

## What Is It?

Responding to a child's behavior is an individualized strategy within all behavior support plans. The ways in which adults respond to children's behavior influences whether and how that behavior will occur again in the future. This is true for prosocial behavior, academic behavior, and challenging behavior. Responses are also known as "consequences" and occur immediately after a behavior. Consequences can be planned or unplanned. A consequence or response, "Thank you for tapping me on my shoulder to get my attention," lets the child know that the behavior was safe and appropriate for the setting.

## When to Use It

- To increase or maintain a new skill or desired behavior (e.g., using materials safely, requesting a break).
- To provide feedback so children understand when their behavior is safe or appropriate.
- To provide feedback so children understand when their behavior is unsafe or inconsistent with expectations.

## Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Identify the challenging behavior and the new skills the team will teach the child.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Determine what the child finds reinforcing (e.g., praise or verbal acknowledgment, time with an adult, break from a task, access to preferred items or activities).
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Make a plan across the day for who, how, and when the team will respond to instances of new skills and challenging behavior.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Respond consistently by reinforcing the new skill or desired behavior immediately and every time it occurs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Respond consistently to challenging behavior by calmly prompting or reminding the child to use the new skill or desired behavior. Provide just one prompt or reminder rather than repeating the direction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Remain calm with a neutral expression if challenging behavior persists and present simple choices to re-engage. Wait for the child to follow a direction or make an appropriate choice, and immediately praise the child for using new skills or following requests.
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Minimize attention to challenging behavior. Focus on noticing prosocial behavior and new skills.

### Example

*Iris is a 4-year-old in Davis' preschool classroom. Iris consistently has a difficult time with clean-up routines. Whenever Davis provides a transition signal in the classroom, Iris lays on the floor with a toy, tantrums, and refuses to move until an adult comes to her. Other times, Iris grabs materials and runs around the room until adults follow her. An adult goes to Iris and spends the entire transition supporting her. Iris often comes to the next activity with an adult several minutes after the activity begins. The behavior support team works with Davis and Iris' family to develop an individualized plan for Iris. The team determines Iris' behavior is maintained by adult attention. They decide to teach her new skills (see Intervention Guide on Teaching a Request for Attention and Cooperation/Following Instructions) and to develop new strategies for responding to Iris' behavior. To change the way adults react to Iris' behavior, the team develops a clean-up visual mini-schedule. An adult goes to Iris prior to the transition and provides her with lots of attention. They give her an individual transition signal along with the visual. They praise her for completing each step on the schedule ("You stopped at the signal!", "Great job setting the timer, Iris!", "You are working so hard to put those blocks away!"). The last step on the mini-schedule is a special helper role in the next activity. Once Iris finishes cleaning up, she moves to that activity and gets lots of attention and praise for helping. If Iris does not follow the mini-schedule, an adult calmly waits and points to the visual cue and models a step as needed. They stay close to Iris but minimize attention until she follows a step. Then they immediately praise and join in the routine with Iris.*

### How to Increase Effectiveness

- Conduct a preference assessment to identify a highly preferred reinforcer.
- Use behavior specific praise.
- Use a ratio of 4:1 praise statements to corrections.
- Provide reinforcement immediately (and contingently) when the child engages in an appropriate behavior.
- Make sure all adults know the plan and respond consistently.

### Resources

Blair, K. C., & Fox, L. (2011). [Facilitating individualized interventions to address challenging behaviors](#). Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation.

Strain, P., Joseph, J., Hemmeter, M. L., Barton, E., & Fox, L. (2017). [Tips for responding to challenging behavior in young children](#). Pyramid Equity Project.