



This guide was produced by the Tennessee Behavior Supports Project at Vanderbilt University. This tip sheet was authored by Justine B. Katzenbach, Brooke C. Shuster, Becky H. Shafer, Blair P. Lloyd, and Erik W. Carter. For more information, visit <http://tennesseebssp.org>.



What are Opportunities to Respond?

An opportunity to respond (OTR) is when a teacher presents an instructional question, statement, or gesture that promotes student responses (e.g., pointing to a flashcard, answering a question aloud, writing an answer on a dry erase board).¹ The teacher then provides feedback to students based on responses. There are two basic types of OTRs: verbal responses and non-verbal responses.



When are OTRs effective?

All students can benefit from increased OTRs. High rates of OTRs in the classroom can lead to improved academic performance, increased on-task behavior, and decreased problem behavior.² Yet, research shows that students who exhibit problem behavior, including students with emotional/behavioral disorders (E/BD), receive fewer OTRs than their peers without disabilities.³ For students with co-occurring problem behavior and academic struggles, increased OTRs are associated with improved reading and math skills, more time spent on-task, and decreased disruptive behavior.⁴

Example of an OTR:

Opportunity to Respond ⁵		
Antecedent: Teacher provides question, cue, or prompt	Behavior: Students respond	Consequence: Teacher provides feedback
"Class, what is this word?"	"Apple."	"Good, the word is apple."

How do I provide OTRs?

Teachers should provide frequent opportunities for students to engage with classroom instruction.⁶ Current research indicates that effective teachers often provide 3 to 5 OTRs per minute for simple responses (e.g., verbal or gestural) and as few as 1 OTR per minute when responses are more complex (e.g., solving a math problem).⁷ A teacher may provide only 1 OTR every 10-30 minutes for longer tasks (e.g., written prompts).⁸ As results vary, the general rule is to focus on high quality and a variety of OTRs rather than focusing only on high numbers of OTRs.⁹

To increase the quality and number of OTRs, identify places in the lesson plan where student responding tends to be low. Additionally, see where you could increase responses from a single student to the whole class. The best way to improve the quality of OTRs in your classroom is to embed them directly into your lesson plans.



How can I add variety to the types of OTRs I provide?

Adding a variety of OTR strategies within your lesson plans can lead to more dynamic lessons and improved student engagement. For example, incorporating both individual responses and whole-group responses will hold students accountable on both the individual and class-wide level. Further, OTR strategies can promote different forms of responding (e.g., written, oral, gestural). The tables below provide more examples of both verbal and non-verbal strategies in action.

Examples of Verbal Opportunities to Respond¹⁰

OTR Strategy	Description of Strategy	Strategy in Action
Individual Questioning	A question is delivered to an <i>individual student</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling on students individually with increased frequency • Round-robin for individual responses • Pulling a random student's name out of container
Choral Responding	<i>All students</i> receive OTRs to a teacher-directed question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher signals and students respond in unison • Students read statement together • "Think-Pair-Share" • "Think-Write-Pair-Share"

Examples of Non-Verbal Opportunities to Respond¹¹

OTR Strategy	Description of Strategy	Strategy in Action
Individual Questioning	A question is delivered to an <i>individual student</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students "stop and jot" down their answers
Choral Responding	<i>All students</i> receive OTRs to a teacher-directed question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding up fingers/hands • Students move to a section of the room that corresponds with their answer • Clapping a number • Pointing to the answer • Low-tech student responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » White boards » Guided notes » Response cards • High-tech individual student responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » iPads » Clickers » Computer assisted response systems



Helpful Tips for Increasing OTRs in the Classroom:

- Write specific OTRs directly into your lesson plan before beginning instruction.
- Be strategic about your seating arrangements if using group or partner OTRs. For example, be careful not to partner two students who engage in high levels of disruptive behavior.
- Have a trusted colleague sit in for a class period. Ask them to tally the number of OTRs that occur. Set goals for yourself based on this information.

For Further Reading

<http://dwwlibrary.wested.org/media/opportunities-to-respond>

http://pbissmissouri.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/1._Opportunities_to_Respond_Teacher_Tool_092914.pdf

Endnotes

¹Sprick, R.S., Knight, J., Reinke, W., & McKale, T. (2007). *Coaching Classroom Management: Strategies and tools for administrators and coaches*. Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest Publishing.

²Haydon, T., MacSuga-Gage, A. S., Simonsen, B., & Hawkins, R. (2012). Opportunities to respond: A key component of effective instruction. *Beyond Behavior, 22*, 23-31.

³Carr, E.G., Taylor, J. C., & Robinson, S. (1991). The effects of severe behavior problems in children on the teaching behavior of adults. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 24*, 523-535.

⁴Sutherland, K. S., & Wehby, J. H. (2001). Exploring the relationship between increased opportunities to respond to

academic requests and the academic and behavioral outcomes of students with EBD: A review. *Remedial and Special Education, 22*, 113-121.

⁵Missouri SW-PBS Teacher Tool: Multiple Opportunities to Respond (2014). Retrieved from http://pbissmissouri.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/1._Opportunities_to_Respond_Teacher_Tool_092914.pdf

⁶Haydon, T., MacSuga-Gage, A. S., Simonsen, B., & Hawkins, R. (2012).

⁷MacSuga-Gage, A. & Simonsen, B. (2015). Examining the effects of teacher-directed opportunities to respond on student outcomes: A systematic review of the literature. *Education and Treatment of Children, 38*, 211-240.

⁸Simonsen, B. & Myers, D. (2015).

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Haydon, T., MacSuga-Gage, A. S., Simonsen, B., & Hawkins, R. (2012).

¹¹*Ibid.*