



WHAT ARE STIMULUS PREFERENCE ASSESSMENTS (SPAs)

- Everyone needs to be motivated to do various tasks. You know what is motivating or reinforcing to you, but do you know what is reinforcing to your students?
- That is where preference assessments come into play. They are assessments that help us find what reinforces students.



WHY PREFERENCE ASSESSMENTS?

- Can't we just talk to caregivers or past teachers?
We can, but that isn't always accurate. Students preferences change often and vary in different settings. Talking with others gives us a good idea of where to start with our preference assessments.
 - We can't assume we know what a student wants. What is reinforcing to one is not always reinforcing to another.
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TYPES OF PREFERENCE ASSESSMENTS

- Single stimulus
 - Paired stimulus
 - Multiple stimulus without replacement
 - Free operant
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SINGLE STIMULUS

o Method:

- A single item is presented to the student. Data is then taken on how the student interacts with the item. Does he approach the item or does he avoid the item? After 20-30 seconds to interact with the item, it is removed and other one place in front of student. Once all items have been set in front of student, you will repeat all items at least two more times.



SINGLE STIMULUS

Student: _____

Assessor: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Record + (approached) or - (non-approached) for each item on each trial.

Stimulus Item	Trial 1	Trial 2	Trial 3	Trial 4	Trial 5	% of approaches

Items approached on at least 80% of trials



SINGLE STIMULUS

- Advantages: Easy and will most likely identify sever preferred items
 - Disadvantages: Doesn't give a hierarchy of preferred items and may identify false positives because most students will interact with everything even if it isn't reinforcing.
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PAIRED STIMULUS

- Method
 - Two items are placed in front of student. The student it told to pick one. The student will grab an item and other item is immediately removed. Let student consume or interact with choice for 20 seconds. Repeat until all item have been pair with each other at least twice.
 - If student doesn't grab an item, remove and represent. If student still doesn't make a selection, remove and go to the next set of items.
 - If student grabs both items, take them away and repeat trial.
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PAIR STIMULUS

Student: _____

Date: _____

Stimulus	
1	
2	
3	
4	

	Left	Right	Selection
1	1	2	
2	3	4	
3	2	3	
4	4	1	
5	1	3	
6	2	4	
7	2	1	
8	4	3	
9	3	2	
10	1	4	
11	3	1	
12	4	2	

Stimulus	# Times selected
1	
2	
3	
4	

ASSERT
Autism Support Services:
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PAIRED STIMULUS (FORCED CHOICED)

- Advantage: Gives a great hierarchy of preferred items
- Disadvantage: Very time consuming



MULTIPLE STIMULUS WITHOUT REPLACEMENT

o Method

- An array of five items are placed out in front of student. The student is told to “pick one” and chooses from the array. As soon as a choice has been made, immediately remove all other items. Give student time to consume or interact with toy for 20 seconds. Repeat process with remaining items. Keep going until all items are gone. You will repeat procedure at least two more times.
 - o If student doesn't choose an item, remove and represent. If no item is chosen session is completed.
 - o If student goes for multiple items, quickly remove and represent.



MSWO

 Preference Assessment Data Sheet						
Student: _____			Assessed By: _____			
Date: _____		Time: _____				
Stimulus Items	Rank by Trial			Sum of 1, 2, & 3	Overall Rank (Smallest sum is #1)	
	1	2	3			



MULTIPLE STIMULUS WITHOUT REPLACEMENT

- Advantages: Obtain an efficient hierarchy of preferences, quicker than the Paired stimulus with similar results
- Disadvantage: There are a lot of items to manipulate
- Note: Multiple stimulus can be done with replacement, but it may not build up a hierarchy.



FREE OPERANT

- Method
 - The student is given free access to any item while teacher records how long the student interacts with chosen items.



FREE OPERANT

- Advantages: Very simple to do and naturalistic.
 - Disadvantages: May not get a hierarchy of preferred items and data recording can be difficult.
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THINGS TO REMEMBER

- You can not combine edibles and tangibles in a single preference assessment. They must be done separately.
 - Allow students to eat edibles (small pieces) and allow student access to tangibles for about 30 seconds.
 - Preference assessments need to be repeated several times.
 - Preferences change with time, so do preference assessments often
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REFERENCES

- Dr. Thomas Higbee Utah State University
- Dr. Mark Groskreutz Southern Connecticut State University

