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The Parent’s Guide to In-Home ABA Programs

Frequently Asked Questions about Applied Behavior Analysis for your Child with Autism

Elle Olivia Johnson

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“Here I am!” This is just one example of ways to tailor an ABA program for a child’s individual needs.

2. How can such simple play activities help my child learn and achieve his educational and behavioral goals?
At first glance, it might seem that blowing bubbles and rolling a ball back to the therapist are strictly play skills. However, look closer.

Vignette: John and Annie

John, an ABA therapist from Chicago, is working with Annie, a non-verbal two year old. John sits in front of Annie, dips a wand into bubble solution, and, while making eye contact with Annie, says “One, two, …” When Annie makes eye contact, John says “Three!” and blows the bubbles. Annie loves this game and soon learns that after John says “One, two”, she will need to make eye contact to make John say “Three!” and blow the bubbles. Notice that the therapist holds off on blowing the bubble wand until Annie has made eye contact. In time, John will require more and more of Annie before blowing those bubbles. Soon, John will encourage Annie to make any kind of vocalization before he will blow the bubbles. As Annie gains these skills in vocalizing, John will shape her vocalizations into the word “Three”, by reinforcing her closer and closer attempts at the word.
Each task that the therapist does with your child is related to a specific goal. It probably looks like they are just playing, however, they are working hard on various educational, social, and play skills. There are many different goal areas for ABA programming. Some are listed in Table 4.1, along with the types of activities that the therapist may use to practice them.

Table 4.1 ABA goals and related activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal Area</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Puzzles, nesting cups, ring stacker on graduated cone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Come sit down, go play, give to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task completion skills</td>
<td>Puzzles, string beads, placing pegs into holes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory-based activities</td>
<td>Touching, squeezing, or poking putty, reaching into a bin filled with rice or beans to retrieve a toy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play skills</td>
<td>Sharing, taking turns, eye contact, learning simple games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitation</td>
<td>Knock table, cover eyes, clap, tap thighs, tap table, stomp feet, arms up, turn around, nod head, shake head, jump, stand up, wave, high-five, blow kiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive tasks</td>
<td>Matching colors, shapes, objects, or categories, expressively or receptively labeling vehicles, toys, food, clothing, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>