

Paclawskyj, T. R., Matson, J. L., Rush, K. S., Smalls, Y., & Vollmer, T. R. (2000). Questions About Behavioral Function (QABF): A behavioral checklist for functional assessment of aberrant behavior. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 21(3), 223–229. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0891-4222(00)00036-6

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About the author

Teacher at heart, behavior analyst, and writer, Dr. Peter Beddow has spent more than two decades helping children, families, and school teams navigate autism, behavior, trauma, and learning differences with clarity, structure, and hope. He studied English Literature and Creative Writing at Middlebury College and earned a PhD in Special Education from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, where his work focused on fairness, learning, and access in assessment. Peter has worked as a teacher, special educator, director, consultant, and board certified behavior analyst in homes, schools, and clinics. He founded Accessible Hope, a Nashville-area practice supporting diverse families, and writes and teaches practical, humane approaches to behavior and learning.

Scope and safety

This assessment tool provides structured screening and interview information for functional assessment. It is not individualized medical, behavioral, mental-health, legal, or emergency advice. Functional behavior assessment and intervention planning should be guided by qualified professionals and consider the learner's communication, health, safety, disability-related needs, culture, and context.

How to cite this resource

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