Intervention Guide: Self Monitoring

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What Is It?

Self-monitoring builds skills by teaching students to recognize and keep track of their own behaviors. Self-monitoring interventions require a student to observe and record whether or not they have engaged in a target behavior. Self-monitoring can involve technology devices such as computers or tablets to track behaviors or simple systems that use tally marks and smiley faces.

When to Use It

- Self-monitoring is effective for decreasing challenging behaviors maintained by attention and escape. The procedures focus on increasing positive, desired behaviors in place of the problem behaviors.

- Self-monitoring procedures should only be used with students who are able to (a) identify the target behavior, (b) self-observe, and (c) accurately record their performance. Students should be able to complete this process and engage in the required task independently.

- Self-monitoring requires the teacher to explicitly teach the student the skills that are required to use self-monitoring procedures. If a teacher is unable to provide instruction and support to the student while learning these new skills, self-monitoring may not be effective.

- Self-monitoring can be used during a variety of activities and instructional arrangements, such as independent work or group instruction.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

☐	1. Identify the target behavior you want to increase. Define it in observable terms that the student can understand (e.g., paying attention: eyes on my paper, voice is off, pencil in my hand, completing my worksheet).
☐	2. Select an activity or situation where the student can easily monitor and record his behavior while engaging in the activity.
☐	3. Design a simple recording form for the student that does not distract the student from engaging in the academic or social situation (e.g., checklist, yes/no recording). See the additional resources for examples and ideas.
☐	4. Teach the student how to use the self-monitoring form. Have the student practice recording his performance of the target behavior. While the student practices self-observing and recording, you should also record the student's performance and compare your observations with the student's observations. Continue to provide feedback to the student as needed.
☐	5. Using baseline data, set a goal and select a reinforcer to be delivered when the student meets the goal. Reinforcers should be student-specific and increase the likelihood that the student will engage in the appropriate behavior in future occurrences. Make sure the student knows what they need to do to receive the reinforcer. If possible, select reinforcers in collaboration with the student.
☐	6. Have the student use the intervention during the selected activity or situation. A teacher may need to provide the self-monitoring materials to the student and cue the student to begin using the intervention.

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☐	7. Immediately reinforce the student for completing goals at the end of each activity or situation. If reinforcement will be delayed (e.g., student earns computer time before lunch), acknowledge that the student met his or her goal, provide praise, and ensure that the reinforcement is delivered at the appropriate time.
☐	8. Monitor the student's accuracy and progress throughout the intervention.
☐	9. As the student is successful in meeting his or her goals across multiple opportunities, set new goals with the student.

Example

Jackson frequently makes off-topic comments that are distracting to his classmates during the morning writing task in Ms. Pickett's class. Ms. Pickett is unable to assist and monitor all of the students during this independent work session. The intervention team completes a functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention plan. The team decides to implement a self-monitoring intervention for Jackson during the morning writing task. They define the target behavior as (a) sitting at desk, (b) zero voice, (c) writing in journal. The team designs a simple, yes/no recording form for Jackson to use. The form also lists the target behavior to serve as a reminder to Jackson. They decide to use a timer set to 1-minute intervals to prompt Jackson to self-observe and record for the entire 10-minute writing task. At each 1-minute mark, the timer beeps and Jackson records "yes" if he is demonstrating the target behavior or "no" if he is not.

Mr. McCoy, the behavior specialist, teaches Jackson the self-monitoring intervention. Together, they practice the process of observing and recording the target behavior. Using baseline data and input from Jackson, the team decides that if Jackson can demonstrate the target behavior in 6 out of 10 intervals, then he can walk down to the office with a classmate to deliver the lunch tickets.

The next day, Jackson uses the self-monitoring form during the morning writing task. Mr. McCoy also decides to track Jackson's performance of the target behavior and compare his data with Jackson's at the end of the writing block. This ensures that Jackson is recording accurately and is done periodically by the adults in the classroom. When Jackson is successful in meeting his goal after many consecutive writing blocks, Ms. Pickett works with Jackson to set a new goal and gives him the option of selecting a new reinforcer that will be likely to increase the occurrence of the appropriate behavior during future writing blocks.

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Self-monitoring requires that the intervention team design a recording form or system that the student can use while engaging in the target activity or task. If a recording form is too complicated for the student to use, redesign the form so the student can use it more easily.

- Have the student model the appropriate behavior and practice the skills of self-observation and self-recording before using the intervention in the classroom.

- When teaching the student to self-observe, provide the student with examples and non-examples of the identified target behavior.

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- Reinforce the student as soon as possible once he or she reaches their goal.

- Work collaboratively with the student to set goals. Select student-specific and powerful reinforcers.

- Collect data on the student's behavior and compare your data with the student's self-monitoring form to ensure accuracy. Provide feedback to the student on their accuracy.

- Use self-monitoring across academic, behavioral, self-help, and social skills.

- Change the monitoring cue (i.e., the cue that triggers the student to monitor his own behavior). The monitoring cue can be an audio recording, visual timer, teacher directed prompt, or student directed cue.

Resources

Rafferty, L. A. (2010). Step-by-step: Teaching students to self-monitor. T*EACHING Exceptional Children, 43*, 50-58.

Schulze, M. A. (2016). Self-management strategies to support students with ASD. *TEACHING Exceptional Children, 48*, 225-231.