

Observation Techniques

Types of Observation

» Participatory and
Non-participatory

Participatory

- ▶ Observer engages with child during activity or daily routine.
- ▶ May not always be recorded in written format.
- ▶ Could be recorded as diary – feedback to parent.
- ▶ Can be difficult to manage and record.
- ▶ Can be planned or unplanned.
- ▶ Keep a note pad handy for spontaneous activities or events!

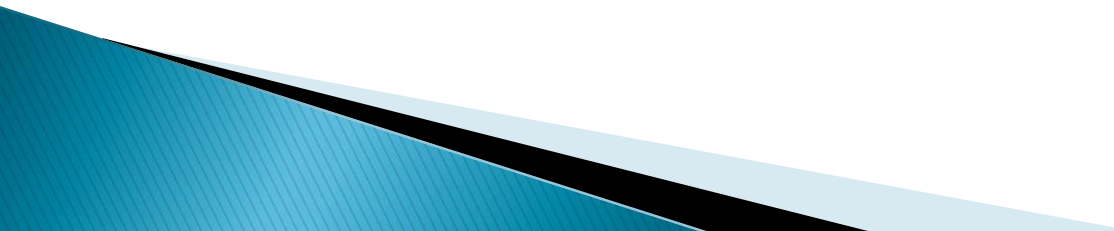


Non-Participatory

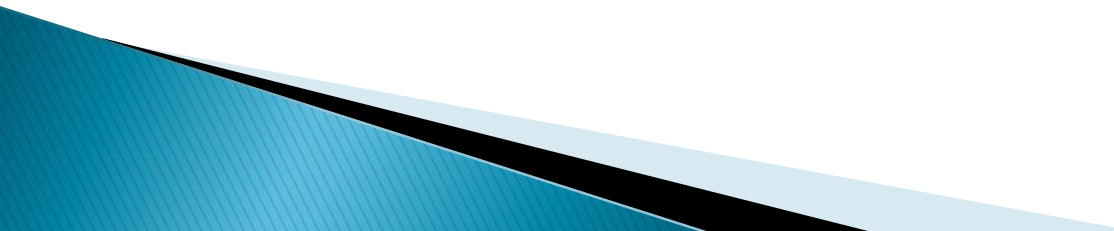
- ▶ Observer stays outside activity.
- ▶ Concentrates on child or aspect being watched.
- ▶ Observer can watch child as an individual and in the context of an activity.
- ▶ Observer needs to sit where they can see and hear without affecting child observed.
- ▶ Children need to know which adults are available for help during observation.



Participatory & Non-Participatory

- ▶ In general try to record the child's behaviour without being involved because the observer could be influencing the child if they are involved in the activity.
 - ▶ It also becomes difficult to record information immediately if the observer is actively involved.
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Structured and Naturalistic Observations

- ▶ Might be set tasks which are organised in order to observe a particular behaviour with a child.
 - ▶ Naturalistic observations are based on events which happen spontaneously, for example a child offering to share their snack, or share a toy.
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Observation Techniques

Observing Children

- ▶ Please click on the image below to watch the video clip (approximately 5 minutes).



Remember Permissions

- ▶ If using photographs, video or audio recordings of children you must have permission to do so before starting your observations.

Observation Techniques

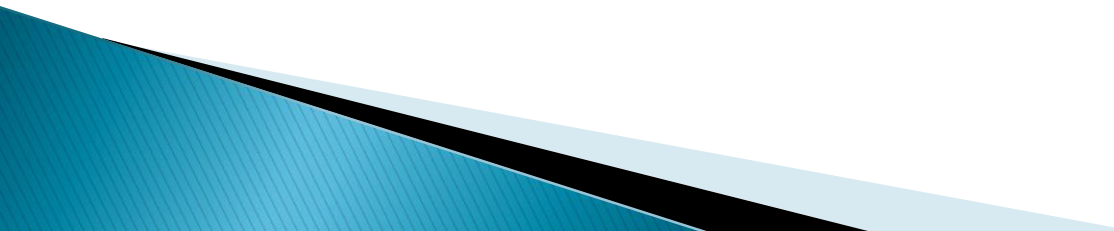
Discussion

What do you think is meant by 'technique'?

