

## Defining Behavior Fact Sheet

### The Science of Behavior for Educators

Behavior is anything a living organism can do.

Defining behavior ensures everyone working with students looks for the same things.

Defining a behavior means describing what can be observed about the behavior using the senses, without also assigning a reason for the behavior.

Subjective or value-driven terms don't make the best labels for behavior.

Think about terms like:

Tantrum

Defiance

Noncompliance

Disrespect

Trying your best

Working hard

Having a good attitude.

If a term means different things to different people, it needs to be clarified to define the behavior.

### **Steps to Defining Behavior:**

**Be specific, observable and measurable:** What does the behavior look like? Sound like? How would you know the behavior was happening?

**Consider context:** Are there any times when the behavior would be encouraged or desirable?

**Consider exclusions:** Are there times when a student might engage in the behavior that would not count for data collection?

**Read for clarity:** Consider whether others would understand the definition.

Behaviors can be defined for groups or for individuals.

Having a clear definition of a behavior of interest is the first overall step in behavior change.

More information about the Science of Behavior for Educators Video Series and related resources are available online at [www.cebis.org](http://www.cebis.org).