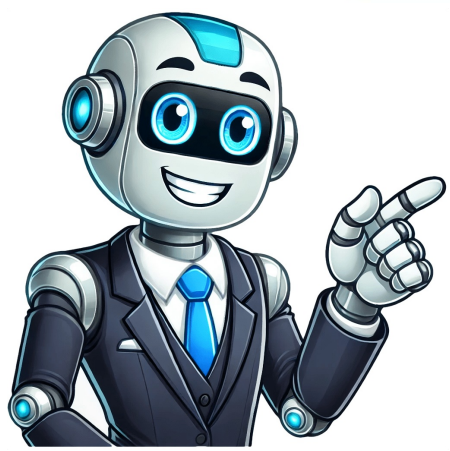I'm not a robot

The BCBA Task List is more than just an exam study guide—it's a professional framework that shapes how behavior analysts think, make decisions, and provide care. And with the 6th Edition now in effect (as of January 2025), it's worth taking a closer look at what's changed, what's stayed the same, and how the list continues to support both exam prep and day-to-day clinical work. Whether you're preparing to sit for the exam or looking to sharpen your practice, understanding how to use the BCBA Task List beyond the test is key. Published by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), the BCBA Task List outlines the essential knowledge and skills required for certification and ethical clinical practice. As of the latest update, it's officially called the BCBA Test Content Outline, a subtle shift in language that reflects a broader purpose—this isn't just a checklist, but a map for how competent BCBAs should think and work. The 6th Edition organizes the content into nine domains. Each section is weighted differently on the exam. For example, the "Concepts and Principles" and "Behavior-Change Procedures" domains carry the most weight (14% each), while foundational areas like "Behaviorism" and "Experimental Design" make up smaller—but still important—portions of the test. These domains aren't just academic categories—they mirror the daily responsibilities of BCBAs in practice. Understanding them is not only essential for passing the exam but for building a well-rounded, ethical, and effective clinical approach. Compared to the 5th Edition, the 6th brings a few notable changes: New name: The BCBA Task List is now called the Test Content Outline (TCO) to better reflect its purpose as an exam guide. Sections are now called Domains: What used to be "Section A, B, C…" are now referred to as Domains A, B, C, and so on. More items: The BCBA Task List 5th Edition had 92 items, while the 6th Edition now has 104 items. The content was reorganized—not significantly expanded. Some domains (like B) were split into smaller pieces, while others (like G) were combined. Updated language: The verbs used in each task are more specific. And the term "cultural humility" was added to emphasize the importance of respecting clients' values, backgrounds, and lived experiences. Greater emphasis on ethical and supervisory responsibilities: The updated outline places more weight on ethical decision-making, treatment integrity, and structured supervision—areas that are central to maintaining quality in applied behavior analysis. Taken together, these changes represent a move toward competence that's not just academic, but practical. The goal is to prepare behavior analysts for the realities of working in the field, not just passing a test. Once certified, many new BCBAs quickly realize that the content they studied for the exam shows up in nearly every aspect of their day-to-day work. Each BCBA Task List section connects directly to the work that happens across assessments, interventions, supervision, and decision-making. Data collection is a good example. It's not just about gathering numbers—it's about gathering accurate, useful information to guide treatment. Without reliable data, it's hard to know whether a client is making progress or if a change in strategy is needed. This is why the Task Content Outline places a strong emphasis on how we collect, analyze, and interpret data. Assessment and reassessment are equally central. BCBAs are responsible for identifying each client's strengths and areas of need, which requires thoughtful evaluation at intake—and again throughout treatment. Reassessments help guide clinical decisions and also support documentation required for insurance. When it comes to treatment planning, the outline reminds us that decisions must be data-driven. Reviewing progress, adjusting goals, and modifying procedures are all part of delivering effective services. These tasks can happen quickly or gradually, but the key is making sure they're intentional and backed by evidence. Supervision also takes on a larger role in the 6th Edition. BCBAs are expected to provide structured oversight, help RBTs grow their skills, and ensure ethical practice across their teams. Keeping supervision aligned with the Task List means having clear goals, tracking progress, and providing meaningful feedback. From organization and scheduling tie back to the competencies in the outline. A BCBA's day involves juggling therapy sessions, supervision, parent training, and team meetings. Staying organized helps maintain quality and prevent burnout—for the BCBA and the team they support. While the BCBA Task List (or now) Test Content Outline doesn't prescribe how to manage all of this, it offers a clear picture of what must be done. Tools like ABA Matrix can support that structure—by helping with documentation, data tracking, and supervision logs—but ultimately, the goal is to apply the outline's content in a way that's