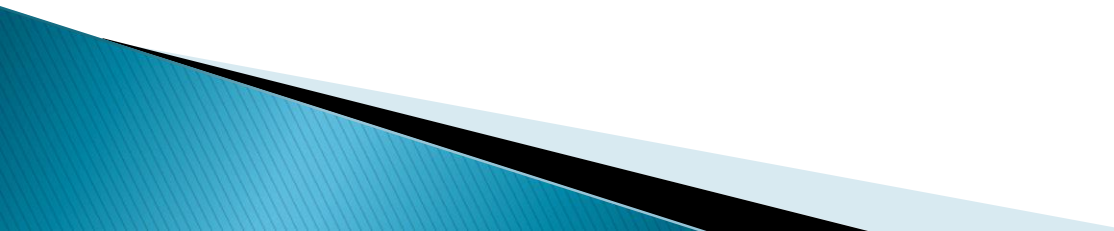
Can you name any that you may have previously seen or used?



Methods

- ▶ Written Record/Free description/Narrative
 - ▶ Checklist
 - ▶ Target observation/Time or Event Sample
 - ▶ Movement/tracking/spider's web
 - ▶ Sociogram (or a graph of social links; it plots the structure of interpersonal relations in a group situation)
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Select an Appropriate Technique

- ▶ Understand the purpose of the technique.
 - ▶ Match the technique to the aim of the observation.
 - ▶ Different techniques gather specific data.
 - ▶ Using a range of techniques:
 - Can enable holistic development to be observed.
 - Can help the observer to accurately predict the child's behaviour.
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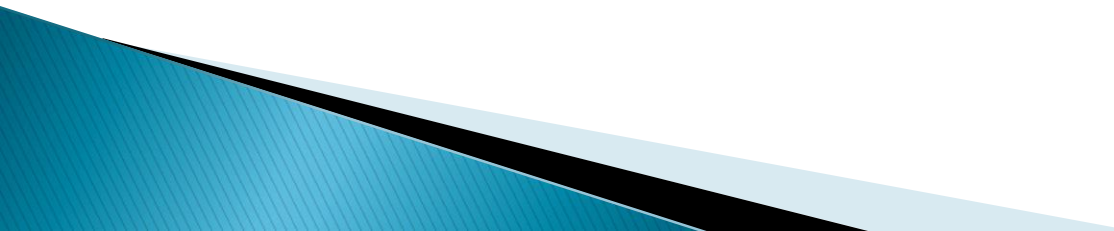
How do you choose the method?

Free description

To detail specific behaviour for a child's records, to plan for individuals, often over short period of time (10 – 15 minutes).

Time sampling

For behaviour modification baseline data, for child development research.



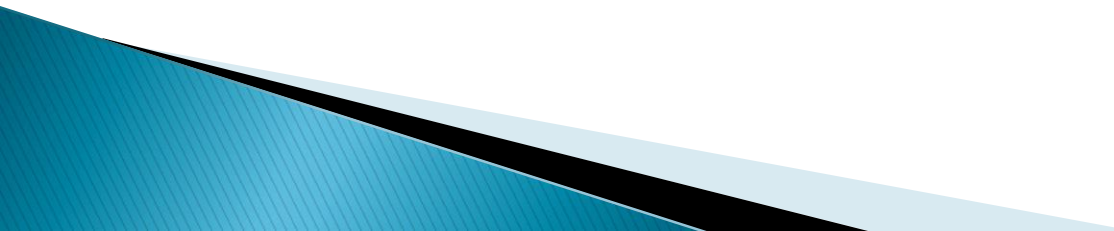
How do you choose the method?

Event Sampling

For behaviour modification, identifying a trigger for an unwanted behaviour.

Checklist

To determine presence/absence of specified behaviours, to plan for individuals, give an overview of a child's development/progress.



