

“Three Points Make a Straight Line” (Determining Baseline and Interpreting Data)

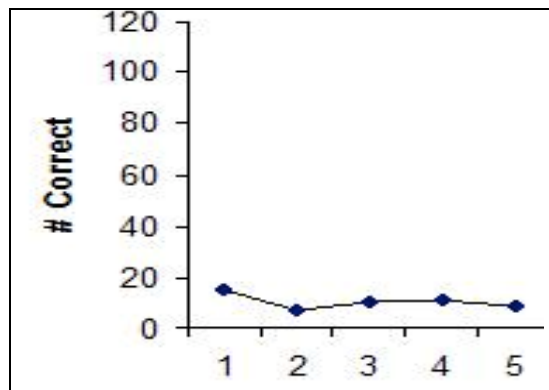
Now that we can create

- meaningful and measurable IEP Objectives for our students,
- practical, easy-to-use data forms and
- easy methods to collect data

we now need to know how often to collect data and how to interpret the data we collect. Below are some guidelines to consider when deciding how frequently data should be collected and how to interpret our results. (See Strategies, “How to Measure Progress” for examples of objectives, data forms and methods).

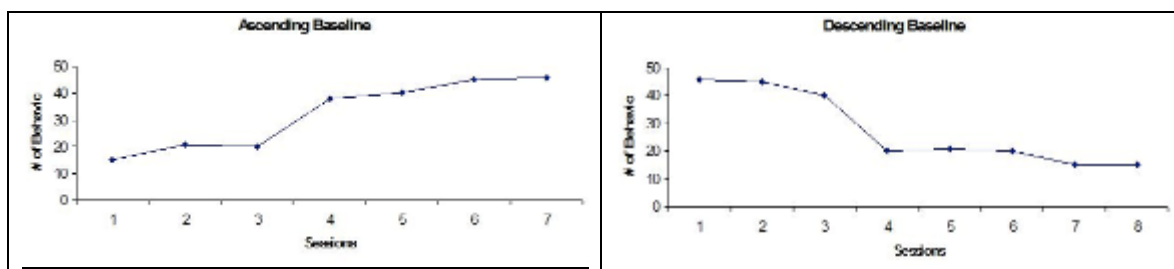
1. Collecting Baseline:

First we need to collect “baseline” to determine what our student can do before we begin teaching a new skill. We need to collect baseline data a minimum of three times to see if we have a stable baseline. We must gather enough data so we can be pretty sure about what our student is doing without intervention. If data fluctuates wildly, or we can’t see if the baseline is stable or visualize a trend, then we may have to take more than three samples of baseline data. (See forthcoming handout on “Fluctuating Data”).



Here is an example of a Stable Baseline of data.

Sometimes Baseline Data isn’t flat, but slopes upward or downward. In this case, we need to have taken enough baseline samples so we can see what the trend is.



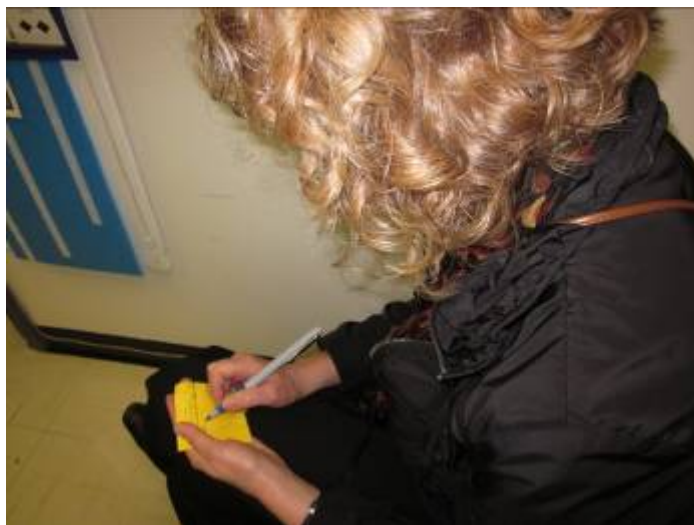
Above are examples of Ascending and Descending Baseline

2. How Frequently Should We Collect Data?

Once we have determined a baseline, then we should continue to collect data while we are providing our planned intervention. The data must be collected frequently enough so that we can be sure that we are not wasting our student's learning time by using a method of intervention that isn't working. However, we don't have to overwhelm ourselves by constantly taking data either. This is where therapy and teaching becomes more art than science. We have to make a decision on how frequently to collect data, based on past experience with our student's rate of learning. As a rough guideline, try to collect data at least once a month.

3. Collecting Data During a Period of Intervention

Data collection should be easy, e.g. as easy as taking frequency counts on a sticky note. Remember, if we want to see if our student is progressing, we should not be providing prompts or cues while we take samples. The only exception would be if the objective states that a prompt will be required. For example, if our objective is to have our student be able to independently initiate communication with his iPod Touch and AAC Application, then we should not prompt or cue him when we are taking data samples, but only count the number of unprompted communication attempts during a certain pre-established time period.



Taking data can be as easy as taking data counts on a sticky note

4. How To Decide Whether to Revise Our Previous Objective

If our data shows wild fluctuations or a trend opposite to what we are intending to achieve, then we may decide to ...

- change the method of intervention.

If we try another method of intervention and our student is still not progressing in his acquisition of the skill, then we may decide to

- revise our objective.

Remember, our overall goal is to help our students develop to their fullest potential. It may be that our students may never be completely independent in a skill. However, if they have learned some degree of independence, then we have achieved our goal.

5. How To Decide Whether Our Students Have Achieved Their Objective

Our students have achieved their objective when they have achieved the criterion set out in the IEP Objective. So, for example, if our objective is that our student will be able to independently initiate communication using an iPod Touch 80% of the time over 3 successive days, and s/he achieves that level, then we can say our student has achieved the objective and it's time to teach a different skill.

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http://www.funkphd.net/7741/ssd/ssd_quiz.htm