### WHAT IS A PREFERENCE ASSESSMENT?

Observations that allow teachers and other practitioners to determine a preference hierarchy (most preferred items, moderately preferred items, and least preferred items). The most preferred items may be used as potential reinforcers for behavior and academic tasks.

### Steps for Preference Assessment

#### How do you plan for it?

Ask caregivers and others who know the student well what they like. Gather a variety of materials based on their responses that could be utilized with the individual during a preference assessment.

**Considerations for Preference Assessments**

- Consumable items such as food and drinks
- Tangible items such as various toys and materials
- Activities that involve movement
- Games
- Electronic media such as TV, iPad, computer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you do it?</th>
<th>Multiple Stimulus without Replacement</th>
<th>Multiple Stimulus with Replacement</th>
<th>Paired Stimulus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* The teacher presents an array of items in front of the student and allows him/her to select one. Each presentation of items is considered one trial</td>
<td>* The teacher places an array of items in front of the student and allows him or her to select one. After the student plays with or consumes the item, the teacher re-offers that same item in the array, and replaces the unselected items with new ones.</td>
<td>* The teacher places two items in front of the student, and allows him or her to select one. After the student plays with or consumes the item, the teacher presents another trial of two items.</td>
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<td>* After the student plays with or consumes the chosen item, the teacher removes it from the array.</td>
<td>* The teacher repeats trials until the set number of trials is complete (e.g., after every item has been presented at least twice), or until the student refuses to make any further selections.</td>
<td>* The teacher repeats trials until every item has been paired with every other item.</td>
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**How do you do it? Continued**

**Single Stimulus**
- The teacher places a single item in front of the student, and allows the student to approach it and engage with it or consume it if it is an edible.
- After the student finishes consuming the edible or stops engaging with the item, the teacher removes the item and presents another item.
- The teacher repeats trials until every item in the array has been offered to the student, or until the student consistently rejects or does not approach any of the items.

**Free Operant Observation**
- Should be done on a regular basis during free time when a student has the opportunity to pick from a variety of items or activities.

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**Case Study**

Ms. Collins teaches 6 year old Sammy. She would like to increase the amount of time he remains with the class during circle time, but she is having a hard time identifying what she can use as potential reinforcers. Sammy doesn’t seem to be interested in much. Ms. Collins collects baseline data to determine the amount of time Sammy currently sits and to determine criteria for reinforcement. Ms. Collins also sends home a questionnaire that asks his parents what food items, toys, and activities he likes. Based on the responses, Ms. Collins sets up a preference assessment with Goldfish crackers, crayons and blank paper, a Slinky, and a few Legos. She decided to use a paired stimulus preference assessment. Based on the preference assessment, Sammy’s most preferred item/activity is the Legos, followed by the Slinky, crayons, and Goldfish. Ms. Collins sets up a reinforcement system for Sammy to earn time with Legos for sitting longer in circle. She continues to collect data to determine if Sammy is now sitting longer with the class during circle time.

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**Resources**

For more detailed descriptions of each type of preference assessment:

For video clips of each type of preference assessment:
LASARD Project: Videos of Effective Practices
[http://www.hdc.lsuhscl.edu/lasard/opd_effective_practices.aspx](http://www.hdc.lsuhscl.edu/lasard/opd_effective_practices.aspx)