



Directions for Trial Based Assessment

Single Stimulus Presentation

1. First present an item in front of the learner.
2. If the student approaches within 5s , allow the student 30s with the item (or let them consume it) then mark a "+" on the data sheet.
3. If the learner does not approach within 5s then prompt he/she to engage with the stimulus for 30s and then present it again.
4. If the learner does not respond then present the next stimulus.
5. Continue until each stimulus has been presented 5 times (items approached 80% of the time are considered preferred).

Single Stimulus Presentation

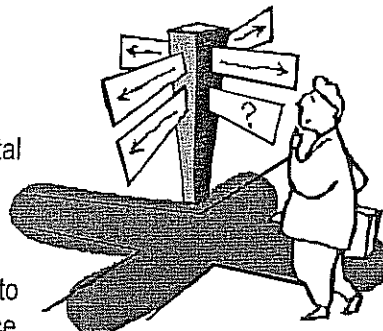
Record + or - if the student touches the stimulus.
Record the duration of time the student engages with the stimulus.
Present all stimuli at least 5 times.

Stimulus	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response

Stimulus	Response	Response	Response	Response	Response

Forced-Choice Reinforcer Assessment: Guidelines

The teacher of a child with severe or profound developmental disabilities may want to motivate the student by rewarding his or her work performance and effort with classroom items, events, or activities that the child likes. Because of communication deficits, though, the student may not be able to make his or her preferences clearly known. The forced-choice reinforcer assessment technique allows the teacher to discover what potential reinforcers a child actually prefers and even permits the instructor to rank those reinforcers in the order of apparent student preference.



Below are guidelines for completing a 'forced-choice' reinforcer assessment (Berg, Wacker, & Steege, 1995).

- 1. Collect information about the child's preferences.** Use information collected from interviews with the student's teaching staff and care-givers—as well as results of direct observations of the student—to create a list of reinforcers that are likely to motivate the child. Possible choices might include food items, social interactions with specific people, access to toys, and preferred activities (e.g., computer time). NOTE: Reinforcers are best when they are feasible, easy to supply, and help to advance the child's educational goals.
- 2. Prepare for the assessment survey.** Narrow your reinforcer list to no more than 6 items or activities that can easily be obtained and given out in a classroom setting. Be sure to have these items on hand for the reinforcer assessment. Choose a time to conduct the assessment when there are no distractions in the room and you can give the student your complete attention. If necessary, use two or more sessions to complete the reinforcer assessment.
- 3. Allow the student to sample reinforcers.** At the start of your assessment, give the child a *brief* opportunity to sample each reinforcer.
 - If the reinforcer is a *food item*, the child is given a tiny taste of the food or beverage.
 - If the reinforcer is an *activity* such as working on the computer, the child has 5-10 seconds to engage in the activity.
 - If the reinforcer is *access to a preferred object* (e.g., stuffed toy), the student has 5-10 seconds of access to the object.
- 4. Conduct a 'forced-choice' assessment.** You are ready now to move to the next phase of the reinforcer assessment. Randomly pick 2 of the 6 choice-items, present them together in front of the student and allow the child 5-10 seconds to select one of the two. (Depending on what is most convenient, the examiner can hold choice-items in his or her hand, or display them on a table.) NOTE: the child may signal 'choice' by touching or picking up an item, looking fixedly at the item, pointing to the item, or engaging in any other behavior that he or she typically uses

to indicate preference. If the student selects an item within the time limit, record the child's choice. If the child fails to choose before the time expires, remove the two reinforcer choices and record that the child did not choose an item.

Continue to present sets of two reinforcer choices to the child until all choices have been paired with one another. Record the child's preferences.

5. **Rank-order student preferences.** Analyze the student's choices to determine the *most preferred* and *least preferred* items. You can compute a 'preference percentage' for any item by: (a) calculating the number of times that the child *selected* item X, (b) dividing that figure by the total number of pairs in which item X appeared, and (c) multiplying the answer by 100 (See Figure 1).

<p>Figure 1: Formula to calculate 'preference percentage': Number of times item X selected / total number of choice-pairs that include item X = (___ / ___) X 100 = _____ %</p>

Rank-order the child's 'preference percentages' to determine which items the student most preferred and those which the student least preferred.


6. **Verify that student choices are true reinforcers (OPTIONAL).** Once you have assessed the child's reinforcer preferences (Steps 1-5), you may choose simply to use the 2 or 3 most preferred reinforcers as classroom rewards to increase the student's work effort, improve behaviors, etc. Or you may want to *test* the reinforcers first in a real-world setting to see if they are actually potent motivators:

- Have the child start a task that you would like to motivate them to complete (e.g., matching letters to corresponding picture cues as a pre-reading task). Using a *highly preferred* reinforcer, give the child brief rewards at several points during a 10-minute period and measure the child's attention to task and work completion. Then repeat the process, this time rewarding the child with the *least-preferred* reinforcer from your list.
- Over several days, repeat the reinforcer trials. (Vary your use of reinforcers, though, so that sometimes you start with the least-preferred reinforcer and sometimes you start with the most-preferred reinforcer.) Then analyze the data that you collected on student engagement during these trials.
- If the student shows notable improvements on your goal behavior (e.g., increased attention, more work completion) when completing the task for the *preferred* reinforcer but does not show the same gains with the *non-preferred* reinforcer, you can be reasonably sure that you have found a motivating reward that you can use as part of your instructional or behavioral program.