sustainable, ethical, and effective. From data collection to supervision, ABA Matrix simplifies the work so you can focus on client care—not admin. By using the BCBA Task List as more than a study aid, BCBAs can stay grounded in the expectations of the field and build practices that reflect those values every day. Whether you're studying for certification or applying these concepts in the field, keeping the outline close by is a good habit to build to stay more confident and effective in your practice. The BCBA Task List 5th Edition is a comprehensive framework outlining the skills and knowledge required for behavior analysts. This guide is essential for aspiring BCBAs, practicing analysts, and those seeking to understand ABA therapy better. It covers key areas like philosophical underpinnings, behavior assessment, behavior-change procedures, and ethics. Understanding the task list is crucial for passing the BCBA certification exam. The task list ensures high-quality ABA services based on ethical and research-backed practices. Introduction In applied behavior analysis (ABA), Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) are very important. They know the science of behavior and use it to help people improve their lives. To become a BCBA and give good ABA therapy, you need to really understand the BCBA Task List. This list shows the skills behavior analysts must have to check, understand, and change behaviors well. Understanding the Core Components of the BCBA Task List The BCBA Task List acts like a roadmap for anyone wanting to work in behavior analysis. It is also a helpful guide for BCBAs who are already practicing. This list forms the base of the BCBA training programs and shapes what is taught in the BCBA certification exam. If you are receiving or thinking about ABA therapy, knowing the Task List can give you useful information about what a certified professional knows and can do. Overall, this complete framework helps make sure that clients receive high-quality, ethical, and effective ABA services. Exploring Philosophical Underpinnings and Basic Concepts Task List Section A focuses on the basics of behavior analysis, especially radical behaviorism. This view sees behavior as shaped by the environment. The section looks at the principles of ABA and how they are used, helping to explain how behavior is learned and changed. It highlights the need to look at behavior in clear, measurable ways. This part of the Task List urges BCBAs to often ask "Why?" when looking at behaviors. This helps them find out the purpose behind a behavior. By grasping these key ideas, future BCBAs can work on changing behavior in a systematic and scientific way. The Significance of Measurement, Data Display, and Interpretation Accurate measurement, displaying data, and understanding it are very important for behavior analysts. They help in tracking progress and making smart choices. The Task List Section C highlights the need for clear observation and measurement. It turns ideas like tantrums or attempts at communication into clear data that can be measured. BCBAs must know different ways to collect data. They also need to know how to create graphs and show data visually. Additionally, it's crucial to analyze trends and draw useful conclusions. This approach helps behavior analysts see how well their methods are working. They can make changes if needed and make sure clients get the best treatment possible. Navigating Through the BCBA Certification Process The journey to becoming a BCBA is tough and needs hard work. It includes certain education requirements, hands-on experience, and passing a big test. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) sets these rules. They want to make sure that new entrants to the field can offer good and ethical behavior-analysis services. It is very important to understand the certification steps and the role of the BACB. This process makes sure that only skilled professionals, who know behavior analysis, are able to get the BCBA certification. Essential Requirements for Gaining BCBA Certification The BCBA has several rules for getting BCBA certification. First, you need to have a master's degree in behavior analysis or a similar field. You also need specific classes in behavior analysis. Besides this education, you must finish a lot of supervised fieldwork hours. This usually means 1,500 to 2,000 hours working with clients while a qualified supervisor helps you. The last step in this process is the BCBA exam. This is a big test that checks how well you know the BCBA Task List. If you pass these requirements, you will be ready with the knowledge, skills, and experience to succeed in your BCBA career. The Role of Ethics and Professional Conduct Ethics form the cornerstone of any reputable profession, especially those involving direct client care. The BCBA Task List dedicates a section to ethics (Section E), highlighting the ethical responsibilities of a behavior analyst, as detailed in the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts. This