



What is Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)?

- Behavioral science is the examination of human and animal behavior using the principles of science, including observation, reproduction, testing, objectivity, etc.
- Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the *application* of behavioral science in order to improve socially important behaviors.
- ABA-based procedures apply behavioral principles of learning to increase or decrease a particular behavior, improve the quality of a behavior, stop an old behavior, or teach a new behavior.
- ABA-based behavioral interventions are based upon decades of scientific investigation with individuals affected by a wide range of behavioral and developmental disorders, including autism.
- Specifically for children with autism, research demonstrates the efficacy of ABA in teaching complex communication, social, play, and self-help skills, and in reducing disruptive behaviors.
- **Only four therapeutic interventions are scientifically validated for the treatment of autism, and all four of these are based on the principles of ABA**, according to Simpson (2005).
- Scientifically validated interventions for autism based on ABA include:
 1. Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT)
 2. Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT)
 3. Incidental Teaching, and
 4. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).
- **Effective ABA-based programs include intervention that is:**
 1. Implemented early (ideally, before age three)
 2. Intensive with respect to the number of hours children are actively engaged
 3. Provided in natural environments (i.e. home, school, community)
 4. Actively involves families
- More than 50% of children with autism who participated in comprehensive preschool programs using ABA were successfully integrated into non-handicapped classrooms, with many requiring little ongoing treatment. (Harris and Handleman, 1994)