# **Evidence-Based Practice Brief: Extinction**

This evidence-based practice brief on extinction includes the following components:

- 1. Overview, which gives a quick summary of salient features of the practice, including what it is, who it can be used with, what skills it has been used with, settings for instruction, and additional literature documenting its use in practice
- 2. Steps for Implementation, detailing how to implement the practice in a practitioner-friendly, step-by-step process
- 3. Implementation Checklist, to be used to monitor fidelity of the use of the practice
- 4. Evidence Base Summary, which details the NPDC-ASD criteria for inclusion as an evidence-based practice and the specific studies that meet the criteria for this practice

# **Overview of Extinction**

Sullivan, L., & Bogin, J. (2010). *Overview of extinction.* Sacramento: CA. National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, M.I.N.D. Institute. University of California at Davis Medical School.

Extinction is a strategy based on applied behavior analysis that is used to reduce or eliminate unwanted behavior. Extinction involves withdrawing or terminating the positive reinforcer that maintains an inappropriate interfering behavior. This withdrawal results in the stopping or extinction of behavior. The interfering behavior is likely to increase in frequency and intensity (extinction burst) before it is extinguished as the learner seeks to elicit the reinforcers previously provided. Extinction is often used with differential reinforcement to increase appropriate behaviors while discouraging the use of inappropriate behaviors.

### Evidence

Extinction procedures meet the criteria for an evidence-based practice with four single subject and one group design studies. The evidence supports the use of extinction procedures with preschool, elementary, and middle school ages.

#### With what ages is extinction effective?

Extinction can be used effectively with children and youth in early childhood, elementary, and middle school settings.

#### What skills or intervention goals can be addressed by extinction?

Extinction procedures are most commonly used to reduce challenging or interfering behaviors. Within the articles that comprise the evidence base, extinction has been used to successfully reduce interfering behaviors (disruptive or restricted behaviors that interfere with optimal development, learning, and/or achievement).

#### In what settings can extinction be effectively used?

Extinction procedures should only be used after other more positive interventions have been tried and shown not to work. Extinction procedures should only be used by an individual who is familiar with the learner and who can create a plan for dealing with an extinction burst should the behaviors get worse.

#### **Evidence Base**

The studies cited in this section document that this practice meets the NPDC on ASD's criteria for an evidence-based practice. This list is not exhaustive; other quality studies may exist that were not included.

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### Preschool

Kuhn, S. C., Lerman, D. C., Vorndran, C. M., & Addison, L. (2006). Analysis of factors that affect responding in a two-response chain in children with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis 39*(3), 263-280.

#### Elementary and Middle School

- Aiken, J. M., & Salzberg, C. L. (1984). The effects of a sensory extinction procedure on stereotypic sounds of two autistic children. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 14*(3), 291-299.
- Hagopian, L. P., Contrucci-Kuhn, S. A., Long, E. S., Rush, K. S. (2005). Schedule thinning following communication training: Using competing stimuli to enhance tolerance to decrements in reinforcer density. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 38*(2), 177-193.
- Maag, J. W., Wolchik, S. A., Rutherford, R. B., & Parks, B. T. (1986). Response covariation on self-stimulatory behaviors during sensory extinction procedures. *zJournal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 16(2), 119-132.
- Rincover, A. (1978). Sensory Extinction: A procedure for eliminating self-stimulatory behavior in developmentally disabled children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 6*(3), 299-310.

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Weiskop, S., Matthews, J., Richdale, A. (2001). Treatment of sleep problems in a 5-year old boy with autism using behavioral principles. *National Autistic Society, 5*(2), 209-221.

# **Evidence Base for Extinction**

The National Professional Development Center on ASD has adopted the following definition of evidence-based practices.