section covers essential considerations, such as maintaining client confidentiality, respecting confidentiality, and ensuring informed consent. BCBAs are expected to adhere to this code, making ethical decisions that prioritize the well-being and best interests of their clients above all else. What is the Test Content Outline 6th Edition (TCO 6) that the BACB is adopting on 1/1/25? The primary purpose of TCO 6 is to guide the creation of the BACB exam from 1/1/25 going forward. Will the 5th Edition Task List still be in effect? No, TCO 6 has replaced the 5th Edition Task List. You will see that some items have been added, some removed, and some moved from one content area to another. You can review a 5th to 6th Edition crosswalk here: ☐ Will this change affect course content or my degree plan? No, this change will not affect course content or your degree plan. How will this change affect me? Depending on when you plan to sit for the BCBA/BCaBA exam, this change may or may not affect you. If you plan to sit on or before 12/31/24, we recommend using the 5th Edition Task List to Guide your studying for the exam. If you plan to sit on or after 1/1/25, we recommend you use TCO 6 to guide your studying for the exam. Either way, be sure to use all materials you accessed through your program, emphasizing the BDS CBA Modules and the Cooper et al. (2020) text, Applied Behavior Analysis. View 5th Edition Task List Here: TCO 6 FAQs: ☐ the BDS TCO 6th Edition CBA Modules replaced the 5th Edition Task List version (V9)? Yes, BDS has updated the CBA Modules to reflect TCO 6, which should be available online on 1/1/2025. Our VCS courses have been revised to align with these changes and replace the TL 5 modules with the TCO 6 modules. The new courses were released for the C-Term on December 4, 2024; for the B-Term on January 2, 2025; and for the A-Term they will begin on January 29, 2025. Students in the B and C Terms have all been updated to TCO 6 modules. A-Term students will finish the current term with TL5 modules and replace the TL 5 modules with the TCO 6 on 1/ 29/ 2026. Students who plan to sit for the exam are encouraged to use the 5th to 6th Edition crosswalk to guide their study. will the 'Sunset of the VCS' on January 1, 2026 affect my course content and eligibility to apply to sit for the exam? ABAI and BACB have jointly decided to revise their program recognition process and will no longer use the ABAI-based program grids to review program content hours and exam eligibility. Instead, when you apply to take the exam after 1/1/2026, the ABA Program Coordinator will submit a BACB-required Attestation to support your application. We will share more information on that process as it evolves. In the meantime, there will be no changes to course content or eligibility requirements. Are there additional changes coming from BACB in 2027? Yes, Effective 1/1/2027, the BACB adds additional coursework content that may affect your program, depending on when you apply to test. The primary change will be an addition of required hours of 'Organizational Behavior Management,' the area now covered under the title of 'Supervision and Personnel Management'. Will these changes affect content hours or my degree plan? Yes, these changes will affect BACB's required content hours. We are revising our courses to meet that requirement; however, depending on the timing of your degree plan and graduation, and if you apply to sit after 1/1/27, you may be required to return for additional coursework. Please be aware of the possible impact of this change as you get closer to applying to sit for the exam. Is it true that there will also be changes to supervised experience requirements in 2027? Yes, this is true. Your supervised fieldwork is independent of your educational program, and outside of your educational program requirements, but BACB has announced changes to supervised fieldwork and continuing education requirements, also effective 1/1/2027. Please be sure to discuss these upcoming changes with your BCBA Supervisor and visit bacb.com regularly to stay current on these and other upcoming changes. The specific upcoming changes can be viewed here: if I have other questions? If you have questions about your educational requirements, your advisor is your first best point of contact. If they can't answer your questions, they will refer you to the ABA VCS Coordinator for further support. If you have questions about supervision, your BCBA supervisor is your best point of contact. We continue to emphasize the importance of following changes as they are announced and implemented at bacb.com. The links to 'News and More' and the Quarterly newsletters provide good information and should be visited at least quarterly. After reviewing these materials, please feel free to contact SBS@purdueglobal.edu if you have other questions. BCBAs are in high demand as the Applied behavior analysis (ABA) field continues to rapidly expand. Behavior analysts are critical for the implementation