

CHAPTER ONE

Overview



FACTER (*Functional Assessment and Curriculum for Teaching Everyday Routines*) is used for both assessment and instruction in functional everyday routines and related skills for students with disabilities. FACTER can be used with any elementary- or secondary-age student who needs to learn typical living skills, transition, academic, leisure, community, or career routines. A unique aspect of FACTER is that each routine identified for instruction can be individualized to address the related skill needs of each student. FACTER also provides the user with the data needed to report progress on Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives that are aligned with the FACTER curriculum.

FACTER consists of (a) a thorough student assessment across routines and related skills and (b) a student instruction element that combines ongoing teaching and assessment on critical steps of selected routines. The critical steps are chosen for instruction based on their likelihood to enhance the student's independence. The assessment and instruction cycle is repeated continually to document student progress over time and to identify new areas for instruction. Thus, FACTER provides a continuous cycle, from assessment to IEP planning to instruction; that is, FACTER assessments may inform specific decisions on the IEP, which in turn target key areas for instruction and reassessment.

A number of special education researchers have noted the importance of training for independence as the primary goal for students with moderate to severe disabilities (e.g., Agran, 1997; Copeland & Hughes, 1997; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998). FACTER uses a unique independence measurement scale to indicate how independently each student can perform each step of various routines and the related skills that enhance each routine. The scale accounts for necessary student accommodations and modifications. For example, a student who uses a wheelchair can be scored as independent for various mobility tasks if no assistance is required from another person. Similarly, visual schedules and augmentative communication systems can be used to independently perform routines. For example, a student may independently perform all steps of a routine while using a picture schedule system or a computer-assisted communication device.

FACTER employs a functional approach to both assessment and instruction by focusing on content that matches descriptions of the educational goals for students with complex needs found in the special education and assessment literature (Browder, 1991, 2000; Falco et al., 1990; Ford et al., 1989; Sparrow, Balla, & Cicchetti, 1984). Important routines that occur in real environments are the best source of curriculum for students with significant disabilities (Snell & Brown, 2000; Westling & Fox, 2000). Thus, the domains in which FACTER addresses routines are as follows:

- using daily living skills
- transitioning between activities

- performing academic activities
- engaging in leisure activities
- participating in community routines
- performing career-related activities

These areas represent home, school, work, and community environments for students.

FACTER also assesses and instructs students on the following related skills that enhance performance of the routines:

- expressive communication
- receptive communication
- problem solving
- teamwork/social skills
- motor skills
- functional academics (math, reading, and writing)

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Related skills are selected for each student that correspond to identified routines. The related skills can also be selected to correspond to IEP goals and objectives. Ideally, a teacher would assess the same skills across all routines. Improved student independence on related skills should translate into improved independence in performing the routines.

FACTER consists of eight steps within three phases:

Assessment Phase

1. Complete baseline rating of routines.
2. Select routines for performance assessment.
3. Select specific related skills for each routine.
4. Conduct performance assessments for routines and related skills.

Instruction Phase

5. Select routine steps and related skills that are a priority for instruction.
6. Provide instruction and ongoing assessment of progress on specific steps of routines and related skills.
7. Conduct performance assessment of routines in which instruction has been completed.

Evaluation Phase

8. Determine next steps based on whether student's goals are met.
 - a. If yes, select a new routine for instruction.
 - b. If no, go back to Step 5 and provide instruction in the areas needing attention.

FACTER assessments combine data from (a) teacher perceptions of student independence in a wide variety of routines and related skills (Steps 1–3) and (b) direct observation of specifically chosen routines and skills relevant to the instructional program for each student (Step 4). These assessment results are used to guide a teacher to select the appropriate steps and skills for instruction (Step 5). Student assessment profiles can be

created and examined for progress over time through repeated use of FACTER. The instruction phase incorporates assessment of both the specific steps being taught (Step 6) and the complete routine (Step 7). Assessments are conducted in the natural environment, and the results are used to decide whether to continue the instruction phase or return to the assessment phase (Step 8). Each step of FACTER is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Brief History of FACTER's Development

The assessment component of FACTER was originally developed by the authors to meet the Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97) requirement for comprehensive functional assessments of students not able to participate in regular district and state assessments. Initially called *The Extended Career and Life Role Assessment System* (Extended CLRAS; Arick, Nave, & Hoffman, 2000), an assessment system was developed for the state of Oregon to match its series of Career Related Learning Standards. The Extended CLRAS measures student independence levels on important routines and related skills, and therefore satisfies the IDEA '97 requirement for a comprehensive statewide assessment system. IDEA '97 specifically mandates that all students exempted from standardized statewide testing due to their disabling condition had to be provided an alternate assessment by July 1, 2000. In addition, IDEA '97 requires that aggregated results of the assessment be published at the same time as results of traditional statewide testing. The Extended CLRAS allows the state of Oregon to meet these IDEA '97 requirements through district and statewide reports generated to document the number and performance levels of students assessed. In addition, individual student reports are generated for teachers to showcase student results.