Reference:

Berg, W.K., Wacker, D.P., & Steege, M.W. (1995). Best practices in assessment with persons who have severe or profound handicaps. In A. Thomas & J.Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology-III* (3rd ed., pp.805-816). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.

Reinforcer Assessment Grid (Wright, 2002) Student: _____

Directions: Here are directions for using this grid to conduct a reinforcer assessment with developmentally delayed students (adapted from Berg, Wacker, & Steege, 1995): 

- In the section *Potential Reinforcers List*, list items 1-6 that you selected as possible reinforcers for the student.
- Offer successive pairs of items to the student—following the presentation order that appears in section II, *Pairing of Reinforcer Choices*. Allow the child 5-10 seconds to select one of the two. If the student selects an item within the time limit, record the child's choice. If the child *fails to choose* before the time expires, remove the two reinforcer choices and mark 'No Choice'.
- Continue to present sets of two reinforcer choices to the child until all choices have been paired with one another (Section II: *Pairing of Reinforcer Choices*: left column).
- OPTIONAL: To increase your confidence in your assessment, readminister the items in the order listed in the right column of Section II: *Pairing of Reinforcers*.
- Summarize the student's preferences in Section III, *Reinforcer Assessment Results*.

I. Potential Reinforcers List

Item 1:

Item 2:

Item 3:

Item 4:

Item 5:

Item 6:

II. Pairing of Reinforcer Choices

Trial Set 1: First item presented on student's *right*

(Optional)

Trial Set 2: First item presented on student's *left*

Pairing of items	Student Choice	Pairing of items	Student Choice
Item 3 & Item 6	3.....6.....No Choice	Item 2 & Item 6	2.....6.....No Choice
Item 2 & Item 4	2.....4.....No Choice	Item 4 & Item 5	4.....5.....No Choice
Item 4 & Item 6	4.....6.....No Choice	Item 1 & Item 4	1.....4.....No Choice
Item 1 & Item 3	1.....3.....No Choice	Item 1 & Item 6	1.....6.....No Choice
Item 2 & Item 5	2.....5.....No Choice	Item 3 & Item 5	3.....5.....No Choice
Item 3 & Item 4	3.....4.....No Choice	Item 5 & Item 6	5.....6.....No Choice
Item 1 & Item 5	1.....5.....No Choice	Item 1 & Item 2	1.....2.....No Choice
Item 2 & Item 3	2.....3.....No Choice	Item 2 & Item 3	2.....3.....No Choice
Item 1 & Item 2	1.....2.....No Choice	Item 1 & Item 5	1.....5.....No Choice
Item 5 & Item 6	5.....6.....No Choice	Item 3 & Item 4	3.....4.....No Choice
Item 3 & Item 5	3.....5.....No Choice	Item 2 & Item 5	2.....5.....No Choice
Item 1 & Item 6	1.....6.....No Choice	Item 1 & Item 3	1.....3.....No Choice
Item 1 & Item 4	1.....4.....No Choice	Item 4 & Item 6	4.....6.....No Choice
Item 4 & Item 5	4.....5.....No Choice	Item 2 & Item 4	2.....4.....No Choice
Item 2 & Item 6	2.....6.....No Choice	Item 3 & Item 6	3.....6.....No Choice

III. Reinforcer Assessment Results	
Number of times item 1 selected / total number of choices including item 1	= (___ / ___) * 100 = ___ %
Number of times item 2 selected / total number of choices including item 2	= (___ / ___) * 100 = ___ %
Number of times item 3 selected / total number of choices including item 3	= (___ / ___) * 100 = ___ %
Number of times item 4 selected / total number of choices including item 4	= (___ / ___) * 100 = ___ %
Number of times item 5 selected / total number of choices including item 5	= (___ / ___) * 100 = ___ %
Number of times item 6 selected / total number of choices including item 6	= (___ / ___) * 100 = ___ %

Reference:

Berg, W.K., Wacker, D.P., & Steege, M.W. (1995). Best practices in assessment with persons who have severe or profound handicaps. In A. Thomas & J.Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology-III* (3rd ed., pp.805-816). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.

NOTE: For a more complete description of how to conduct a forced-choice reinforcer assessment, see: Wright, J. (2003). *Forced-choice reinforcer assessment: Guidelines*. Available on-line: <http://www.interventioncentral.org/htmldocs/interventions/specialneeds/rftassessment.shtml>

Directions for Trial Assessment

Multiple Stimulus Without Replacement (MSWO)

1. Present all 5 stimuli in front of your partner
2. If your partner makes a selection within 5s then provide access for 30s (or consumption of an edible) then record a "1" on your data sheet next to the corresponding stimuli
3. Remove that item from the array following the 30s of access.
4. Take the item from the left side of the array and place it on the right side and then re-center the remaining items in front of the student.
5. Repeat this process until only one item remains or no item is selected during the 5s.
6. Record the order in which the items are selected.
7. If there is no approach then record the remaining items as 5.
8. Complete the entire process three times.
9. Add the numbers in the column for each item.
10. Rank the items with the lowest total ranked as 1.

Student: _____ Assessed by: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Stimulus Item	Rank by Trial			Sum of 1,2,&3	Overall Rank (smallest sum is #1)
	1	2	3		

Preference Assessment Data Sheet (Carr, Nicolson, & Higbee; 2000)

Student: _____ Assessed by: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Stimulus Item	Rank by Trial			Sum of 1,2,&3	Overall Rank (smallest sum is #1)
	1	2	3		

Preference Assessment Data Sheet (Carr, Nicolson, & Higbee; 2000)