To be considered an evidence-based practice for individuals with ASD, efficacy must be established through peer-reviewed research in scientific journals using:

- *randomized or quasi-experimental design studies.* Two high quality experimental or quasi-experimental group design studies,
- *single-subject design studies.* Three different investigators or research groups must have conducted five high quality single subject design studies, or
- combination of evidence. One high quality randomized or quasi-experimental group design study and three high quality single subject design studies conducted by at least three different investigators or research groups (across the group and single subject design studies).

High quality randomized or quasi experimental design studies do not have critical design flaws that create confounds to the studies, and design features allow readers/consumers to rule out competing hypotheses for study findings. High quality in single subject design studies is reflected by a) the absence of critical design flaws that create confounds and b) the demonstration of experimental control at least three times in each study.

- Horner, R., Carr, E., Halle, J., McGee, G., Odom, S., & Wolery, M. (2005). The use of single subject research to identify evidence-based practice in special education. *Exceptional Children, 71,* 165-180.
- Nathan, P., & Gorman, J. M. (2002). A guide to treatments that work. NY: Oxford University Press.
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- Rogers, S. J., & Vismara, L. A. (2008). Evidence based comprehensive treatments for early autism. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, *37*(1), 8-38.

Using these criteria, the empirical studies referenced below provide documentation for supporting extinction as an evidence-based practice. This list is not exhaustive; other quality studies may exist that were not included.

### Preschool

Kuhn, S. C., Lerman, D. C., Vorndran, C. M., & Addison, L. (2006). Analysis of factors that affect responding in a two-response chain in children with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis 39*(3), 263-280.

#### Elementary and Middle School

- Aiken, J. M., & Salzberg, C. L. (1984). The effects of a sensory extinction procedure on stereotypic sounds of two autistic children. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 14*(3), 291-299.
- Hagopian, L. P., Contrucci-Kuhn, S. A., Long, E. S., Rush, K. S. (2005). Schedule thinning following communication training: Using competing stimuli to enhance tolerance to decrements in reinforcer density. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 38*(2), 177-193.
- Maag, J. W., Wolchik, S. A., Rutherford, R. B., & Parks, B. T. (1986). Response covariation on self-stimulatory behaviors during sensory extinction procedures. *zJournal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 16(2), 119-132.
- Rincover, A. (1978). Sensory extinction: A procedure for eliminating self-stimulatory behavior in developmentally disabled children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 6*(3), 299-310.

# **Steps for Implementation: Extinction**

Sullivan, L. & Bogin, J. (2010). *Steps for implementation: Extinction.* Sacramento, CA: The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, M.I.N.D Institute, University of California at Davis School of Medicine.

Implementing extinction procedures to reduce an interfering behavior (disruptive or restricted behavior that interferes with optimal development, learning, and/or achievement) for children and youth with autism spectrum disorders includes the steps described below.

#### Step 1. Identifying the Interfering Behavior

When starting an extinction program, the first step is to identify the behavior that is interfering with a learner's development and learning. Interfering behaviors might include disruptive, self-injurious, and/or repetitive/stereotypical behaviors. To identify a behavior, teachers and other practitioners (speech-language pathologists, behavioral specialists, paraprofessionals, and other team members) gather information from numerous individuals regarding the topography, frequency, intensity, location, and duration of the behavior.

- 1. Teachers/practitioners define the interfering behavior by focusing on:
  - a. what the behavior looks like (topography),
  - b. how often the behavior occurs (frequency),
  - c. how intense the behavior is (intensity),
  - d. where the behavior occurs (location), and
  - e. how long the behavior lasts (duration).

#### Step 2. Identifying Data Collection Measures and Collecting Baseline Data

1. Teachers/practitioners identify data collection measures to be used to assess the interfering behavior before implementing the intervention.

When collecting data for extinction, it is important to focus on the frequency, duration and intensity of the behavior. Data collection sheets which measure these characteristics will be most appropriate for extinction.

2. Teachers/practitioners gather baseline data on the interfering behavior.

The data collection measures determined above would be used, along with the information gathered in Step1, to determine the nature of the interfering behavior prior to the intervention.

