



outcomes such as increased independence, improved comprehension of transitions and time, reduced maladaptive, teaching new skills, and improved functional living skills (Cohen & Sloan, 2007).



Activity lists can be used in a variety of different settings such as schools, homes, clinics, and within the community. For example, a morning routine at home could be implemented using an activity list to accomplish different tasks and transition to school. This could look something like waking up, brushing your teeth, getting dressed, eating breakfast, getting a backpack, and walking to the bus.

Each of these tasks addresses a skill that the learner must complete, and it prompts a smooth transition between events by setting an expectation and decreasing maladaptive behaviors while reaching the ultimate goal. While each activity list may look different, they all embody the same function, to help learners understand and manage routines, by offering visual support that expands both cognitive and emotional components.



Developing activity lists for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy involves creating a structured plan of activities and interventions tailored to the individual needs and goals of the client. ABA therapy is commonly used to support individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other developmental disabilities. Here are the steps to develop an activity list for ABA therapy:

- **Assessment and Goal Setting:** Begin by conducting a comprehensive assessment of the client's strengths, weaknesses, and specific areas of need. This assessment should include input from caregivers and any other relevant professionals. Set clear and measurable goals for the client. These goals should be based on the principles of ABA, such as increasing desired behaviors and reducing problem behaviors.
- **Identify Target Behaviors:** Identify the specific behaviors that need to be addressed. These can include communication deficits, social skills, self-care skills, and problem behaviors. Prioritize these behaviors based on their importance and relevance to the client's overall development.



evidence-based ABA techniques, such as reinforcement, prompting, shaping, and fading, to design effective behavior plans.

- **Select Activities and Interventions:** Based on the behavior plans, select activities and interventions that are suitable for the client's age, preferences, and abilities. Activities should be engaging and motivating for the client to ensure their active participation.
- **Create a Schedule:** Develop a daily or weekly schedule that outlines when each activity or intervention will take place. Be sure to allocate sufficient time for each activity. Consider the client's attention span and energy levels when scheduling activities.
- **Data Collection:** Implement data collection procedures to monitor the client's progress towards their goals. This may involve tracking frequency, duration, or intensity of target behaviors. Data collection is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of the interventions and making necessary adjustments.
- **Individualization:** Keep in mind that ABA therapy is highly individualized. Modify activities and interventions as needed based on the client's progress and changing needs. Continuously assess and update the activity list to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
- **Collaborate with Team:** ABA therapy often involves a team of professionals, including behavior analysts, therapists, and caregivers. Collaborate with the team to ensure consistency and coordination in implementing the activity list.
- **Review and Revise:** Regularly review the activity list and behavior plans to assess progress and make any necessary revisions. Goals may change as the client makes progress.
- **Monitor and Document:** Maintain thorough documentation of the client's progress, including data sheets, notes, and reports. This documentation is essential for tracking outcomes and reporting to stakeholders.
- **Visual Supports:** Consider using visual supports, such as schedules, visual cues, and social stories, to help clients understand and follow the activity list. Visual supports can be particularly beneficial for individuals with communication or language challenges.
- **Reinforcement:** Incorporate reinforcement strategies into the activity list. Positive reinforcement, such as praise, tokens, or preferred items, can motivate clients to engage in desired behaviors and activities. Use reinforcement consistently and in accordance with the principles of ABA.
- **Generalization:** Aim to promote generalization of skills learned during therapy sessions to real-life situations. Help clients apply the skills they acquire in therapy to various settings and with different people.
- **Communication:** Foster effective communication between the therapist, caregivers, and other team members. Regular meetings and open communication channels are essential for sharing progress, concerns, and adjustments to the activity list.
- **Behavior Reduction:** For clients with problem behaviors, design specific interventions to reduce or replace these behaviors. Functional behavior assessments can help determine the underlying causes of challenging behaviors.
- **Data Analysis:** Analyze the collected data to assess trends and patterns in the client's progress. Data analysis can guide decision-making and prompt adjustments to the activity list and behavior plans.
- **Training and Supervision:** Ensure that therapists and caregivers receive adequate training and supervision in implementing ABA interventions and the activity list. Supervision by a Board Certified



- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Be culturally sensitive and considerate of the client's cultural background and family values when designing activities and interventions.
- **Transition Planning:** Plan for transitions, such as transitioning from one activity to another or from therapy to school or community settings. Smooth transitions can help reduce anxiety and promote success.
- **Family Involvement:** Involve the client's family in the therapy process. Provide training and support to caregivers so that they can reinforce skills and strategies learned during therapy in the home environment.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Adhere to the ethical guidelines and standards of practice established by relevant professional organizations, such as the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB).
- **Stay Informed:** Stay updated on the latest research and developments in the field of ABA therapy. Attend conferences, workshops, and training sessions to enhance your skills and knowledge.
- **Task Analysis:** Break down complex skills or behaviors into smaller, manageable steps through task analysis. This allows for a gradual and systematic teaching approach, making it easier for the client to learn and master new skills.
- **Functional Communication Training:** Implement functional communication training for clients with communication deficits or challenging behaviors. Teach them alternative, appropriate ways to express their needs and desires.
- **Social Skills Training:** Include social skills training in the activity list to help clients develop essential social interaction skills. This can involve activities like role-playing, peer interactions, and social scripts.
- **Natural Environment Teaching (NET):** Incorporate natural environment teaching into the activity list, where skills are practiced in real-life situations and settings to promote generalization.
- **Behavior Momentum:** Use the concept of behavior momentum by starting with easy or preferred tasks before transitioning to more challenging ones. This can increase the client's compliance and engagement.
- **Consistency:** Maintain consistency in implementing interventions and following the activity list across different settings and with various team members. Consistency helps reinforce learning and reduce confusion for the client.
- **Task Rotation:** Rotate tasks and activities to prevent boredom and maintain the client's interest and motivation. Variety can be especially important for clients with attention deficits.
- **Assessment of Preferences:** Regularly assess the client's preferences and interests to ensure that the activities included in the list are relevant and engaging. Adjust the list based on the client's changing preferences.
- **Data Graphing:** Create visual graphs or charts to represent the client's progress over time. Graphs can provide a clear visual representation of improvement and help in decision-making.
- **Individualized Prompts:** Tailor prompts and cues to the client's specific needs. Some clients may require more verbal prompts, while others may benefit from visual or tactile prompts.
- **Task Independence:** Work toward promoting task independence by gradually fading prompts and supports as the client becomes more proficient in the targeted skills.



- **Safety Considerations:** Prioritize safety in all activities and interventions. Conduct a risk assessment and take appropriate precautions to ensure the client’s safety at all times.
- **Celebrate Progress:** Celebrate and acknowledge the client’s achievements, no matter how small. Positive reinforcement and encouragement can boost motivation and self-esteem.
- **Continual Assessment:** Continually assess and reevaluate the client’s goals and progress. Be prepared to modify the activity list and behavior plans as necessary to meet evolving needs.
- **Team Collaboration:** Foster collaboration and open communication among all members of the therapy team, including therapists, parents, educators, and support staff.

Developing activity lists for ABA therapy is an ongoing and collaborative process. It requires flexibility, patience, and a commitment to helping individuals achieve their full potential. As therapy progresses, the activity list should evolve to reflect the client’s growth and changing needs. Remember that the ultimate goal of ABA therapy is to improve the client’s quality of life and promote meaningful, positive outcomes.

Here are some examples of activity lists for ABA therapy for individuals with different goals and needs. Keep in mind that these are just illustrative examples, and activity lists should be highly individualized based on the client’s specific goals and assessment results.

Increasing Communication Skills (Non-Verbal to Verbal)

Client: A non-verbal child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who is working towards developing verbal communication.

Goals:

- Increase functional communication.
- Develop basic receptive language skills.

Activity List:

- **Communication Book:** Create a communication book with pictures/icons representing common needs and wants (e.g., food, drink, bathroom). Teach the child to use the book to request items.
- **PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System):** Introduce PECS cards and teach the child to exchange cards for desired items or actions.
- **Simple Sign Language:** Teach basic sign language for essential words like “more,” “please,” and “thank you.”
- **Receptive Language Activities:** Engage in receptive language activities like matching objects to pictures or following simple one-step instructions.
- **Speech Therapy:** Incorporate speech therapy sessions focusing on vocalization and articulation.
- **Social Communication:** Practice social interactions through turn-taking games and structured play.
- **Home-Based Practice:** Assign daily home practice activities for caregivers to reinforce communication skills.

Reducing Aggressive Behavior in a Child with ADHD

Client: A child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) who exhibits aggressive behavior towards peers.

Goals:

- Decrease aggressive behaviors.



- Anger Thermometer: Teach the child to identify and express their anger using an anger thermometer or emotion chart.
- Deep Breathing: Practice deep breathing exercises as a strategy to calm down when feeling angry or frustrated.
- Anger Diary: Encourage the child to keep an anger diary to record triggers and responses to anger.
- Conflict Resolution: Role-play scenarios to help the child learn conflict resolution skills and alternative ways to express frustration.
- Positive Reinforcement: Implement a token system where the child earns rewards for using appropriate behaviors.
- Social Skills Group: Participate in a social skills group to improve peer interactions and social problem-solving.
- Parent Training: Train parents in behavior management techniques and strategies to reinforce positive behaviors at home.

