

Types of observations

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Observations can capture a moment in time for the child and the experience.

When documenting a child's observation there are different formats that can be chosen, however, generally the observation itself dictates the observational method. The purpose of the observation determines the best observational method to use. As you read more about the type of observation that will become more clear.

Observations can be very brief such as anecdotes, or jotting or some observation formats can long and detailed in their descriptions such as a running record. You should use a range of observation types when observing children. It is not considered best practice to stick to the one type of observational method as using differing types provides for a better ability to assess the child's overall development.

Types can include:

- **Jottings:** Usually short details of significant events, behaviours or conversations. A brief paragraph focusing on significant behaviours and information regarding the child. It is useful method to use in conjunction with photos and work samples.
- **Event Samples:** This is mostly used when focusing in a particular thing such as behaviour. For example how often a child bites, or throws a tantrum, etc. Using this method helps to establish such things as is there a trigger, how often said behaviour takes place and where such as within the type of environment (indoor, outdoor, mat time, sleep time, etc.). Event samples provide evidence to show whether incidents are continuing, escalating or have slowed or ceased.
- **Photo Observations:** As the type states this is a non-written form of observation that may or may not be accompanied with a written form of observational method. It is a perfect visual tool to capture a child at play, or practicing a skill or during social skills and interactions and can clearly show the level a child is at, such as a good photo observation of a series of child cutting can clearly show the control, the grip, the ability.
- **Anecdotal Records:** This would probably be the most common form used if you were to look through a child's observations. It is basically a short story that captures the child engaging in play and the experience and is written in past tense starting right at the beginning when the child begins the experience and ends when the child stops participating in the experience. The reason this one is the more common is because it's a useful method to record events or actions based on the child's strengths, interests, development and needs.
- **Running Records:** This type of observation is often described as detailed observation as what occurred is what is written. You write exactly what is being seen and a good running record offers loads of detailed information. A running record is written in present tense. This method is considered useful in recording any areas of development, note down child's interests as they occur and provides a holistic approach to observing a child.
- **Time Samples:** Time samples are good for working in conjunction with event samples in relating to monitoring a specific behaviour as they provide information on what a child is doing at regular intervals (for e.g. every 15 minutes during the morning routine), although they are additionally a good observational method to look at a child's overall participation within the learning environment and to observe a child's overall development in a range of contexts by capturing them at various regular intervals.
- **Sociograms:** This is perhaps the most specific type of observational method and possibly the least relevant and used in the whole early childhood setting as it is more geared to just the preschool children to observe patterns of friendships This method is able to specify which child needs more support in making friends as a chart is created to monitor and point to their friendship references.

