Behavior Assessment: Duration and Latency Recording
Est. Time: 25 Minutes

Objective

Gain experience collecting data using both duration recording and latency recording.

Overview

By collecting data, educators can determine whether a student's behavior is problematic and warrants intervention. Before they can do so, they must first operationally define the **target behavior**, or the behavior to be changed. In an operational definition, a behavior is explicitly or clearly defined such that it is measurable, can be identified by two or more observers, and can be identified across time and in different settings or contexts. Once educators operationally define the target behavior, they should choose a data collection system that provides the most accurate picture of student performance in the classroom. Two such methods are **duration and latency recording**.

Duration recording documents how long a student engages in a specified behavior. This type of data collection is appropriate for behaviors that have a distinct beginning and ending or for those that occur at very high rates (e.g., tantrumming, being out of seat, not completing a task). To collect data on the duration of a behavior:

1. Start the stopwatch when the behavior begins.

2. Stop the stopwatch when the behavior ends.

3. Record the length of time the behavior occurred.

4. Repeat the above steps until the end of the observation period.

5. Calculate the total duration by adding the duration of each episode during the observation period.

Educators can report duration data in terms of the average duration per observation period (total duration student is engaged in the behavior/number of observational periods) if the observation period is consistent (e.g., 15 minutes). For example, the student is given five minutes at the end of a class each day to work on his homework. The student works on his homework for a total of fifteen minutes across five days. To calculate the average duration the student worked on his homework, divide fifteen minutes by five days. The average durations is three minutes per day.

Educators may also report the percentage of time the student engaged in the behavior. If the observation periods vary in length (e.g., the class has twenty minutes in the library the first week of the month and fifteen minutes the second week of the month), the percentage of time the student engaged in the behavior can be calculated by dividing the total minutes of the behavior's duration (e.g., 20 minutes) by the number of minutes in the observation period (e.g., 60 minutes) and multiply by 100.

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Tips for Implementation

- Because it is difficult to collect duration data while teaching, ask another individual (e.g., a teacher) to collect the data. However, if you decide to collect the data, have a stopwatch with you at all times and keep the data sheet close by (e.g., on a clipboard, on a mailing label taped to your shirt sleeve).

- When collecting this type of data, make sure the behavior definition specifies the length of time that the behavior must occur in order to "count." For example, a student is considered off-task when his or her behavior lasts for longer than five (5) seconds.

Latency recording measures the amount of time that lapses between an antecedent (e.g., teacher's directive) and when the student begins to perform a specified behavior. This type of data collection is appropriate for behaviors that follow a command or directive, or a distinct stimulus. For example, the teacher might expect the student to be in his seat and ready for class within ten seconds of the bell ringing. To collect data on latency:

1. Start the stopwatch when the antecedent is provided.

2. Stop the stopwatch when the behavior occurs.

3. Record the number of seconds or minutes that elapsed between the end of the antecedent and the onset of the behavior.

4. Repeat the above steps until the end of the observation period.

Tips for Implementation

- Clearly define the target behavior so that you can accurately record instances in which the student engages in the behavior. For example, if you are collecting data on a student who is chronically tardy, start timing when the bell rings and stop timing when the student is physically sitting in his desk. Alternately, you may stop timing when the student enters the classroom. Defining these behaviors is crucial to maintain consistency in data collection efforts.

- As with duration data, latency data can be difficult to collect while teaching. To make it easier, have a stopwatch and data sheet readily available.

Behavior Assessment: Duration and Latency Recording

Activity

1. View the video at http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/mcontent/duration-and-latency/. Use the attached duration recording form to record instances of the student's off-task behavior.

2. View the video again and use the attached latency recording form to record how long it takes the student to begin a task after the teacher gives a prompt. Be sure to use the stopwatch when recording your data.

3. Answer the following questions.

   a. According to the duration data, what percentage of time was the student off task?
   b. Do you think the percentage of time that the student was engaged in off-task behavior is problematic? Explain.
   c. According to the latency data, when the teacher gave the initial directive for the class to begin working, how long was it before the student began the task?
   d. After redirecting the student, how long was it before the student began the task?
   e. Do you think the amount of time it took the student to begin the task after the teacher's initial directions is problematic? How about after being redirected? Explain.

Behavior Assessment: Duration and Latency Recording

Duration Recording Form

Student: _Kailyn_   Date: _1/01/xx_

Class/Teacher: _Language/ Mrs. Oliver_   Observer: _Mrs. Hand_

Target/Problem Behavior: _During independent math activities, Kailyn engages in off-task behaviors, which refers to any behavior lasting 5 seconds or longer that deviates from teacher instruction (e.g., looking around the room, playing with her hands or objects)._

Start Time	End Time	Duration

Total time observed:	
Total time off-task (seconds):	
Percentage of time off-task:	

Behavior Assessment: Duration and Latency Recording

Latency Recording Form

Student: _Kailyn_   Date: _1/01/xx_

Class/Teacher: _Language/ Mrs. Oliver_   Observer: _Mrs. Hand_

Target/Problem Behavior: _During independent math activities, Kailyn will begin working on her assignment within five seconds after a teacher provides a prompt (e.g., directions, redirection)._

Start Time (Time of request)	Time (behavior was initiated)	Latency