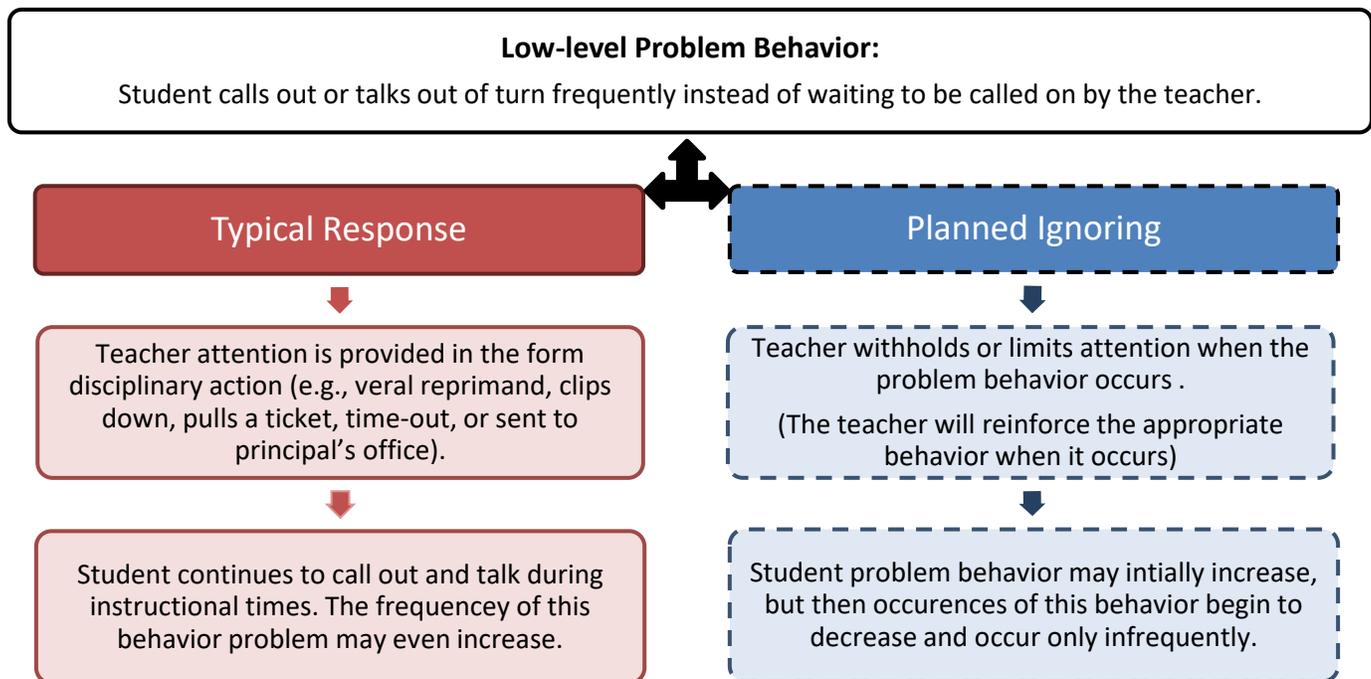


What is Planned Ignoring?

Planned ignoring involves the removal of attention when a minor behavior challenge is occurring. By ignoring the inappropriate behavior, the teacher withholds access to the sought reinforcer—attention. Planned ignoring typically targets low-level (e.g., minor) problem behaviors that primarily occur because the student seeks to gain attention; these behaviors do not significantly distract other students or otherwise interfere with classroom routines. Planned ignoring is an effective strategy for such behaviors because the reinforcer (e.g., attention) for the behavior is eliminated (i.e., withdrawn). The behavior is no longer reinforced when the teacher makes a commitment to ignore such behaviors and continue with instruction. Ideally, the teacher limits attention for minor problem behaviors and purposefully provides attention (e.g., praise or general attention) when the student exhibits more appropriate behaviors.