FACTER was completed in 2001–2002 with a comprehensive revision of the Extended CLRAS and with the addition of an instructional component to complement the assessment system. The revised assessment system of FACTER provides the user with an integrated performance assessment system for both routines and related skills. Also, the assessment system was revised to provide for periodic assessment to monitor progress on the student's IEP. The new instructional component allows teachers to create individualized lesson plans based on results from the assessment data. This new component also provides a mechanism to track each student's results on the routine steps during the instruction phase. FACTER content corresponds directly to the functional domains discussed in the special education literature and represented in special education assessments. In fact, the related skills selected for assessment and instruction may come from each student's IEP. FACTER also provides forms and instructions for monitoring student progress across domains and over time, thus creating assessment profiles for the IEP team to examine. Appendix E provides additional data about the reliability and validity of the assessment component used in FACTER.

FACTER's instructional component was developed to complement the assessment and IEP planning aspect. It allows teachers to create individualized lesson plans based on results from the assessment data and to track each student's results during the instruction phase. This information can guide IEP team planning for students and provide documentation of progress on meeting IEP goals and objectives.

The FACTER instructional component draws heavily from accepted direct instruction practices with special education populations. For example, students are assessed on routines on which they are deficient and then are directly taught the basic core steps needed to complete routines. A number of different teaching strategies are employed,

including the use of pictorial cues, tactile systems, and social stories. Also, instruction on specific steps is provided to the student in two formats: through preroutine teaching of the steps and by teaching steps during performance of the complete routine.

A recent study investigated the effectiveness of different instructional strategies employed by FACTER. Six graduate students at Portland State University assessed and instructed 1 student each using FACTER. They implemented an instructional phase of short duration (approximately 2 weeks) on six different routines for each student. Of the six routines, three were taught using during-routine teaching strategies only, and three were taught using both preroutine teaching and during-routine teaching strategies. The researchers measured the students' level of improvement on independence. In addition, they examined the effectiveness of preroutine teaching of critical steps out of the context of the routine by comparing results for three routines in which problematic steps were taught out of the context of the routine. Study results show that instruction both with and without the preroutine teaching strategy improved the independence level on specific steps for all participating students. Preroutine teaching strategies allowed students to obtain independence on specific steps of the routine. Students taught during-routine teaching strategies only improved on specific steps to a verbal prompt level. This potentially important finding indicates that if students learn specific required steps of a routine ahead of time, they are less likely to later be dependent on teacher prompting in natural settings.

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The FACTER Approach to Assessment and Instruction

The primary purpose of FACTER is to assess and teach students the ability to perform typical everyday routines while incorporating essential related skills for living. All people engage in a broad range of routines every day. These routines can be task-analyzed into a number of core steps for assessment and instructional purposes. Routines are important to teach because they occur naturally in daily life, provide specific purpose, and enable people to become more independent in their lives.

Routines are naturally occurring purposeful events in daily life that consist of a number of linked core steps. Routines generally include a beginning, a middle, and an ending step or activity.

Examples: eating lunch, academic seatwork, socializing with friends, arriving at school, and going shopping.

Routines serve as the basic unit for assessment and instruction in FACTER. First, a knowledgeable teacher rates the student on how independently the student would probably be able to perform a broad range of routines. Then, the student is assessed on a small number of routines through performance assessments conducted in the natural environment. Finally, routine steps are identified that require instruction to enhance student independence on the routine.

During the performance assessment of each routine, FACTER also is used to assess students on specific related skills. These skills are important because they enhance a person's ability to engage in routines more effectively. They do not necessarily correspond to specific steps of a routine, but they do improve student performance on those steps. Thus, these skills also provide a higher level of independence to people who possess

them. Routines and related skills are often identified from the student's IEP goals and objectives.