Written Records

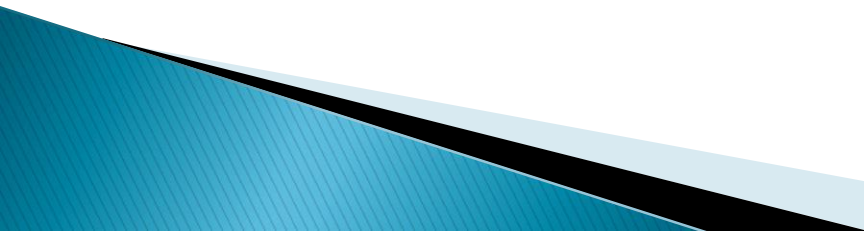
Written Records

Free Description or Snapshot

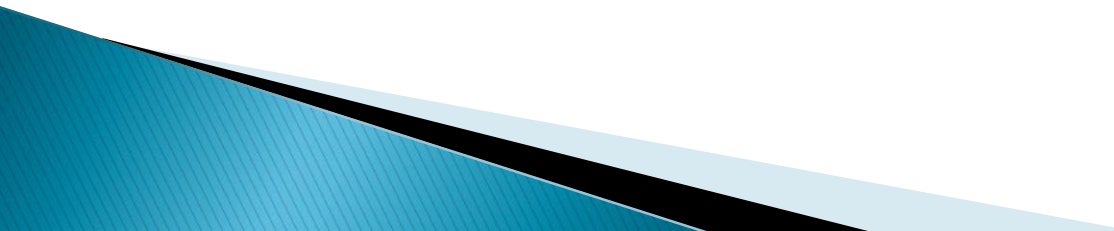
- ▶ Participatory or non-participatory

The observer records a free flowing description everything seen within the time period of the observation.

Record:

- ▶ Everything child does and says.
 - ▶ Conceptual awareness – number, colour, shape.
 - ▶ Skill development.
 - ▶ How child approaches tasks and problem solves.
 - ▶ Persistence, motivation and attitudes in general.
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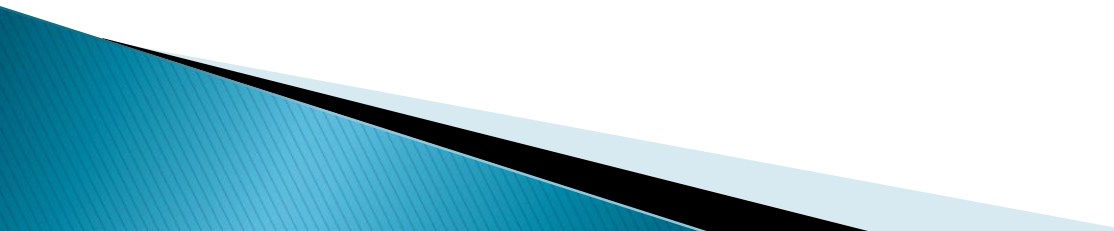
Disadvantages

- ▶ Can be difficult to record everything being observed.
 - ▶ Can also be very time consuming to write up everything that has been observed.
 - ▶ Needs to be written up immediately after observation completed to ensure accuracy.
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Narrative free description observation account

Child playing with camera

The adult shows 'child A' the camera, he is looking at the camera and turns to look at the front of it. He places his hands on the camera and the adult supports the child to hold the camera in two hands. He tries to look through the camera and find the button; the adult places his finger on the button. The child looks through the camera and presses the button. The child gives the camera back to the adult and leaves the area.



