Writing SMARTIE Behavior Goals

A Practical Framework for Teachers and Administrators

Purpose:

Behavior goals should be precise, inclusive, and equity-centered—not generic statements like *"Student will improve behavior."* Effective goals are clear, measurable, and grounded in data while recognizing the diverse needs and identities of students. This worksheet introduces the **SMARTIE framework**—adding *Inclusive* and *Equitable* to the traditional SMART model—so educators can write goals that are both **instructionally sound and socially conscious.**

What Makes a Behavior Goal SMARTIE?

Component	Guiding Question	Example
S — Specific	What exact behavior are we targeting?	"Use a break card when frustrated."
M — Measurable	How will progress be tracked?	"Frequency count, 4 of 5 days."
A — Achievable	Is the goal realistic given supports?	"Prompted → Independent over time."
R — Relevant	Does it align with identified needs in the PLAAFP/BIP?	"Tied to self-regulation deficit."

T — Time-Bound	When will the outcome be achieved?	"By end of 36 instructional weeks."
I — Inclusive	Does the goal honor student identity, strengths, and access needs?	"Allows visual or verbal expression of regulation strategies."
E — Equitable	Does the goal ensure fair access to supports and culturally responsive implementation?	"Includes student-chosen strategies and non-punitive monitoring."

SMARTIE Goal Formula:

By [date/timeframe], given [supports/conditions], Student will [observable behavior] [to what criterion] [as measured by what tool], using [inclusive approach or student-selected strategy].

Example:

By June 2026, given visual prompts and a structured break system, Student will use a self-calming strategy (deep breathing or requesting a break) to return to task within 5 minutes in 4 of 5 opportunities, measured by teacher frequency data, using the self-selected strategy of choice (movement, breathing, or drawing).

Examples by Behavior Domain

1. Self-Regulation

- Given emotion visuals and modeling, Student will identify feelings using a 5-point scale in 4 of 5 opportunities.

- Given structured choice and sensory tools, Student will use a self-selected calming strategy when frustrated in 4 of 5 opportunities.

2. Task Engagement

- Given visual schedule and reinforcement plan, Student will engage in academic tasks for 15 consecutive minutes in 4 of 5 sessions.

- Given a "first-then" structure, Student will transition between activities within 1 minute of the cue in 80% of opportunities.

3. Social Skills

- Given explicit instruction and role-play, Student will initiate a peer interaction using a taught script in 3 of 5 opportunities.

- Given modeling and visual cues, Student will demonstrate active listening during small group activities in 4 of 5 sessions.

4. Replacement Behaviors (BIP-Aligned)

- Given adult modeling, Student will request assistance verbally or via break card instead of leaving class without permission in 80% of opportunities.

- Given instruction and visuals, Student will use coping statements ("I need help," "I can try again") instead of yelling or throwing objects in 4 of 5 opportunities.

Inclusive & Equitable Goal Writing Tips

Common Oversight	SMARTIE Upgrade	Why It Matters
Generic "appropriate behavior" goals	Name the **specific observable skill** and allow	Ensures neurodivergent and multilingual learners are not

	multiple modes of expression	penalized for communication differences
Same target for all students	Co-create goals with the student	Promotes ownership and self-determination
Punitive framing ("will comply")	Positive framing ("will use")	Focuses on skill acquisition, not control
No cultural/contextual consideration	Include student/family input on calming strategies and reinforcers	Aligns supports with student identity and home values

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Data Collection Tools

Goal Type	Best Tools	Example Entry
Frequency	Tally per period/day	"Break card used: 4/5 days."
Duration	Stopwatch/time-on-task	"Time to recover: 3 min."
Latency	Time between direction and action	"Average response: 30 sec."
Interval	Observation every 5 min	"On-task during 8 of 10 intervals."

Rating Scale	Student or teacher self-rating	"Self-rated calm = 4/5."

SMARTIE Alignment Checklist

- Goal language is **specific and observable**.

- Data collection method is **identified**.

- Supports and prompts are **explicitly listed**.

- Goal is **co-created** or student voice is included.

- Strategies are **accessible and culturally relevant**.

- Data review frequency and timeframe are **defined**.

Sample Progress Log

Date	Target Behavior	Prompt Level	Independent	Strategy Used	Notes
10/28	Used break card	Verbal prompt	✓	Deep breathing	Returned in 3 min
10/29	Used break card	None	✓	Movement break	Self-initiated

Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Pitfall	SMARTIE Fix
"Student will follow classroom rules."	"Given visual expectations, Student will identify and follow 3 classroom expectations independently in 4 of 5 opportunities."
Goal assumes one-size-fits-all strategy	Offer 2–3 self-selected calming or engagement strategies.
Data plan missing	Identify frequency, duration, or latency tool.
Compliance language	Reframe to skill-building, positive, and student-centered.

Action Starter: Try Tomorrow

- Choose one student's existing behavior goal.

- Audit it using the **SMARTIE checklist.**

- Add inclusive language ("using a strategy of choice," "in a culturally responsive context").

- Share your revised goal with your team and discuss how to measure it consistently.