

Task List Study Guide

The copyrighted 4th edition task list is reproduced here with permission from the BACB © Study guide materials are copyright of BAS About This Study Guide This study guide is arranged in the order of the tasks and items presented in the 4th edition task list produced by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board (BACB). As such, Foundational Knowledge is found toward the end of this study guide. If you are struggling with terminology, or some basic concepts, it may be beneficial for you to start with this section. Otherwise, simply proceed through the task list as shown, and refer to the Foundational Knowledge section as needed.

Task List Section A: Measurement

Task A-01: Measure frequency (i.e., count). Measuring frequency is using a direct measure. In essence, it means to count whatever you are measuring. Examples: Counting the number of cartwheels, steps, or words spoken. Ask yourself: “How many instances occurred?” or “How many times did that happen?”

Task A-02: Measure rate (i.e., count per unit of time). Rate is the ratio of count per observation time (often expressed as per minute, per session, etc.); a direct measure. This is really just frequency with the addition of a time period and division. In fact, Cooper, Heron and Heward (2007) use the terms frequency and rate interchangeably. The ratio is the division of frequency/time period, such as 10 pointing behaviors/hour.

Note: This rate versus frequency controversy is silly. This task list separates the two. As long as this is the case, we have to treat them as two separate ideas. Just keep in mind that frequency is a count and rate must include a time period and averaging. Examples: Counting the number of cartwheels per minute, steps per day, or words spoken during a class period. Think, “Frequency divided by an amount of time.”

Utility:

- A scenario might mention frequency over (i.e., divided by) a selected time period; this is rate.
- Rate is best used with easily identified behaviors and behaviors of short duration. Observers with less training may still be able to record an accurate rate.
- You may be asked which dimension of behavior is most appropriate in a given situation. Rate would not be most appropriate for behaviors that are targeted for a reduction or increase in duration rather than number of occurrences.

Task A-03: Measure duration. Duration is the total extent of time that a behavior occurs. Direct; (continuous) measurement. Measurement of temporal extent. Examples: Total time of each tantrum, time it takes to chew each bite, or time spent scrubbing hands when washing. Note: To avoid confusion when measuring duration, define the behavior in simple terms but well enough to be observed and understood by other people. If you see an instance of a target

behavior and it ends, you need to know how long to wait before timing a new occurrence. For instance, if someone clears her throat for 10 seconds, pauses for 1 second, clears for another 10 seconds, pauses for 2 seconds, and clears again for 22 seconds: is this one behavior of a 45-second duration or three separate behaviors? The answer is in how you define the target behavior. If you say that any instance of throat-clearing separated by more than 5 seconds is a separate instance, then the above example would be a target behavior duration of 45 seconds. If, instead, you say that a pause of 1 second or more indicates a separate occurrence, then the above example would be three separate instances of the target behavior (10 seconds, 10 seconds, and 22 seconds).

Utility:

- Duration is a good measure to use for behaviors that last for a longer period of time.
- It is also useful for behaviors that are targeted for an increase or decrease in temporal extent, but not for complete elimination. Tantrums, for example, might initially be tracked by their duration. Once the duration is reduced to a specific point, frequency may become a better dimensional measure.