A functional assessment should include:

1. ***A definition of the challenging behaviour in question:***

This is typically referred to as an operational definition of the behaviour. Having a clear concise definition of the behaviour (which may include specific examples of the behaviour as well as the frequency) is an essential.

1. ***An assessment of the antecedent (i.e. what happens before) events:***

Certain things often appear to trigger challenging behaviour. What antecedent events (e.g. activities, settings, individuals, objects thoughts or feelings) are most likely to predict the occurrence of the behaviour? What antecedent events are most likely to predict the non-occurrence of the behaviour?

1. ***An assessment of the consequent (i.e. what happens after) events:***

What is the person getting, or not getting from the behaviour that motivates them to do it again. Many consequents are externally motivated.