Tip Sheet: Self-Monitoring

Definition
Self-Monitoring (i.e., self-recording): students keep a record of their own behavior.

Other Terminology
All of the terms below are part of self-management and refer to students collecting data on their own behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 2009):
- Goal setting
- Self-evaluation
- Self-instruction
- Self-reinforcement

Rationale
- An important goal in education is for students to become independent in monitoring and managing their own behavior (Cooper et al., 2007).
- As students with disabilities spend more time in general education classroom, their use of strategies to monitor and change their own behavior becomes increasingly more important (Alberto & Troutman, 2009).

There are a number of advantages to using self-management strategies in the classroom that include:
- Reduced dependency on teachers (Lee et al., 2007)
- Increased generalization (Koegel et al., 1999)
- Increased time for learning (McDougal & Brady, 1998)
- Increased student motivation and self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 2002)
- Easily taught to students (McLaughlin et al., 1985)
- Requires less teacher time and effort as compared to other strategies (Prater, 1994)

Implementation:
Steps (adapted from Alberto & Troutman, 2009; Rafferty, 2010):
1) Identify a target behavior.
2) Define the target behavior.
   a. Be sure to develop an operational that has concrete examples of the target behavior.
3) Collect baseline data (teacher).
4) Select/design a data collection system and procedures.
   a. Decide if the student will collect data during or after the activity/time period.
   b. Determine how the student will be cued to record data.
5) Teach the student how to use the data collection system.
   a. Discuss the importance of the target behavior.
   b. Share the definition and talk about examples and nonexamples.
   c. Teach and demonstrate how to use the self-monitoring form.
   d. Teach students to graph data.
   e. Let student practice all of the steps.
   f. Allow student to begin self-monitoring when he/she can complete all of the steps two to three times independently.
6) Decide if student needs reinforcement for improvement. Some students may demonstrate improvement without additional reinforcement.
7) Periodically monitor the student using the same baseline method order to evaluate student progress.
Other considerations (Rafferty, 2010):
1. Use with behaviors that a student already possesses (self-monitoring is not about teaching new skills).
2. Do not use with dangerous behaviors.
3. Consider student’s cognitive level - students should be able to understand the target behavior and when he/she is performing it.
4. Use with behaviors that occur frequently enough to be monitored and that the student can control.
5. Consider a student’s background and do not target behaviors that are counter to a student’s culture (e.g., eye contact).
6. Consider items that can help cue students to self-monitor (Flaute et al., 2005):
   - Time Tracker Visual Timer & Clock by Learning Resources
   - Egg or digital timer
   - This is a “regular” timer that can be used for classroom activities. It is also useful if a student
   - Vibrating timers
   - Talking alarm clocks
   - Stop watches

**Self-Monitoring Example**
Casey is an 11-year old girl with a learning disability. Remaining on-task during class has been a challenge for Casey so she is working with her teacher to learn how to self-monitor on task behavior. The definitions are as follows:

On-task is:

- a) Looking at self-monitoring sheet or math practice sheet
- b) Writing on the self-monitoring or math sheet
- c) Raising hand and sitting quietly to ask question
- d) Using math manipulative

On-task is not:

- a) Talking to peer
- b) Walking around class
- c) Drawing a picture not related to math

The teacher collected baseline data for three consecutive days using momentary time sample, and the baseline data indicated that Casey was on-task an average of 3 out of 12 intervals (5 min intervals for 60 minutes) or 25% of the class period. Casey and her teacher decide to use the MotivAider® (http://www.habitchange.com) to cue Casey to collect data because it is quiet (vibrates to alert the student) and will not disrupt the class.

Casey’s teacher modeled and taught Casey how to collect data using the sheet below. The MotivAider® is set for an average of 5 minute intervals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>+ or -</th>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>+ or -</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
Each time the MotivAider® vibrates, Casey looks at her prompt card (see below) on her desk and asks herself the question, “Am I on-task?” If “yes,” then Casey marks a plus (+); if “no,” then Casey marks a minus (-).

Each day, Casey graphs the number of intervals she has a plus. Casey’s teacher added a token economy where Casey earns a token for each plus. Tokens are used to buy items at the class store at the end of each week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Looking at self-monitoring sheet or math practice sheet</td>
<td>✓ Talking to peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Writing on the self-monitoring or math sheet</td>
<td>✓ Walking around class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Raising hand and sitting quietly to ask a question</td>
<td>✓ Drawing a picture not related to math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Using math manipulative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence
Evidence supports the use of self-monitoring across behavior, disabilities, and settings. For example:

**Behaviors**
- Academics (e.g., reading, accuracy; Holifield et al., 2010; Joseph & Eveleigh, 2010)
- On task (e.g., DiGangi et al., 1991; Graham-Day et al., 2010)

**Disabilities**
- Autism (e.g., on task; Holifield et al., 2010)
- ADHD (e.g., Harris et al., 2005)
- Learning Disabilities (e.g., Prater et al., 1991)
- At-risk (e.g., Peterson et al., 2006)
- Intellectual disabilities (e.g., Ganz & Sigafoos, 2005)

**Settings**
- Elementary (e.g., Harris et al., 2005)
- Middle (e.g., Peterson et al., 2006)
- Secondary (e.g., Graham-Day et al, 2010)
- General Education (e.g., Harris et al., 2005; Peterson et al., 2006)
- Special Education (e.g., Levendoski & Cartledge, 2000)

Also see Ganz (2008) for a review and using self-monitoring as part of positive behavior support.

**References**


Cooper, J. O., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L (2007). *Applied behavior analysis* (2nd ed.) Columbus,
OH: Pearson.


