



Direct Behavior Rating: A Guide to Selecting Measurement Targets

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A defining feature of DBR involves flexibility to develop the tool to meet the needs of particular situations. One very important consideration involves selection of measurement targets – that is, which behaviors do you want to include on the DBR form? In this guide, suggestions for choosing measurement targets to rate using DBR scales are provided.

Why is target selection important?

It may seem fairly obvious as to why target selection is important –if you don't identify something to rate, then you don't have a DBR form! However, there are a few considerations related to target selection that need to be weighed before settling on targets for inclusion. Perhaps the most relevant is to identify if and how you want to generalize the data across students. That is, are you interested only in targets specific to behaviors of interest in a single student or do you want to include multiple students and perhaps compare resulting data. For example, if you are designing an intervention plan focused on a single individual around organizational skills (e.g. preparedness for work), perhaps you only want to examine data at the intra-individual level (just that student). However, if you want to include multiple students in the data plan, such as around paying attention during teacher direction, you may want to define the behavior more broadly (e.g. academic engagement) to form a common and global target that is relevant to all students in the intended rating group.

What are some considerations in target selection?

Although DBR is flexible in that ANY target can be included, some basic considerations in selecting relevant targets include:

- Is identified as highly important (e.g. bothersome) by the student, teacher, or parent
- Is or has potential to become seriously problematic if not addressed
- Consistently disrupts the learning or home environment
- Deviates substantially from current expectations
- Can be framed positively toward teaching more appropriate behaviors

What formats for DBR can be used to measure targets?

In addition to flexibility in target selection, the format for the DBR scale also can be flexibly determined. Part of that decision is simply dependent on chosen preference. Other considerations relate to the total number of selected targets, age of the child, and desired uses of resulting data. Basically, two options are offered for DBR formats. First, DBR scales can be considered to be DBR Single-Item Scale (DBR-SIS), meaning that each behavior is rated and interpreted independently. For example, consider daily graphing of academic engagement during teacher-directed math instruction. The second option is to use a DBR Multi-Item Scale (DBR-MIS), which means that multiple items are rated and aggregated (grouped) together in summarization and interpretation. Examples of each format are as follows:



Example DBR Single-Item Scale Format (DBR-SIS)

Example DBR Multi-Item Scale Format (DBR-MIS)

Behavior	Rating		
How prepared was I for class?	①	2	3
How well did I pay attention?	1	2	③
How well did I follow directions?	1	②	3
Total Score:	6		

What are the “Big 3” and how are they relevant?

As previously described, DBR can be flexibly used to support virtually any target deemed relevant. However, when the goal is to include targets relevant to all students in the classroom, it can be most efficient to select targets that can serve as general outcome measures (GOMs). A common example of a GOM for reading is oral reading fluency (e.g. Curriculum-Based Measurement) whereas a medical example is blood pressure. GOMs are intended to provide brief or quick information about functioning. Within the classroom, the following 3 targets have been identified as important for all students (and thus, possible GOMs):

academically engaged, non-disruptive, and respectful. Brief definitions of each can be found in the shaded box to the right (see also www.dbr.education.uconn.edu).

The rationale behind selecting these behaviors is simple! First, we know that respectful and non-disruptive behavior puts a student in line for positive relationships with adults and peers. Then, non-disruptive and academically engaged behavior facilitates greater access to learning. Although additional targets might certainly be added to fit a particular need, together, these three targets are important contributors to overall student success.

The “Big 3” School-Based Targets:

- **Academically Engaged** - actively or passively participating in the classroom activity.
- **Non-Disruptive** - student action that interrupts regular school or classroom activity.
- **Respectful** - compliant and polite behavior in response to adult direction and/or interactions with peers and adults.

Who can select targets?

DBR targets can be selected by anyone involved with the child – even the child! The key task is not as much who selects the targets as whether the chosen targets are appropriate for the context in which the assessment will occur. For example, a parent and child might select items involved in the bedtime routine. These targets will not likely apply to the school setting, whereas a target such as “academic engagement” likely would not be the best choice for the bedtime routine! If possible, involving the child in determining the most important and relevant targets is encouraged. Doing so can be helpful in engaging the child in the assessment also toward teaching self-management skills.

How is a DBR created to communicate about child behavior?

Step 1: Identify goals for using a DBR. Consider whether the purpose is specific to an individual or desired for use and comparison across individuals.

Step 2: Clearly define targets, including examples and non-examples of the definition. Consider phrasing that promotes positive teaching of expected behavior.

Step 3: Select the DBR scale format. Consider whether multiple targets will be aggregated or data are to be summarized individually by target.

Step 4: Confirm agreement regarding definitions and procedures – implement!

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