of high-quality, ethical ABA therapy. BCBA certification is a big step in an ABA professional's career trajectory. Earning this certification allows for increased opportunities and career advancement. If you're an aspiring behavior analyst or just want to learn more, join us as we explore what it takes to become a BCBA, including mastering the BCBA Task List. A BCBA is a clinician with graduate-level education who specializes in the science of behavior within the ABA field. Behavior analysts analyze skills and behaviors, such as communication, social, and functional living skills. After conducting in-depth assessments and analyzing the results, they create and implement interventions to teach new skills and modify behaviors. The primary goal of a behavior analyst is to teach skills that will enable their learners to experience the highest possible quality of life. Approximately 75% of BCBAs work with individuals with autism, while others work in schools, clinical behavior analysis, within organizational behavior management (OBM), and other subspecialties. Becoming certified as a BCBA requires a combination of education, fieldwork experience, and an exam. The minimum requirements to earn BCBA certification include: A master's degree Applied Behavior Analysis coursework, 1,500-2,000 supervised fieldwork hours Passing the BCBA exam Learn more about the steps to become a BCBA here. The BCBA Task List serves as the basis for the content behavior analysts need to know before obtaining certification. The BCBA exam questions are based on the Task List, requiring candidates to demonstrate knowledge of core ABA principles before becoming a BCBA. Currently, the exam consists of content from the 5th edition task list. However, starting in 2025, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) will switch to the 6th Edition Content Outline. The following information covers the current task list and a brief overview of the differences between the 5th and 6th editions. The first section, Task List Section A, covers the philosophical foundations of behavior analysis. This section entails tasks such as the philosophical assumptions of behavior analysis, radical behaviorism, and the dimensions of ABA. Philosophical underpinnings make up the smallest portion of the exam. Candidates can expect 6 questions from section A, making up 3.43% of the test. Section B of the task list covers key concepts and principles of ABA. This domain encompasses schedules of reinforcement, punishment, generalization, motivating operations, verbal operants, and several other concepts. This content area makes up a substantial part of the exam. Of the 175 questions, 32 are comprised of questions related to section B, making up 18.29% of the exam. Behavior analysts must deeply understand strategies for measuring behavior and displaying and interpreting data. Section C of the BCBA Task List covers this content area. Some tasks in Section C include establishing operational definitions, measuring temporal dimensions of behavior, and interpreting graphed data. Section C comprises 12% of the exam, with 21 total questions. Understanding experimental design is critical not only in research but also in applied work. Section D covers experimental design, with tasks such as distinguishing between internal and external validity and using single-subject experimental designs. 12 questions of the BCBA exam include content from Section D. This accounts for 6.86% of the questions. Section E, ethics, starts the application section of the exam, which includes more practice-oriented skills. The ethics domain of the Task List covers the ethical responsibilities of a behavior analyst, as found in the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts. Candidates will find 18 ethics questions on the BCBA exam, accounting for 10.29%. Section F is all about behavior assessment. BCBAs must understand how to assess and interpret data to inform treatment recommendations. Tasks included in this domain involve describing the functions of behavior, conducting preference assessments, and analyzing functional assessment data. Questions concerning behavior assessment make up 10.29% of the exam, with 18 questions in this domain. Behavior analysts use assessment results to inform behavior-change strategies. There are many ways to modify behaviors. Section G comprises procedures such as shaping, using differential reinforcement and token economies, and self-management strategies, among others. Section G is the largest content area of the exam. It encompasses 20% of the game, with 35 questions. Section H covers the strategies for selecting and implementing interventions. This domain includes tasks such as identifying potential interventions based on assessment and scientific evidence, monitoring client progress, and collaborating with others. The BCBA exam includes 16 questions from section H, accounting for 9.14%. The final domain of the BCBA Task List is Section I, Personnel Supervision and Management. This section