

Facilitator Guide

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS)

Training & Calibration

This document serves as the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) Training & Calibration Facilitator Guide.

This document provides guidance to assist the exercise facilitator and should not be given to exercise players. It gives the approximate timing of delivery for each slide, limited talking points, and supplemental questions or issues to raise during tabletop exercise conduct. It provides limited talking points, as well as questions to be raised during discussion.



OBJECTIVES

The BARS Training & Calibration session objectives are as follows:

- Enable participants to understand the structure, purpose, and application of the BARS rubric, including how to observe behavior and select appropriate indicators and anchors.
- Provide guided practice through a shared calibration event to strengthen rater consistency, build a common interpretation of performance levels, and align scoring across observers.
- Prepare participants to conduct live BARS data collection by ensuring they understand parameter entry, rating expectations, and the tools used for capturing performance.

SESSION AGENDA AND MATERIALS

Time	Segment	Materials Required
3 minutes	Part 1. Introductory Remarks	none
25 minutes	Part 2. BARS Training	• Paper BARS rubrics for every participant • Digital BARS Collection tool, if applicable, for every participant (if resources are limited, 2 participants may share a single device) • BARS Background Video • <i>BARS Rating Tips Handouts</i> for every participant
50 minutes	Part 3. BARS Calibration	• Calibration Video or scenario
10 minutes	Part 4. Prepare Observers for Live BARS Collection	• <i>BARS Session Parameter Guide</i> • <i>Quick Reference Cards</i> for every participant
2 minutes	Part 5. Closing Remarks	none

PART 1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS [3 MINUTES]

Topic/Issue	Purpose	Facilitator Notes/Questions
Welcome and Framing the Session	Set a positive tone and reassure observers that calibration is about collective alignment, not a performance evaluation of them as raters.	SAY: <i>Welcome, everyone. Today we're going to walk through BARS training and conduct a calibration session to ensure we all have a consistent understanding of how to evaluate performance.</i> <i>Our goal is for each of you to feel confident in how you observe, interpret, and rate behaviors using the BARS rubric.</i> <i>This session is designed to make you better, more consistent raters—not to judge your rating ability.</i>
Why BARS Matter	Connect the training to broader goals: fairness, consistency, developmental feedback, and data integrity.	SAY: <i>BARS give us a structured, evidence-based method for assessing performance.</i> <i>They help reduce subjectivity by grounding each score in observable behaviors and clear anchors.</i> <i>Reliable ratings allow us to identify trends, support development, and provide meaningful feedback.</i>
Session Schedule	Ensure smooth execution and remove logistical distractions.	SAY: <i>First, you'll get familiar with the BARS rubric by reviewing the paper version. I will give you a quick training on the data collection tool, if necessary.</i> <i>Then, you'll build foundational understanding by watching the "BARS Background Video" and reviewing the "BARS Rating Tips" to reinforce how to observe behavior and apply the rubric.</i> <i>We'll conduct the calibration event by applying the BARS rubric to a shared scenario (video or live exercise).</i> <i>I'll end with providing some detailed guidance on our actual BARS data collection.</i>

PART 2. BARS TRAINING [25 MINUTES]

Topic/Issue	Purpose	Facilitator Notes/Questions
Observer Preparation	Ensure participants have all the background materials and knowledge required to learn about BARS.	DO: - Hand out paper versions of the BARS rubric(s) and distribute digital technology being used to collect BARS ratings. - Allow sufficient time for the observers to review and familiarize with the BARS content, if they have not already done so.
Digital Collection Tool Training <i>*To be conducted if participants will use MS Forms, PowerApp, or a tablet application for collection</i>	Ensure participants are familiar with the application they will use to rate performance with the BARS.	DO: Conduct training on the digital collection tool, if necessary.
Why BARS Matter	Connect the training to broader goals: fairness, consistency, developmental feedback, and data integrity.	SAY: <i>BARS give us a structured, evidence-based method for assessing performance.</i> <i>They help reduce subjectivity by grounding each score in observable behaviors and clear anchors.</i> <i>Reliable ratings allow us to identify trends, support development, and provide meaningful feedback.</i>
BARS Background and Familiarization	Provide awareness of the origin of the BARS, why they are used, and how to select ratings.	DO: - Play the <i>BARS Background Video</i> for all observers. - Answer participant questions about the topics in the video.
Tips for BARS Raters	Equip raters with guidance on how to address special circumstances and ensure consistency across raters.	DO: - Hand out the <i>BARS Rating Tips Handout</i>. - Give participants time to read and review the handout. - Ask for and answer participant questions about the tips.