Some useful descriptive vocabulary

Instead of says:

Whispers

Stammers

Mutters

Shouts

Grumbles

Argues

Declares

Insists

Announces

Instead of walks:

Marches

Prances

Strolls

Stomps

Tiptoes

Skips

Shuffles

Toddles

Strides

Tracking Diagrams

Tracking

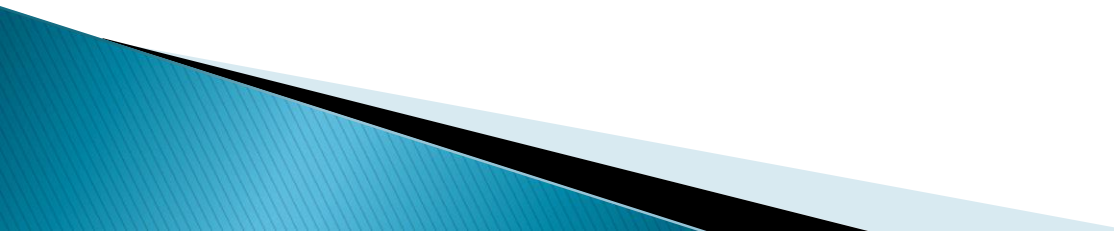
Non-participatory

- ▶ Floor map or plan of activities.
- ▶ Tracks child's movements between activities.

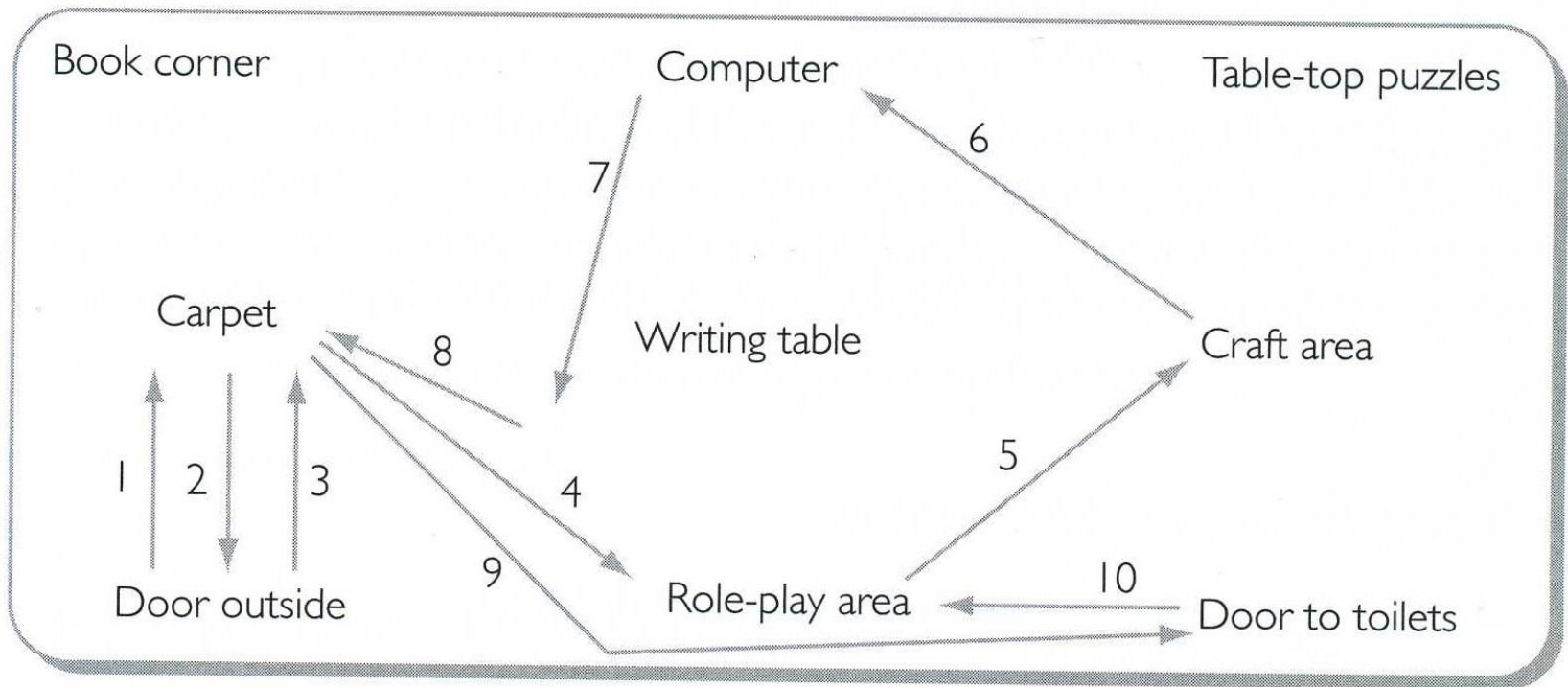
Observe:

- Concentration levels.
- Social interactions.
- Interest in activities/experiences.
- Behaviour.