Related skills are specific personal skills that enhance the quality of the student's performance across routines. *Examples: acknowledging people, making introductions, recognizing that a problem exists, dealing with emotions, and specific gross and fine motor skills.*

The independence measurement scale that is used for all FACTER assessments provides a consistent measure of independence across all assessor ratings and performance assessments, as well as of performance across routines and related skills. It is also used during the FACTER instruction phase. The scale was purposely developed around the concept of independence due to the primary importance of students' ability to control their own lives to the greatest extent possible. The scale has six ratings, as follows:

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Independence Measurement Scale

- 4 = completes independently
- 3 = completes with visual, verbal, or gesture prompting
- 2 = completes with partial physical assistance (requires physical assistance in at least one instance, but not continuous physical assistance)
- 1 = completes with full physical assistance (requires continuous physical assistance)
- 0 = does not complete even with physical assistance
- N = not applicable (due to student's medical needs, the school environment does not provide an opportunity to perform, or the IEP team deems the routine or activity inappropriate for the student)

Table 1.1 shows how the domains and related skills areas of FACTER match the content domains addressed within special education training and assessment literature. The FACTER content categories are personal management, career development, communication, problem solving, teamwork/social skills, motor skills, and functional academics. Routines correspond to personal management and career development, whereas related skills correspond to the other five categories.

A number of functional daily living skills categories discussed in the literature were found to correspond to the FACTER routine domains. For example, FACTER routine domains incorporate all domains identified in special education literature. Likewise, the FACTER related skills categories correspond directly to the domains discussed in the literature. Communication (expressive and receptive), problem solving, teamwork and social skills, motor skills, and functional academics are all important areas in which skill building leads to enhanced independence when performing routines. The complete reference list of literature consulted is provided in Appendix D.

FACTER Student Booklets

The FACTER has two student booklets, the FACTER Elementary Student Booklet and the FACTER Secondary Student Booklet. One Student Booklet is used to assess and instruct one student. The cover page provides a convenient means to record summary

Table 1.1

FACTER Linked to Special Education Literature

FACTER Content Categories for Assessment and Instruction	Corresponding Special Education Domains (from Training and Assessment Literature^a)
Daily Routines	
Living skills routines	Functional Daily Living Skills
Transition routines	• Daily living skills
Academic routines	• Academic skills
Leisure routines	• Transition skills
Community routines	• Self-care skills
	• Health and safety skills
Career routines	Career skills Vocational skills
Related Skills	
Communication	Communication
• Expressive communication	• Expressive communication
• Receptive communication	• Receptive communication
Problem solving	Problem solving
Teamwork/social skills	Social skills Teamwork
Motor skills	Motor skills
Functional academics	Functional academics

^a See Appendix D for the sources reviewed in the development of FACTER.

information of student ratings and performance for an extended time period across all FACTER routines and related skills. The booklet also contains a form for each routine that contains all data related to assessment and instruction on that routine. Thus, teacher ratings and student performance data are maintained on the same form, which also identifies (a) the specific routine steps and related skills that are targeted and (b) the instructional strategies employed to improve student independence.

Each Student Booklet contains the following summarized instructions for using FACTER.

1. Complete the demographic information for the student and assessor in the upper left-hand corner of the Student Booklet.
2. Conduct the baseline rating. Review the activities (shaded column below the baseline rating score) of each routine assessment form and rate the student on how well you think the student would perform all activities four out of five times for each routine. Estimate the student's score using the independence measurement scale (found at the bottom of the second page of each routine form). Place the rating in the upper left-hand corner of each routine form in the Baseline Rating box.
3. Write the baseline rating scores on the cover page of the FACTER Student Booklet.

4. Identify one routine per domain (Living Skills, Transition, Academic, Leisure, Community, and Career) to have the student perform for assessment.
5. Select related skills from the inventory in Appendix A in the Program Manual or the student's IEP. In the Student Booklet, write the selected related skills appropriate for each routine in the related skills section at the end of the routine.
6. Conduct the performance assessment, documenting the dates and the performance scores in the assessment section of the Student Booklet for each selected routine.
7. Select critical steps from each routine and related skills that are a priority for instruction. Refer to Appendix B in the Program Manual for potential instructional strategies. Write preroutine or during-routine instructional strategies individualized for the student in the Instructional Strategies columns on the selected routine forms in the Student Booklet.
8. Provide instruction to the student using preroutine and during-routine teaching strategies. Conduct ongoing data collection and document the initial and final average performance scores for routines and the final related skill scores on the cover of the Student Booklet.
9. Following the instructional sessions needed to teach the critical steps or skills, conduct a follow-up performance assessment for the routine.
10. Continue instruction and assessment on selected routines or, if a routine is mastered, check the Routine Mastery box at the lower left of the routine form and on the cover of the Student Booklet and identify new routines for instruction.