Teaching Daily Living Skills to a Teen with Developmental Disabilities

Client: A teenager with developmental disabilities who needs to acquire basic daily living skills for increased independence.

Goals:

- Foster independence in daily self-care routines.
- Enhance safety and awareness in daily activities.

Activity List:

- Morning Routine: Create a visual schedule for the morning routine, including getting dressed, brushing teeth, and grooming. Use prompts and reinforcement to encourage independence.
- Meal Preparation: Teach basic cooking skills such as making sandwiches, heating food in a microwave, and setting the table.
- Laundry Skills: Demonstrate how to sort laundry, load the washing machine, and fold clothes.
- Grocery Shopping: Practice grocery shopping with a focus on making healthy choices and budgeting.
- Safety Awareness: Conduct safety drills and discussions on topics like road safety, emergency contacts, and handling household hazards.
- Money Management: Introduce basic money management skills, such as counting money, making simple purchases, and budgeting for small expenses.
- Community Outings: Plan outings to practice navigating public transportation and accessing community resources.
- Independent Living Skills: Collaborate with caregivers to ensure consistent practice and support in the home environment.

Improving Social Skills in a Child with Autism

Client: A child with autism who struggles with social interactions and communication.

Goals:

- Enhance social communication.
- Develop peer interaction skills.

Activity List:

- Social Stories: Use social stories to explain and practice appropriate social behaviors in various situations.



- Conversation Skills: Teach conversation skills such as making eye contact, listening, and responding appropriately.
- Emotion Recognition: Engage in activities to help the child recognize and interpret emotions in others.
- Role-Playing: Use role-playing scenarios to practice social situations and responses.
- Video Modeling: Incorporate video modeling to demonstrate and reinforce social skills.
- Social Skills Group: Join a social skills group with peers to practice skills in a supportive environment.

Reducing Stereotypic Behaviors in a Teen with Autism

Client: A teenager with autism who engages in repetitive stereotypic behaviors.

Goals:

- Decrease stereotypic behaviors.
- Promote engagement in age-appropriate activities.

Activity List:

- Functional Assessment: Conduct a functional behavior assessment to identify triggers and functions of stereotypic behaviors.
- Replacement Behaviors: Teach alternative behaviors that serve the same sensory needs without being disruptive.
- Sensory Diet: Develop a sensory diet plan with sensory activities that can help regulate sensory processing.
- Structured Leisure Time: Plan structured leisure activities to engage the teen in age-appropriate hobbies and interests.
- Visual Schedules: Use visual schedules to provide predictability and reduce anxiety.
- Reinforcement: Implement a reinforcement system for engaging in appropriate activities.
- Self-Monitoring: Teach the teen to self-monitor and self-record behaviors to increase awareness.

Teaching Vocational Skills to a Young Adult with Intellectual Disabilities

Client: A young adult with intellectual disabilities aiming to acquire vocational skills.

Goals:

- Develop vocational skills for employment.
- Enhance workplace readiness.

Activity List:

- Job Exploration: Explore different job opportunities and identify interests and preferences.
- Resume Building: Create a resume and practice interview skills.
- Workplace Behavior: Teach appropriate workplace behaviors, such as punctuality, following instructions, and teamwork.
- Task Training: Provide hands-on training for specific job tasks.
- Money Management: Teach money management skills for handling a paycheck.
- Travel Training: Practice using public transportation or commuting to work.
- Workplace Readiness Program: Enroll in a workplace readiness program to gain practical experience.
- Mock Interviews: Conduct mock job interviews to build confidence and interview skills.

Reducing Elopement Behavior in a Child with Autism

Client: A child with autism who has a history of wandering or elopement.



- Reduce elopement behaviors.
- Improve safety and awareness.

Activity List:

- Functional Behavior Assessment: Conduct a functional behavior assessment to identify triggers and functions of elopement.
- Safety Drills: Implement safety drills and practice procedures for getting help when needed.
- Social Stories: Create social stories to explain the importance of staying in safe areas.
- Visual Supports: Use visual supports such as visual schedules and social narratives to reinforce safety rules.
- Communication Skills: Teach the child to request assistance or communicate needs effectively.
- Community Outings: Practice safe walking and staying close to caregivers during community outings.
- Reinforcement: Implement a reinforcement system for staying within designated areas.

These examples demonstrate how activity lists can be customized to address specific challenges and goals for individuals receiving ABA therapy. The key is to adapt the activities and interventions to the unique needs and progress of each client.

References

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