Comparing Planned Ignoring to a Typical Response



How to Use Planned Ignoring

- Select the target behavior to ignore:** Planned ignoring is useful for minor behavior problems that are reinforced by attention. Consider behaviors where a teacher's response and attention to such behaviors results in more time lost from instruction than can be justified.
 - Do not use planned ignoring with behaviors that may cause physical harm to other students (e.g., hitting, biting, throwing objects), bullying behaviors (e.g., intimidation, harassment), self-injurious behaviors (e.g., head-banging, scratching, cutting), or behaviors that cause major distractions.
- Reinforce appropriate behavior:** Planned ignoring should not be used in isolation to avoid the target behavior being replaced by another minor behavior challenge. Instead, pair planned ignoring with a reinforcement procedure for an alternative appropriate behavior.
- Be ready for the burst:** Often when you start planned ignoring, the problem behavior will increase before it decreases. This phenomenon is known as an *extinction burst*. When a burst occurs, don't be discouraged. Consistently ignore the target behavior until the behavior no longer occurs or occurs infrequently.
 - Be aware that you will be tested from time to time to see if the behavior no longer receives the desired attention. Be prepared to ignore the behavior again and again.
 - However, if the teacher finds that ignoring a student's behavior regularly results in an escalation of the target behavior, planned ignoring should be discontinued.

4. **Be consistent:** When an attention-seeking problem behavior occurs, you can ignore the behavior but continue to reinforce appropriate behaviors. Provide attention for appropriate behavior (e.g., desired, preferred, alternative behavior) when it occurs.

Tips for Effective Planned Ignoring

Planned ignoring can be difficult because the act of withholding reinforcement means the teacher purposefully avoids providing attention in all forms for this behavior. Some common forms of attention must be avoided if planned ignoring is to be effective:

- Avoid giving feedback for target behavior (example: “Daniel, that was not nice to say”).
- Avoid praising the student for not engaging in the target behavior (example: “Adrian, you did great by not interrupting me”).
- Avoid engaging in a teaching interaction about the target behavior (example: “Tanisha, do you know how that makes me feel when you interrupt me?”).
- Avoid non-verbal responses (e.g., big sigh, eye contact, change of facial expressions, change of voice tone, etc.)
- If you do need to respond to the target behavior, make your response brief!

Evaluate Your Use of Planned Ignoring

- Collecting data is an excellent way to evaluate the effectiveness of planned ignoring. Before implementing planned ignoring, collect baseline data by recording the number of times the student is engaging in the target problem behavior (the behavior you want to reduce or eliminate).
- You can use tally marks or counters to record the rate of the behavior as you go, or review recordings of your instruction to evaluate the target behavior. After implementing planned ignoring, continue to monitor the frequency of the target behavior to evaluate effectiveness (reduction of the target behavior) of the planned ignoring.
- Ask others (peers or instructional leaders/coaches) to observe you and provide feedback on your use of planned ignoring.
 - Ask them to record how many times you deliver reinforcement for an appropriate replacement behavior and withhold reinforcement for target behaviors.
 - Ask them to look carefully for instances where you accidentally provide reinforcement and attention for the target behavior.

Resources

This guide was adapted from the following articles and resources:

Burt, J. L., & Pennington, R. C. (2017). A teacher’s guide to using extinction in school settings. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 53*(2), 107–113. doi:10.1177/1053451217693363

Wright, J. (2015). Teacher attention: Shifting the focus from misbehavior to positive behavior. *Social-Emotional/Behavioral RTI Series*. Intervention Central.

http://www.jimwrightonline.com/mixed_files/montague/wright_praise_paired_w_planned_ignoring.pdf

Select Research and Resources

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

Iwata, B. A., Pace, G. M., Cowdery, G. E., & Miltenberger, R. G. (1994). What makes extinction work: An analysis of procedural form and function. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 27*, 131–144.

Janney, D. M., Umbreit, J., Ferro, J. B., Liaupsin, C. J., & Lane, K. L. (2013). The effect of the extinction procedure in function-based intervention. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 15*, 113–123.

For Further Reading

Colvin, G. (2009). *Managing noncompliance and defiance in the classroom: A road map for teachers, specialists, and behavior support teams*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Hester, P. P., Hendrickson, J. M., & Gable, R. A. (2009). Forty years later—the value of praise, ignoring, and rules for preschoolers at risk for behavior disorders. *Education and Treatment of Children, 32*(4), 513-535.

Lattal, K. A., St.Peter, C., & Escobar, R. (2013). Operant extinction: Elimination and generation of behavior. In G. J. Madden (Ed.), *APA handbook of behavior analysis* (Vol. 2, pp. 77– 107). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.