

Defining Behavior Fact Sheet

The Science of Behavior for Educators

Behavior is anything that 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.

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

Think about terms like these:

- 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.

Behaviors can be defined for groups or for individuals.



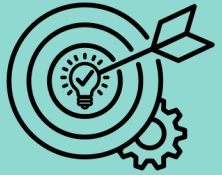
Having a clear definition of a behavior of interest is the first step in overall behavior change.



Steps to Defining Behavior:

• Be specific, observable & 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 any 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.