PART 3. BARS CALIBRATION [50 MINUTES]

Topic/Issue	Purpose	Facilitator Notes/Questions
Preparation for Practice Ratings	Ensure participants have the BARS in hand to conduct the calibration exercise.	DO: <i>Ask participants to prepare the rating method you plan to use for the calibration session—either the paper BARS rubric or the digital collection tool (tablet, mobile device, or laptop).</i> <i>Explain that both formats are appropriate for calibration:</i> <i>Paper–pencil supports easier note-taking and quick reference to indicator and anchor language.</i> <i>Digital tools provide a realistic practice environment and help participants become familiar with the technology they will use during live collection.</i> <i>Instruct participants to open their chosen format (paper rubric accessible or digital device initiated in a new session) so they are ready to begin the calibration exercise.</i>
What Calibration is and Why We Do It	Clarify the value of calibration and ensure observers understand why they're doing it.	SAY: <i>Calibration is the process of rating the same event independently and then comparing, discussing, and aligning our interpretations.</i> <i>It helps us build a shared mental model of what behavior looks like at each anchor level.</i> <i>Today's calibration event will create that common reference point so we're all rating from the same foundation.</i>

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What a Calibration Event Looks Like	Prepare observers for the structure of the session and reduce anxiety about rating differences.	SAY: <i>We'll watch a scenario (either a video or a live exercise) and each of you will score it independently.</i> <i>Then we'll discuss what you saw, what indicators and anchors you used, and where our scores align or differ.</i> <i>The discussion is the most important part; differences help us understand how people interpret behavior.</i>
Expectations for Observers	Build discipline in observation, anchor observers in the BARS process, and reinforce good rater habits.	SAY: <i>Your job is to observe behavior closely and take notes as needed.</i> <i>Focus on what was actually said or done, not assumptions or outcomes.</i> <i>Use the rubric to guide your rating decisions. Identify the KPA, the indicator, and the closest anchor.</i> <i>Provide comments with your ratings; these help create a richer picture of performance and are essential for giving good feedback to the ratee.</i>
Play Calibration Scenario	Provide participants the context in which to practice conducting ratings.	DO: - Present the calibration scenario you selected to the observers. - Instruct observers to conduct their ratings throughout the scenario.
Normalizing Rating Differences	Reduce defensiveness and promote vulnerability in sharing ratings.	SAY: <i>It's completely normal for us to start with different scores.</i> <i>Mistakes or disagreements are not failures—they are opportunities for better alignment."</i> <i>We're building shared understanding, not looking for a "perfect" score.</i>

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Discussion of Ratings and Rationales	Identify ratings on which observers were not aligned and discuss how raters should treat those items to achieve alignment.	DO: • Facilitate a discussion of how the observers rated performance in the scenario, using probes and techniques you observed in the <i>Calibration Exemplar Video</i>. • Ask one individual to share one rating and their rationale for the rating. • Ask the other observers who had the same rating and why. • Ask who had a different rating and why. • Facilitate a conversation to land on rules for how the behavioral anchors should be interpreted to avoid disagreements. • Repeat this process for each rated item until you believe calibration of thought and application has been achieved.

PART 4. PREPARE OBSERVERS FOR LIVE COLLECTION [10 MINUTES]

Topic/Issue	Purpose	Facilitator Notes/Questions
Guidance for Parameter Entry	Provide instructions for parameter data entries and ensure all observers enter parameters consistently.	SAY: - Parameters are the several pieces of information that identify the activity we are rating. - They include the name of the exercise or event, the date and time, our convention for labeling each BARS session we are going to collect, and who was rated in each session. - It is critical that we all enter the parameter data using the same conventions. DO: - Identify the parameters that observers should note and input at the start of each rating session. - Show observers where each parameter should be entered in the data collection form they will use. - Identify the conventions you wish to use, based on your review of the BARS Session Parameter Guide and your decisions about the conventions that will suit your use case.
Review of the Quick Reference Cards <i>*Optional</i>	Handout and review the contents of the Quick Reference Cards, which will help observers complete the BARS rubrics	DO: - Distribute the <i>Quick Reference Cards</i> to participants. - Review the cards to familiarize them with the contents. - Note the parameters and rating tips are provided on the <i>Quick Reference Cards</i>.



CLOSING REMARKS [2 MINUTES]

Topic/Issue	Purpose	Facilitator Notes/Questions
Wrap Up and Coordinating Instructions	Address final questions or concerns and identify next actions.	DO: • Ask for and field any remaining questions. • As needed, provide coordinating instructions or next steps to participants.