

Scatter Plot Data Sheet

Based on the work of P. Touchette, R. MacDonald, and S. Langer (1985)

A scatter plot can help to identify the patterns of responding in natural settings. Severe problems often occur in short bursts of responding alternating with periods of no responding. Line graphs illustrate this frequency well. The scatter plot will display not only a sense of frequency but also the periods during the day in which the behavior is emitted. Severe problem behavior presents only two important rates: zero and unacceptable. The scatter plot will display the presence and absence of the target behavior over the course of the day. The visual patterns of the scatter plot easily lend themselves to interpretation.

Problem behaviors may be highly correlated to a time of day, the presence or absence of certain people, a social setting, a class of activities, a contingency of reinforcement, a physical environment, and combinations of these and other variables. The scatter plot can assist in demonstrating the effects of altering variables as hypotheses regarding the student behavior are tested through changes of schedule, activities, instructors or other variables.

A grid needs to be designed that is practical for the purpose (see sample attached). The grid segments could be hours, half-hours, quarter hours, or any time unit appropriate to the duration of the student's schedule. Horizontal segments represent successive days. A blank cell represents a zero rate. The filled cell represents a problem behavior occurring during the time segment. If the target behavior needs to be divided into low and high frequency, a slash can represent the presence of the behavior in low frequency with a filled cell representing high frequency.

When the target behavior occurs in other settings or at other times, the chart may be extended to include all waking hours and can be used at home after school or on weekends. The important aspect of recording the frequency of the target behavior is to define or describe the behavior well. Different observers of the same behavior should be in agreement as to the occurrence of the behavior and if necessary, determining if the behavior was high or low frequency during the designated time period.

The scatter plot can be used as an assessment tool and as a means of documenting change in behavior. The scatter plot allows insights into patterns of responding not readily available in graphs of daily or weekly frequency. The tool has minimal demands on staff and the visible display has valuable dividends.

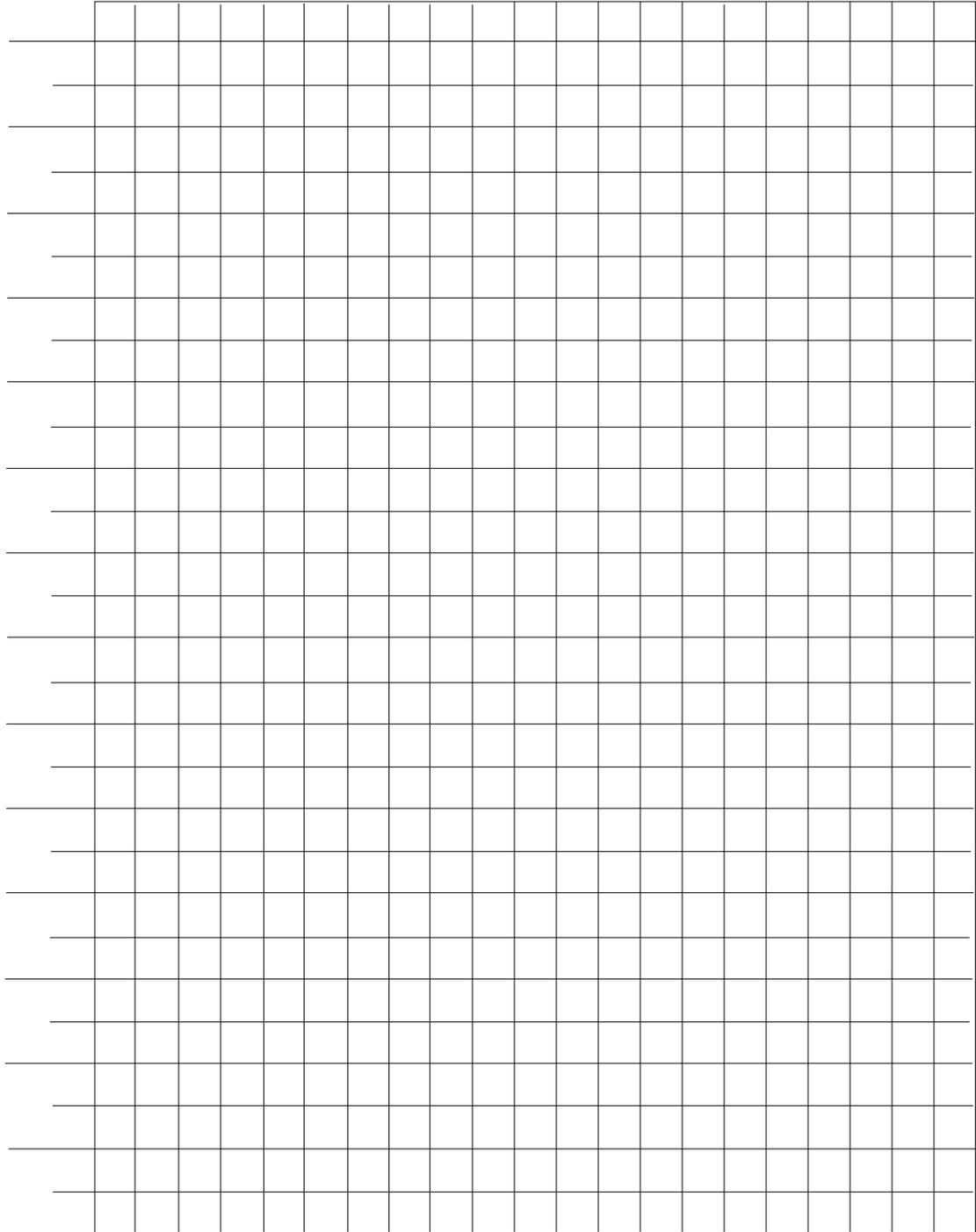
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Name: _____ Starting Date: _____

Comments: _____

____ / ____ ____

Time of Day



Successive Days