

DO'S AND DON'TS OF FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT

Do...	Don't...
★ ...Use several different types of data—review records and permanent products, conduct interviews and observations, use rating scale checklists.	★ ...Make it too obvious that the child is being observed (this may change his/her behavior).
★ ...Interview the people who know the child best—parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, peers, siblings, friends of family.	★ ...Be disorganized. Keep complete notes, with full names of people, dates, etc. This will help collect data that is more accurate and valid.
★ ...Be aware of the child's environment. Remember that even subtle things such as changes in seating location, time of day, or lighting all have the potential to influence the child's behavior.	★ ...Forget to observe the child during both structured (e.g., during lessons) and unstructured activities (e.g., transitions).
★ ...Consider the problem relative to the child's skills—Is it a “can't do” or a “won't do” problem? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1) Does the child have a grasp of the skills required to complete the task? ▪ 2) Does the child have the skills, but is not choosing to use them for some reason? 	★ ...Give up, especially when a child reacts to an intervention plan. Oftentimes, this is a direct indication that the intervention plan is working. Be consistent, and make decisions with data that is collected over a period of time.
★ ...Consider the impact of tasks & activities upon the child's behavior. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pay attention to the types of responses required (e.g., verbal vs. nonverbal, written vs. oral). ▪ Review any relevant curricular materials. 	★ ...Forget to consider the potential influence of the child's eating and sleeping patterns (e.g., night terrors, food allergies, whether or not the child had breakfast earlier in the day).
★ ...Observe the child as much as possible. The more information that is collected, the more valid and accurate the assessment.	★ ...Ignore the influence of cultural factors—some behaviors are considered more socially acceptable in some cultures than others.
★ ...Describe the child's behavior as thoroughly as possible (i.e., who, what, when, where, why).	★ ...Assume the purpose of a child's behavior holds true across settings (i.e., what may be true in one setting may not be true in another).
★ ...Observe the child at different times of day.	★ ...Forget to identify the child's strengths and preferences (knowing these makes intervention much more successful).
★ ...Get the feedback of others—make functional assessment a team effort! This helps ensure both an accurate assessment and identification of good intervention strategies.	★ ...Just attend to issues surrounding when the behaviors occur—remember that it is just as important to learn about when the behaviors DO NOT occur.
★ ...Be respectful. Keep in mind that people sometimes feel uncomfortable by being observed.	★ ...Get discouraged! It often takes time to correctly identify the function or purpose of a child's behavior.