includes tasks such as establishing clear expectations for supervisees, using a functional assessment approach to identify variables affecting personnel performance, and using function-based strategies to improve performance. Candidates can expect 17 questions regarding personnel supervision and management, making up 9.71% of the exam. The 6th edition BCBA Task List has some differences. It has the same 9 domains/content areas, with the exception of section A. Philosophical Underpinnings becomes Behaviorism and Philosophical Foundations in the 6th edition. Another difference is that in the 6th edition, the content areas are more evenly distributed. As we highlighted, the content areas of the 5th edition task list varied significantly. The smallest portion of the exam, philosophical underpinnings, makes up 3.43% of the exam, compared to the largest portion, behavior-change procedures, which make up 20% of the exam. In edition 6, this ranges from 5% in domain A (behaviorism and philosophical foundations) to 14% in domain G (behavior-change procedures). Some of the specific tasks within each content area have also changed. Candidates testing on the 6th edition Task List are encouraged to compare and contrast the task lists to understand the differences in depth. Mastering the BCBA Task List is critical as you pursue a career as a behavior analyst. The task list encompasses the foundational knowledge behavior analysts need to be successful in their role. Mastery of the task list allows BCBAs to competently apply the principles of ABA to craft meaningful behavior change in the lives of their learners. Learn more about the requirements for becoming a BCBA and consider whether this is the career path for you. — Our ABA solutions are designed to help ABA professionals and practices better handle scheduling, billing, documentation, data collection, and more. Schedule a demo to see how our BCBA-designed software improves the quality and delivery of ABA services. Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) play a vital role in designing, implementing, and overseeing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) programs. To ensure high standards in the field, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) has developed a BCBA Task List that outlines the skills and knowledge required for certification. The BCBA Task List serves as a roadmap for those preparing for the BCBA exam and is an essential reference for professionals in the field. In this article, we'll break down the current BCBA Task List (5th Edition), covering its key areas, importance, and how it shapes professional practice. What Is The BCBA Task List? The BCBA Task List is a set of competencies that BCBAs must master to become certified and effectively practice in the field. This list evolves over time to reflect advances in ABA research, ethics, and best practices. The most recent version, the 5th Edition BCBA Task List, is the current standard for BCBA certification and training. The BCBA Task List is divided into six major sections: Foundational Knowledge Applications of Concepts & Principles Behavior Assessment Behavior-Change Procedures Selecting & Implementing Interventions Ethics & Professionalism Each of these areas contains specific tasks that candidates must master to pass the BCBA exam and succeed in the field. Breakdown of the BCBA Task List (5th Edition) 1. Foundational Knowledge This section covers the fundamental principles of behavior analysis, including: Basic concepts in operant and respondent conditioning Principles of reinforcement, punishment, and extinction The role of motivating operations and discriminative stimuli Understanding stimulus control and generalization 2. Applications of Concepts & Principles BCBAs must apply their knowledge in real-world settings. This section focuses on: Conducting functional behavior assessments (FBA) Developing data collection methods Analyzing behavior patterns Implementing data-driven decision-making 3. Behavior Assessment This section is a core component of ABA therapy. BCBAs must: A. Behavior-Change Procedures This section outlines how to modify behavior using: Implementing positive and negative reinforcement strategies Using differential reinforcement procedures Teaching replacement behaviors Addressing challenging behaviors using ethical strategies 5. Selecting & Implementing Interventions BCBAs must ensure that interventions are evidence-based and suited to individual needs: Choosing interventions based on assessment results Ensuring treatment fidelity Adjusting interventions based on data analysis Promoting generalization and maintenance of skills 6. Ethics & Professionalism Ethical practice is the foundation of ABA therapy. This section focuses on: Adhering to the BACB Code of Ethics Maintaining client confidentiality and dignity Establishing collaborative relationships with families and professionals Engaging in ongoing professional development Why Is the BCBA Task List Important? The BCBA Task List plays