During the baseline phase, it is important to collect data for a long enough period of time to determine if there is some consistency in the behavior. Teachers and/or other practitioners should decide how long data will be collected (e.g., one week, two weeks), and what will happen if there are not enough data to be considered useful (e.g., redesign the data collection method,

observe at a different time). Baseline data collection is important in order to assess the impact of the intervention on the interfering behavior.

The teachers/practitioners also must decide who will collect the initial data. For example, it might be easiest for a paraprofessional to collect data across the day. The team also may decide that it would be easier to have an objective observer collect data rather than the classroom teacher who is in the middle of a lesson.

### Step 3. Determining the Function of the Behavior

1. Prior to implementing the intervention, teachers/practitioners interview school staff, family members, and the learner (if appropriate).

An important part of determining the function of the behavior is to interview team members about the nature of the interfering behavior. Team members may provide information about the functions of the interfering behavior in different contexts and the different forms of the behavior that serve the same function.

- 2. Prior to implementing the intervention, teachers/practitioners use direct observation methods to hypothesize the function of the interfering behavior that include:
  - a. A-B-C data (antecedent, behavior, consequence).
    - *i.* When determining the function of the behavior, teachers and other practitioners also must identify what happens right before the behavior (i.e., antecedents) and what happens immediately after the behavior occurs (i.e., consequences). For example, a teacher gives a direction to a student to line up with the class to go outside (antecedent), the student has a tantrum (behavior), the teacher allows the student to remain inside to calm down (consequence). In this example, the behavior appears to have an escape function. For additional examples of ABC data charts, see *Steps for Implementation: Functional Behavior Assessment* (National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders).
  - b. anecdotal observation.
    - *i.* This may involve compiling a running log of the behavior during observation sessions.
  - c. functional analysis.
    - *i.* Once this information is gathered, a functional analysis can be completed that tests the proposed function of the Interfering Behavior against actual behavioral observations. For greater detail on completing a functional analysis, please consult the Functional Behavior Assessment module.
- 3. Teachers/practitioners identify the function of the behavior as one of the following:
  - a. securing attention,
  - b. accessing tangible items (for example, the child cries until the parent gives her a toy that had been out of reach).

- c. escaping/avoiding a task or situation, and/or,
- d. sensory reinforcement (for example, the light reflecting off of a spinning object is appealing (reinforcing) to a student who stereotypically spins objects.).

#### Step 4. Creating an Intervention Plan

- Teachers/practitioners clearly write out extinction procedures (e.g., "When the learner does <u>X</u>, we will respond by doing <u>Y</u>") by:
  - a. preparing a list of possible learner responses to the intervention and
  - b. determining appropriate teacher/staff responses.

The first phase of Step 4 is to clearly write out the intervention procedures. Teachers/ practitioners might prepare a list of possible learner responses to the intervention and determine appropriate teacher/staff responses. For example, if a student is raising his/her hand repeatedly and the function is hypothesized to be gaining attention, the teacher can plan to ignore the student's hand raising.

2. Teachers/practitioners define other strategies to be used along with the extinction procedure.

An important part of creating the plan is to define how extinction procedures will be incorporated with other intervention strategies. The following list includes other intervention strategies that might be considered. Additional information regarding these strategies is available in separate briefs.

- Functional communication training (FCT)
- Differential reinforcement.
- Non-contingent reinforcement.
- Response interruption/redirection.
- 3. Teachers/practitioners define the extinction procedures that the team will follow such as:
  - a. ignoring the behavior,
  - b. removing reinforcing items or activities,
  - c. disallowing escape from non-preferred situations, or
  - d. preventing sensory feedback from occurring.

Some examples of how to use extinction procedures based on the four common functions of behavior are provided in the following table. The purpose of extinction is to reduce an interfering behavior, but it is very important to also teach or promote a replacement behavior, an appropriate behavior that would take its place. When using extinction, practitioners should determine the appropriate replacement behavior and strategies for promoting it. Options for such complementary interventions appear in the last column of the table.