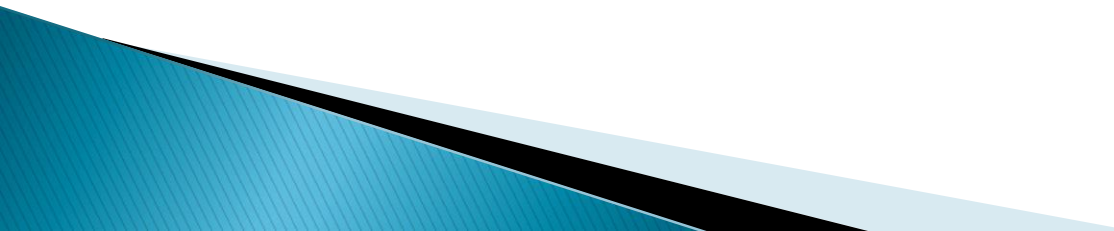
Also record other relevant information.



Tracking Diagram



Tracking Diagram

- ▶ Diagram alone provide limited information.
 - ▶ Add additional notes (separate sheet):
 - How long child stayed at activities.
 - Who was present at each activity (adults/children).
 - Brief notes on interaction, language and what child does at each activity.
 - ▶ These notes provide more information to enable more accurate interpretation later.
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Checklists

Checklists

Can be used to record a single child's progress or to compare development between children.

Sometimes LEA's/schools will have their own development checklist.

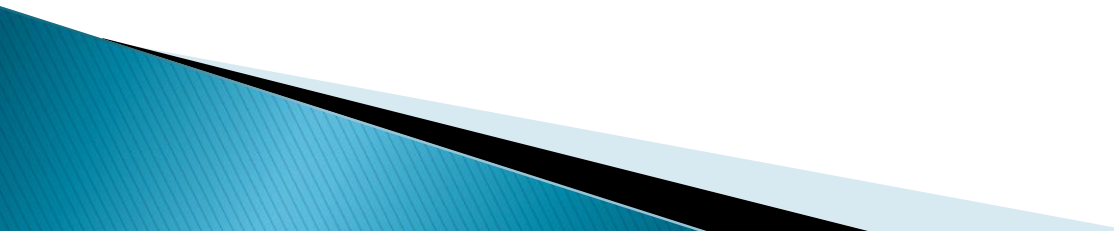


Checklists or Tickcharts

Non-participatory

- ▶ List of specific traits or behaviours whereby the observer indicates presence or absence of that trait/behaviour.
 - ▶ Often used in different settings to observe development and milestone achievement/ curriculum goals/attainment targets – these need to be researched in advance.
 - ▶ Can be used to record if a child can achieve a task, with or without assistance.
 - ▶ Used by a variety of health, care and education professionals.
 - ▶ Simple to use and can be a quick record to use to reflect on children's development.
 - ▶ Need to be prepared in advance and need to be detailed enough to ensure conclusions can be made.
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Checklists or Tickcharts

- ▶ Additional comments may be added.
 - ▶ Further development activities can be planned following a tick list observation.
 - ▶ The same tasks can be carried out at a later date to compare and check the development and progress of the child.
 - ▶ Can be used with many children to give a broader picture of the age range.
 - ▶ Valuable tool for focussing attention when many different criteria need to be observed
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Tick List