a crucial role in: Guiding Exam Preparation: BCBA candidates must master all listed competencies to pass the BCBA certification exam. Ensuring Quality Practice: The task list sets the standards for effective and ethical ABA therapy. Professional Growth: Even after certification, BCBAs use the task list to refine their skills and stay up to date with the latest methodologies. Client Success: The structured approach ensures that clients receive high-quality, data-driven therapy. How to Use the BCBA Task List for Exam Preparation Preparing for the BCBA exam can be challenging, but the BCBA Task List provides a structured framework. Here are some tips to maximize your study efforts: Familiarize Yourself with the Sections: Understand each domain and subcategory in detail. Use Study Guides & Flashcards: Break down key terms, principles, and ethical guidelines into flashcards. Practice Data Collection & Analysis: Hands-on experience with functional assessments and behavior plans is essential. Join Study Groups: Collaborating with other BCBA candidates can enhance your understanding of complex concepts. Take Mock Exams: Simulating the BCBA exam environment will help you build confidence and improve time management. Conclusion The BCBA Task List (5th Edition) is an essential guide for aspiring and practicing BCBAs. It ensures that behavior analysts have the necessary skills to provide effective, ethical, and high-quality ABA services. At True Progress Therapy, we value the expertise and ongoing training to align with the latest ABA research and best practices. Our team follows the highest standards to support individuals with autism and developmental disabilities, ensuring the best possible outcomes. If you are interested in becoming a BCBA or seeking high-quality ABA therapy services, reach out to us at True Progress Therapy today! Frequently Asked Questions 1. What is the purpose of the BCBA Task List? The BCBA Task List outlines the competencies and skills required for behavior analysts. It serves as a guide for BCBA exam preparation, ensures quality ABA practice, and establishes professional standards for the field. 2. How often does the BCBA Task List get updated? The BACB updates the task list periodically to reflect advancements in ABA research and best practices. The current version is the 5th Edition, which replaced the 4th Edition in 2022. 3. Is the BCBA Task List only for exam preparation? No! While the task list is essential for passing the BCBA exam, it is also used by practicing BCBAs as a reference for ethical and effective ABA practices. It helps ensure that therapists provide high-quality, evidence-based interventions. Resources: The field of Applied Behavior Analysis is constantly evolving, and the expectations and standards for behavior analysts evolve with it. To ensure that professionals deliver top-notch services and remain informed, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) routinely updates and revises the task lists that serve as the foundation for their certification exams. This article explores the modifications introduced in the new Test Content Outline (TCO) 6, effective for exams starting January 1, 2025. Retaining Nine Content Domains A significant change to the BCBA TCO is the preservation of the nine content domains from the previous edition. However, four minor revisions have been made to domain titles to enhance clarity and organization. Additionally, the content within each domain has been rearranged to improve flow and remove redundancies, helping candidates better prepare for the examination. Revised Task Statements To improve the clarity of the task statements, revisions have been applied, focusing on the use of purposeful verbs. This helps effectively communicate the expectations and responsibilities of BCBAs, enabling aspiring professionals to grasp the specific skills they need to hone and showcase in their practice. Ethics Domain Update A notable modification in the BCBA TCO is the restructuring of the Ethics domain. Previously encompassing references to the entire Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts, the revised task list now redefines this domain as "Ethical and Professional Issues." This change offers candidates a more concentrated approach to ethical decision-making and professional conduct. Incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Recognizing the vital importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion within ABA, content related to these topics is now integrated into six task lists across three domains. This shift acknowledges the growing understanding that cultural competence and sensitivity are essential when working with diverse populations. By embedding these elements into the task list, the BCBA certification process emphasizes the necessity of promoting inclusivity and delivering culturally appropriate services. Overall, the revisions to the BCBA TCO result in a net increase of two tasks, raising the total to 104. These changes reflect the evolving