More detailed directions are provided later in this Program Manual.

FACTER Assessment Phase: Overview of Steps

The assessment phase comprises the first four steps of FACTER:

1. Complete baseline rating of routines.
2. Select routines for performance assessment.
3. Select specific related skills for each routine.
4. Conduct performance assessments for routines and related skills.

Results from the assessment phase are used to create specific lesson plans for the instruction phase.

The assessment process begins with Step 1, completing the baseline rating. The baseline rating is completed by someone, such as a teacher, who is familiar with the student. The assessor rates the student's independence level on various routines—29 routines for elementary and 39 for secondary. The ratings are recorded in the upper left-hand corner of each routine data form in the FACTER Student Booklet and then transferred to the cover page of the booklet. In Step 2, the teacher or IEP team determines which of those routines the student will perform for assessment in the natural environment. Any number of routines may ultimately be selected for assessment, but we recommend that all students be assessed in each of the six domains: Living Skills, Transition, Academic, Leisure, Community, and Career.

Related skills selection (Step 3) can occur simultaneously with selection of routines (Step 2). The IEP team identifies important related skills that, if mastered, would enhance the student's independence in each of the selected routines. The skills typically come from the student's personal IEP goals and objectives. These related skills are assessed during the performance assessment of the routines. Each routine page in the FACTER Student Booklet includes space to list several related skills to be assessed in the context of performing that routine. Thus, different related skills may be selected for each routine. A list of skills is available in Appendix A.

A performance assessment (Step 4) of the selected routines completes the assessment phase. The student's independence level is scored for each step of the routine and for each related skill necessary within the routine.

Table 1.2 depicts how the FACTER assessment phase relates content domains to assessment strategies. The table shows how many routines and related skills correspond to the domains. Detailed instructions for the assessment process are included in Chapter 3.

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FACTER Instruction Phase: Overview of Steps

The results from the assessment phase are used to plan and conduct specific student instruction and then assess the results of that instruction. Two types of instruction are suggested to improve a student's performance on a routine: preroutine teaching and during-routine teaching.

Preroutine teaching is the teaching of critical steps and skills of a routine outside the context of that routine. Thus, the student receives repeated, explicit, and isolated practice on steps that are currently limiting his or her independence on a given routine.

Table 1.2
FACTER Assessment Phase

Assessment	FACTER Domains					
	Living Skills	Transition	Academic	Leisure	Community	Career
Routine assessment	5 routines	4 routines	6 routines	8/7* routines	5/10* routines	1/7* routines
Related skills assessment ^a	1 selected routine	1 selected routine	1 selected routine	1 selected routine	1 selected routine	1 selected routine (if applicable)
	set of selected skills	set of selected skills	set of selected skills	set of selected skills	set of selected skills	set of selected skills

^aRelated skills assessment includes skills from the following areas: expressive communication, receptive communication, problem solving, teamwork/social skills, motor skills, and functional academics (math, reading, and writing). The related skills selected are specific to each routine.

*Elementary/secondary

During-routine teaching is the teaching of critical steps and skills of a routine within the performance of the complete routine. Thus, the student learns to perform the steps and skills when they are required.

Preroutine teaching and during-routine teaching represent different instructional strategies and may be employed to the degree dictated by student need and the difficulty the student has in completing specific steps of a routine.

The FACTER instruction phase corresponds to Steps 5 through 7:

5. Select routine steps and related skills that are a priority for instruction. Appendix B provides a number of potential instructional strategies for each routine. The appendix should be used with the lesson planning forms in the Student Booklet.
6. Provide instruction and ongoing assessment of progress on specific steps of routines and related skills.
7. Conduct performance assessment of routines in which instruction has been completed.

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The FACTER Student Booklet is used during the assessment and instructional activities. It provides an easy way to document the instruction and assessment process and can be maintained in the student's academic history file. Chapter 4 provides detailed information on FACTER's instruction phase.

FACTER Evaluation Phase: Overview of Steps

The final phase of FACTER, the evaluation phase, evaluates the student's progress toward achieving independence goals on the specific routines and related skills chosen for instruction. If those goals have been met, then the appropriate next step would be to return to Step 1 of the assessment phase and select new routines and related skills in which the student needs to improve his or her independence level. The evaluation phase also helps determine whether adequate progress has been met. A return to the instruction phase is appropriate if the student has not yet achieved his or her specific goals on the currently selected steps. Chapter 5 provides detailed information on the evaluation phase.