

Antecedent-Based Intervention

Antecedent-Based Intervention (ABI) is an evidence-based practice that can help a learner with autism:

- Engage in prosocial or desired behavior
- Learn new behaviors and skills
- Be less likely to display interfering behavior

ABIs are strategies to modify an environment or activity in ADVANCE to “set someone up for success.” These interventions help educators proactively create conditions that encourage desired behavior such as engaging in classroom activities, communicating wants and needs, meeting behavioral expectations, or displaying independence in the classroom. Antecedent Based Interventions are crucial when behaviors interfere with or prevent learning and inclusion! These behaviors might include frequent outbursts, refusal to complete assignments, or wandering off to avoid or escape situations.

Well-designed ABI can foster a positive classroom climate, promote inclusion, and improve the overall quality of life for the students. ABIs can support classrooms or specific students by:

- Creating predictability
- Adding structure
- Increasing motivation
- Clarifying behavioral and academic expectations
- Lowering stress and anxiety

● **ABI Implementation**

ABIs can be put into practice in a classroom or educational setting from Day 1! Common classroom management strategies such as room arrangement, intentional seating assignments, and using visuals to communicate the daily schedule are good examples of ABI. Below are suggestions on how to plan for and when to use ABI in your classroom or setting.

● **Before instruction begins:**

Anticipate support needs and proactively implement ABIs, such as setting up the classroom environment, developing visuals to complement verbal instruction, and consistently following routines at the start of the school year or before a new instructional period.

● **During transitions:**

Prepare students in advance for transitions or changes in their routine, such as moving between activities, changing classrooms, safety drills, or schedule adjustments.

● **After identifying an interfering behavior:**

When an interfering behavior is observed, look at what happened before the behavior and why it is likely to occur. ABIs can support situations that tend to trigger interfering behavior by removing or changing situations that occur beforehand. This form of ABI is individualized for a specific student. Monitor data/student progress and modify ABIs as necessary.



ABI Examples to Support Educational Settings

ABI Strategy	Description	Examples
Environmental Modifications	Set up the physical environment to make expectations clear, reduce distractions, and promote independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide flexible seating options • Assign student seats/work areas • Clearly mark boundaries • Incorporate visual supports
Schedules and Routines	Clearly display and teach the daily sequence, which creates predictability of routines, supports executive functioning, and increases independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post and reference visual schedule • Pre-teach routines and re-teach as needed • Write classroom and homework assignments on the board • Use timers to prompt transitions • Incorporate breaks into the schedule
Choice Making	Offer choices to the learner to increase motivation throughout daily activities such as instruction, recess, break times, lunch, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose where to sit at lunch • Choose which task to complete first • Choose preferred activities • Choose a reward
Interests and Preferences	Assess and use highly preferred items and activities to increase interest and encourage engagement in non-preferred or complex tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct preferences assessments to find out what students enjoy • Use superhero manipulatives to practice counting • Select reading and journal assignments based on student interests
Activity Adaptation	Modify how instruction is delivered to include the format, support offered, and level of difficulty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide both written/visual and verbal instructions • Use one-to-one as well as small-group instruction • Create interactive stations
Priming	Provide information about the activity before asking students to complete it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform students of activities ahead of time • Giving warning of upcoming schedule changes and transitions • Help students set daily goals
Sensory Stimulation	Provide items, activities, environments that meet student's sensory needs. These are unique to student preferences!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide fidget items • Sensory corners • Use sensory stimuli such as rice and sand with writing • Provide quiet music or noise-canceling headphones
Clear Expectations and Consequences	Establish and review behavioral or academic expectations often. Explain how the educator will support them at the start of the day or before activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and read a social story asking for a break before starting a lesson • Review a task analysis for hand washing before bathroom break • Verbally remind student before independent work, to raise their hand if they need help
Learner Motivation	Embed motivators into the day by incorporating student interests and preference in learning materials or provide access after they have completed the learning task as a reinforcement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing a student what they can earn for completing work or following classroom guidelines • Have the learner complete easier tasks before difficult tasks (behavioral momentum) • Assign staff that the student likes to spend time during difficult or less preferred tasks

Additional Resources

- [The National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice \(NCAEP\)](#)
- [VCU-ACE Ask the Expert - Antecedent-Based Intervention](#)
- [VCU-ACE Ask the Expert - Antecedent-Based Intervention: Motivation](#)
- [VCU-ACE Ask the Expert - Antecedent-Based Intervention: Providing Choices](#)

For additional information, visit the ACE website:
vcuautismcenter.org

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