### **TABLE 1. Extinction Procedure Examples**

Function of Behavior	Extinction Procedure	Example	Other Procedures Useful in Conjunction with Extinction
To gain attention	Planned ignoring	Learner is calling out to get the teacher's attention, and the teacher does not respond to the calls.	<ul> <li>Functional Communication Training (FCT)</li> <li>Differential reinforcement</li> <li>Non-contingent reinforcement</li> </ul>
To escape/ avoid demands or interaction	Deny opportunity for breaks	Learner screams whenever he is asked to complete a new task to avoid the demand. The teacher/practitioner continues with task even though the learner is screaming.	<ul> <li>Functional Communication Training (FCT)</li> <li>Differential reinforcement</li> <li>Non-contingent reinforcement</li> </ul>
To gain sensory stimulation or to avoid unwanted stimulation	Interrupt and re-direct the behavior <i>OR</i> change the consequence (from the sensory behavior) so it is no longer reinforcing	Learner bangs his head on a desk so the teacher puts a soft pillow to block the reinforcing sensation.	<ul> <li>Response interruption/redirection</li> <li>Functional Communication Training (FCT)</li> <li>Differential reinforcement</li> <li>Non-contingent reinforcement</li> </ul>
To gain tangible items	Deny access to materials	Learner screams to get time on a computer and is denied access.	<ul> <li>Functional Communication Training (FCT)</li> <li>Differential reinforcement</li> <li>Non-contingent reinforcement</li> </ul>

4. Teachers/practitioners outline an extinction burst safety plan (i.e., what staff/family should do when the behaviors get worse before they get better).

It is important to anticipate that the behavior will possibly get worse for a little while before it gets better. This is sometimes called an extinction burst. Planning for a possible extinction burst includes determining an appropriate response. This requires developing a clear plan to handle a possible increase in the interfering behavior. In the above example of a student who is kicking to escape demands, the extinction burst plan would describe what actions to take if the student starts kicking other students. For example, if during the extinction burst, the student kicks even more than usual, the teacher/practitioner simply ignores the kicking and continues with task demands.

- 5. Teachers/practitioners discuss the intervention with all adults who are with the learner with ASD on a regular basis (e.g., therapists, paraprofessionals, family members).
- 6. Teachers/practitioners explain the intervention procedures to other students who are in close proximity to the learner with ASD when the interfering behavior occurs (e.g., in the same class, at lunch).

Other students also may be alerted to the intervention plan and possible extinction burst.

#### Step 5. Implementing the Intervention

- 1. Teachers/practitioners wait for the behavior to occur and respond by:
  - a. planned ignoring,
  - b. denied access
  - c. escape extinction
  - d. sensory extinction
- 2. Teachers/practitioners promote a replacement behavior using a complementary intervention approach such as functional communication training or differential reinforcement of other more appropriate behaviors.
- 3. Teachers/practitioners continue to respond as planned during the duration of the behavior.

#### Step 6. Collecting Outcome Data

In Step 6, teachers and practitioners again measure the topography, frequency, intensity, location, and duration of the problem behavior following the extinction intervention. This process should include getting input from team members as well as making direct observations of the learner in the setting where the behavior occurs. A-B-C data (antecedent, behavior, consequence) should also be collected at this time. Gathering thorough data regarding the interfering behavior is an important step in determining if the intervention is working.

- 1. Teachers/practitioners collect outcome data that focuses on:
  - a. what the behavior looks like (topography),

- b. how often the behavior occurs (frequency),
- c. where the behavior occurs (location),
- d. how intense the behavior is (intensity), and
- e. how long the behavior lasts (duration).
- 2. Teachers/practitioners collect data in the setting where the behavior occurs.
- 3. Teachers/practitioners compare intervention data to baseline data to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

### Step 7. Reviewing the Intervention Plan

After collecting outcome data on the interfering behavior, the next step is to review the effectiveness of the intervention plan. Depending on the response of the learner to the extinction strategy, modifications may need to be made to the procedures. Once modifications are in place, frequent follow-up observations are necessary to determine if the interfering behavior has been eliminated. It also is important to consider if new interfering behaviors have developed in place of the original interfering behavior.