needs and demands of the field. Nine tasks were removed, and ten tasks were amalgamated into five, streamlining content and removing redundancy. Introduction of Thirteen New Tasks Thirteen new tasks have been introduced in the BCBA TCO, though some elements of these tasks were previously included in prior statements. These additions address significant aspects of behavior analysis practice. B.20 Understand the role of multiple control in verbal behavior. B.22 Explore how behavioral momentum can be used to comprehend response persistence. B.23 Utilize the matching law to interpret response allocation. B.24 Distinguish between imitation and observational learning. C.12 Select a measurement procedure to gather representative procedural integrity data, considering relevant dimensions (e.g., accuracy, dosage) and environmental constraints. D.3 Identify threats to internal validity (e.g., history) and interpret data from single-case experimental designs. E.2 Recognize the risks to oneself, others, and the profession due to unethical behavior. E.8 Apply interpersonal skills (e.g., accepting feedback, listening actively, seeking input, collaborating) to build and maintain professional relationships. F.2 Integrate relevant cultural variables in the assessment process. G.18 Evaluate emotional and elicited effects of behavior-change procedures. H.5 Plan for and mitigate possible relapse of the target behavior. I.3 Implement methods that promote equity in supervision practices. These new tasks ensure the BCBA certification process equips professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills to address the complex demands of their roles effectively. In summary, the BCBA Test Content Outline has undergone significant changes based on the findings of the recent Job Task Analysis. These updates, including task statement revisions, content reorganization, and the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion, benefit the field's evolving nature and the increasing expectations placed on behavior analysts. Aspiring BCBAs should familiarize themselves with these changes to align their knowledge and skills with the updated task list, thereby successfully meeting certification examination demands and delivering high-quality services in ABA. The field of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is undergoing continual transformation, and with this, the roles and responsibilities of behavior analysts are also progressing. To ensure that professionals maintain high service quality and stay informed, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) periodically revises the task lists that form the basis of their certification exams. In this article, we examine the updates incorporated into the latest Test Content Outline (TCO) 6, which will be implemented for exams starting January 1, 2025. This new edition represents an evolution from the BACB's 5th Edition Task List to the 6th Edition Task List. These revisions reflect the latest developments and best practices in the field of ABA, aiming to better prepare behavior analysts for the challenges of modern practice. By staying aligned with current research and methodologies, the BACB ensures that certified professionals are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively serve their clients and communities. Buy the latest study guide here which will be updated with all of the 6th edition material: Are you feeling nervous about the updates to the 6th Edition Test Content Outline? Don't be. We're here to break down the changes— they're not as scary as they seem. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board® (BACB®) has made significant updates as the BCBA certification exam transitions from the 5th Edition Task List to the 6th Edition Test Content Outline (TCO). These changes reflect a growing focus on cultural humility, equity, and the evolution of the behavior analysis field. Here's an overview of the most notable updates, drawing directly from the BACB's® February 2022 Newsletter and other resources. Why the Changes? The BACB periodically updates its exam content to ensure it stays relevant to modern practice. This update, driven by a Job Task Analysis (JTA) conducted in 2021, was guided by several principles. Responsiveness to the Profession: To reflect current challenges and trends in applied behavior analysis (ABA), such as the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. Clarity and Relevance: To ensure tasks are precise and emphasize real-world applications. Separation from Certification Requirements: Unlike previous updates, this revision is not accompanied by certification changes. This allows for exam updates to occur more frequently without requiring structural overhauls in certification pathways. From Task List to Test Content Outline One of the first big updates is the shift from the Task List (5th Edition) to the Test Content Outline (TCO) (6th Edition). While the Task List took on extra (unintended) functions as curricula for fieldwork and