

The ABC Behavior Log

A simple way to look for the pattern behind a behavior that’s puzzling you. A is what happened before (the antecedent), B is the behavior itself, C is what happened after (the consequence). You’re a scientist here, not a judge — just write down what you see.

Behavior is communication; the log helps you hear it. Write entries as soon after the moment as you can, and describe what a camera would have seen — “threw the cup,” not “was defiant.” Don’t hunt for the pattern every night: most families need about two weeks of entries before one shows itself. A filled log is also exactly what a BCBA, therapist, or pediatrician needs from you. Pairs with the parent notebook on our website.

What goes in each column

- Before — where you were, who was there, what was just asked, what had just ended.
- What they did — observable facts only. What you saw and heard, nothing more.
- After — what everyone did next: attention, a task ending, getting the item, being left alone.
- Notes — the backdrop: short sleep, hunger, illness, a schedule change, a new place.

Date & time	Before — what was happening	What they did	After — what happened next	Notes

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After two weeks, step back and read it all at once. Same time of day? Same trigger? Same payoff? That's the pattern — and it's the beginning of a plan.