- 1. All relevant team members meet to discuss intervention data and to determine its effectiveness.
- 2. Teachers/practitioners modify the intervention plan if the learner continues to exhibit the interfering behavior by:
  - a. changing the way they respond to the behavior,
  - b. changing the length of time they ignore or respond to the behavior,
  - c. expanding the plan to other settings,
  - d. having other team members implement the intervention plan, or
  - e. adapting the plan to new behaviors which may have arisen.
- 3. Teachers/practitioners collect data at least weekly to determine the effectiveness of the intervention on reducing the interfering behavior.
- 4. Teachers/practitioners identify new interfering behaviors as they arise.

# **Implementation Checklist for Extinction**

Sullivan, L. & Bogin, J. (2010). *Implementation checklist for extinction*. Sacramento, CA: The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, M.I.N.D Institute, University of California at Davis School of Medicine.

*Instructions*: The Implementation Checklist includes each step in extinction procedures. Please complete all of the requested information including the site and state, individual being observed, and the learner's initials. To assure that a practice is being implemented as intended, an observation is *always* preferable. This may not always be possible. Thus, items may be scored based on observations with the implementer, discussions and/or record review as appropriate. Within the table, record a 2 (implemented), 1 (partially implemented), 0 (did not implement), or NA (not applicable) next to each step observed to indicate to what extent the step was implemented/addressed during your observation. Use the last page of the checklist to record the target skill, your comments, whether others were present, and plans for next steps for each observation.

Site:	State:
Individual(s) observed:	Learner's Initials:

	Observation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Date								
	Observer's Initials								
	Planning (Ste	ps 1	-4)						
Step 1. Identifying the Inter	ering								
Behavior	-				Sco	re**			
1. Define problem behavior by for	ocusing on:								
a. what the behavior looks li									
b. how often the behavior or									
c. how intense the behavior									
d. where the behavior occur									
e. how long the behavior las									
Step 2. Identifying Data Col Measures/Collecting									
<ol> <li>Identify data collection measures interfering behavior before im intervention.</li> </ol>	ires to assess the plementing the								

#### Skills below can be implemented by a practitioner, parent or other team member.

\*\* Scoring Key: 2 = implemented; 1 = partially implemented; 0 = did not implement; NA = not applicable

	Observation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Date								
	Observer's Initials								
Step 2. Identifying Data C Measures/Collecti (cont.)	ollection ng Baseline Data				Sco	ore**			
<ol> <li>Gather baseline data on th behavior.</li> </ol>	e interfering								
Step 3. Determining the F Behavior	unction of the				Sco	ore**			
<ol> <li>Interview team members to function of the interfering b</li> </ol>									
<ol> <li>Use direct observation me hypothesize the function o behavior that include:</li> </ol>									
a. completing A-B-C data behavior, consequence	charts (antecedent, e).								
<ul> <li>b. describing anecdotal o log of behavior).</li> </ul>	bservations (running								
c. completing functional a proposed function of b	nalysis to test ehavior.								
<ol> <li>Identify the function of the l the following:</li> </ol>	behavior as one of					•			
a. securing attention,									
b. accessing tangible items	З,								
c. escaping/avoiding a tasl	k or situation, and/or								
d. sensory reinforcement.									
Step 4. Creating an Interve	ention Plan								
<ol> <li>Clearly write out extinction the student doesX by doingY) by:</li> </ol>	procedures (when _, we will respond								

\*\* Scoring Key: 2 = implemented; 1 = partially implemented; 0 = did not implement; NA = not applicable