coursework, the name change to Test Content Outline is intended to clarify that it is strictly a blueprint for examination content. While it may assist with developing supervision and coursework goals and content, it is not intended as an all-encompassing curriculum. Summary of Overall Changes A number of new tasks were added, while 9 were removed. In addition to additions and removals, some tasks were restructured and combined into others, while some tasks were broken down into multiple tasks. For example, 5th Edition Task List item B-5 Define and provide examples of schedules of reinforcement was broken into two separate items in the 6th Edition Test Content Outline: B.9. Identify and distinguish among simple schedules of reinforcement and B.10. Identify and distinguish among concurrent, multiple, mixed, and chained schedules of reinforcement. Overall, there are 12 more tasks (104 total) in the 6th Edition Test Content Outline compared to the 5th Edition Task List (92 total).

5th Edition 6th Edition Title Task List Test Content Outline Groups of Tasks Section Domain Number of Tasks 92 104 # of Questions on the Exam 175 175 It's important to note that Sections are now called Domains. However, the overall content that each Domain represents are mostly unchanged. Two of the nine domains have new titles, but the rest remain the same. Philosophical Underpinnings → Behaviorism and Philosophical Foundations: Emphasizing the philosophical influence of behaviorism throughout this domain. Ethics → Ethical and Professional Issues: A broader focus to include professional behavior beyond ethics alone. Some areas had a net increase in task list items (I'm looking at you, Domain B), while others had a slight reduction. This does not mean that they're covered more heavily on the exam, though. Here is a breakdown of the overall changes in task number by Domain: Section → Domain 5th Edition 6th Edition A. Philosophical Underpinnings → Behaviorism and Philosophical Foundations 5 5 B. Concepts & Principles 15 24 C. Measurement, Data Display, and Interpretation 11 12 D. Experimental Design 12 13 E. Ethics → Ethical and Professional Issues 7 12 F. Behavior Assessment 9 8 G. Behavior-Change Procedures 22 19 H. Selecting and Implementing Interventions 9 8 I. Personnel Supervision and Management 9 8 Exam Content by Area It's important to know that the number of task items is not the same as the number of items on the exam. While some Domains had an increase in the number of tasks, they may have less questions on the BCBA® Exam now (I'm looking at you again, Domain B). The total number of questions on the exam (175 with 10 additional pilot questions) remains unchanged. Section → Domain 5th Edition 6th Edition A. Philosophical Underpinnings → Behaviorism and Philosophical Foundations 63% 85% B. Concepts & Principles 3218% 2414% C. Measurement, Data Display, and Interpretation 2112% 2112% D. Experimental Design 127% 137% E. Ethics → Ethical and Professional Issues 1810% 2213% F. Behavior Assessment 1810% 2313% G. Behavior-Change Procedures 3520% 2514% H. Selecting and Implementing Interventions 169% 2011% I. Personnel Supervision and Management 1710% 1911% The following are now weighed more heavily on the exam than in the past: Concepts and Principles Behavior Assessment Behavior-Change Procedures What This Means for You The good news is, the changes from the 5th to 6th edition are largely structural and clarifying. Even though it may look like some things are new (e.g. Matching Law) they were likely already addressed under other tasks. If you are a supervisor: Make sure you're going beyond the Task List (now TCO) when supervising. The TCO is not meant to be a curriculum. While we have aligned our own supervision curriculum to cover all of the items in the TCO, we do not go in order and we do not only cover the items. We also make sure that the items are being applied to actual practice-based competencies. For example, we include topics like therapeutic relationships even though they're not explicitly addressed in the TCO because they are still an essential skill for BCBAs®. We also look at competencies that combine multiple tasks. For example, designing data collection systems involves multiple tasks from sections C and H. If you have a trainee who is testing soon, work with them to assess their skills related to each item to determine where to focus their study efforts. If you are a trainee: Look at past assessment data (e.g. Mock Exams) to determine your areas of strength and weakness. Map these to the 6th Edition tasks to determine where to focus your efforts. If you studied the 5th edition, but will be testing under the 6th, you can use a detailed crosswalk (like ours) to see how your current skills and gaps map to 6th Edition competencies. Want a More Detailed Breakdown? Download our 5th to 6th Edition Guide for a detailed crosswalk of changes. We've broken things down by Domain (items added, removed, summaries of changes) as well as by each individual item for each Domain.