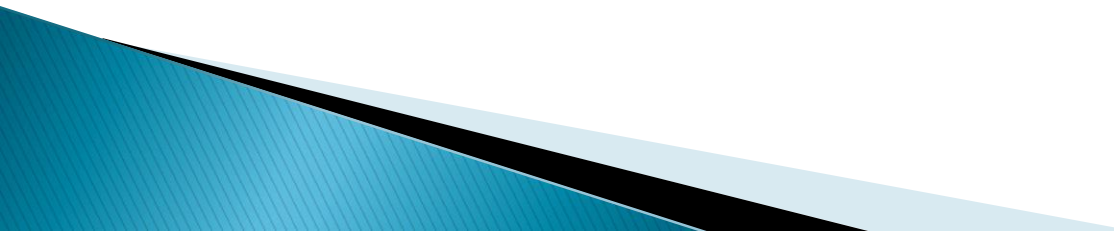
Child's Name:
Date:

D.O.B.
Observer:

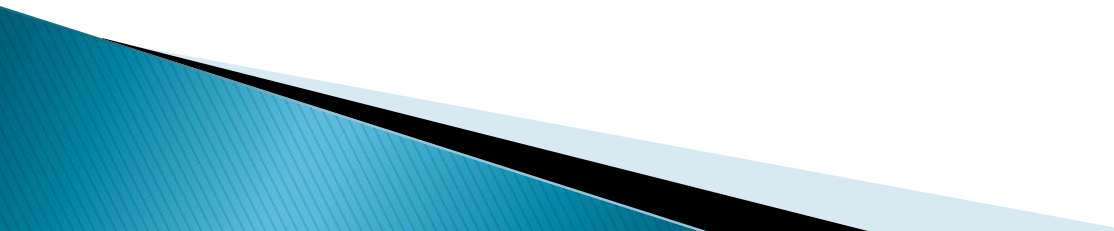
Developmental Checklist

By 12 Months	Yes	No	Sometimes
Walk with some help?			
Transfer objects from one hand to another			
Respond verbally to someone talking to her			
Clap hands			
Stack two blocks			
Hold beaker with two hands			
Respond's to own name being called			

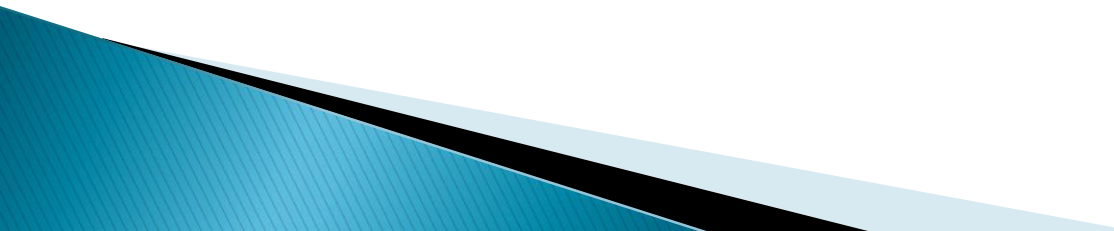
Advantages

- ▶ Quick and relatively easy to use.
 - ▶ Can be repeated to check progress at a later date.
 - ▶ Useful in recording physical development.
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Disadvantages

- ▶ Only the skills assessed are recorded, they can be quite restrictive.
 - ▶ Relatively un-detailed and does not give a rounded picture of the child, only records how they completed the task on that particular day.
 - ▶ Often limited to one area of development
 - ▶ Must be prepared in advance
 - ▶ May not coincide with activity, therefore awareness of planning is required
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Ways of recording observations

- ▶ Field notes – Notebooks, logs
 - ▶ Diaries
 - ▶ Record sheets
 - ▶ Checklists/tally charts
 - ▶ Photographs, videos and audio recordings
 - ▶ Movement charts/Spider webs
 - ▶ Sociograms
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Record of Observations

- ▶ Whichever method you choose to use, all recordings **must** be made in the present tense!

References

Beaty, J. (2006) *Observing Development of the Young Child*. Seventh Edition. Harlow: Pearson Education Inc.