		Observation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		Date								
		Observer's Initials								
St	ep 4. Creating an Interve	ntion Plan				-				
	(cont.)					Sco	pre**		•	
	a. preparing a list of possib	ole learner								
	responses to the interve	ention.								
	b. determining appropriate	teacher/staff								
	responses.									
2.	Describe other procedures	which will be								
	incorporated with the extinc	tion procedure.								
3.	Define extinction procedure	s to be used, such								
	as:									
	<ol> <li>a. ignoring the behavior,</li> </ol>									
	b. removing reinforcing iter	ms or activities,								
	c. disallowing escape from	non-preferred								
	situations, or									
	d. preventing sensory feed	lback from								
	occurring.					1	1		1	
4.	Make an extinction burst (w	hen behaviors get								
	worse before they get better	r) safety plan.								
5.	Discuss the intervention with	h all adults who are								
	with the learner with ASD or	n a regular basis.								
-	<b>—</b> • • • • • •									
6.	Explain the intervention pro-	cedures to other								
	students who are in close pi	roximity to the								
	learner with ASD.									
			0100							
	Intervention (Step 5)									
St	ep 5. Implementing the I	ntervention								
1.	Wait for the behavior to occ	ur and respond by:								
							-		-	
	a. planned ignoring,									
	b. denied access,									
1								1		

\*\* Scoring Key: 2 = implemented; 1 = partially implemented; 0 = did not implement; NA = not applicable

		Observation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		Date Observer's Initials								
Stop 5 Imploment	ing tha I	ntorvontion			l				l	
(cont.)	ing the i		Score**							
c. escape extinc	tion, and/o	or								
d. sensory extine	ction.									
2. Promote a replace complementary in										
3. Continue to respo duration of behav										
	Pr	ogress Monitoring	g (St	teps	6-7)					
Step 6. Collecting	Outcome	e Data								
1. Collect outcome data that focus on:										
a. what the beha	vior looks	like (topography),								
b. how often the	behavior	occurs (frequency),								
c. where the beh	avior occi	urs (location),								
d. how intense th	ne behavio	or is (intensity), and								
e. how long the behavior lasts (duration).										
2. Collect data in the occurs.	2. Collect data in the setting where the behavior occurs.									
3. Compare interven determine the effe										

\*\*Scoring Key: 2 = implemented; 1 = partially implemented; 0 = did not implement; NA = not applicable

		Observation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		Date								
		<b>Observer's Initials</b>								
Ste	ep 7. Reviewing the Interv	ention Plan	Score**							
1.	Discuss results with all team r	members to								
	determine its effectiveness.									
2.	Modify the intervention plan if	the learner								
	continues to exhibit the interfe	ering behavior by:								
		с ,								
	a. changing the way they res	spond,								
b. changing the length of time they ignore or										
	respond,	, 0								
	• *									
	c. expanding the plan to othe	er settings,								
		0 /								
	d. having other team member	ers implement the								
	intervention plan, and/or									
	1 /									
	e. adapting the plan to new b	pehaviors that								
	may have arisen.									
	, ,									
3.	Continue to collect data at lea	ast weekly to								
	determine the effectiveness o	f the intervention.								
4.	Identify new interfering behav	iors as they								
	arise.									

\*\*Scoring Key: 2 = implemented; 1 = partially implemented; 0 = did not implement; NA = not applicable

Date	Observer Initials	Target Skill/Behavior, Comments, and Plans for Next Steps
Date	Observer Initials	Target Skill/Behavior, Comments, and Plans for Next Steps
Date	Observer	Target Skill/Behavior, Comments, and Plans for Next Steps
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Date	Observer Initials	Target Skill/Behavior, Comments, and Plans for Next Steps

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Date	Observer Initials	Target Skill/Behavior, Comments, and Plans for Next Steps
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Date	Initials	Target Skill/Benavior, Comments, and Plans for Next Steps