

Observing

 seriouslykids.com.au/2012/01/observing/

Observation is an essential part of early years daily practice in all kinds of settings, including in the home.

When caring for children it is important to keep an eye on their development and the stages they are at. To do this effectively and gain a broad sense of the child the most common way to do this is by making observations of the child.

Observing the child is the first fundamental step towards understanding the child and towards providing appropriate and child focused experiences and learning opportunities for them.

This is not to say that you should be busy during the day writing down observations and not interacting with the child. To be successful you need to have a balance between both, doing observations and caring for the child.

If you are a nanny it is important if you would like to do observations on the child in your care to discuss this with the parents first.

To be effective, observation requires skills in observing and writing up observations quickly and efficiently. Learning skills in observing are not difficult, and once acquired, they go towards making the job of working with young children even more exciting.

What should be included in observing and recording?

Observing and documenting a child's development goes deeper than only their developmental stage.

It should include the child's:

- Interests
- Discoveries
- Achievements
- Questions
- Talents
- Ideas

Why observe?

Observing children allows us to identify their needs and strengths and account for them in providing specific child focused activities, experiences and opportunities.

Observing needs to be linked to child development to be able to establish where the child fits in in terms of their development with what is considered the 'norm'.

Each child does develop at their own rate and will vary slightly from the guide, however, if you find from doing observations the child is more than 6 months delayed in any developmental area it is important to discuss and seek professional assistance to help them reach their potential and if necessary have them assessed.

Critical thinking is essential to making sense of observations. The more knowledgeable carers/educators are about theories of learning and development, the more useful observations will be.

Observations can include:

- Photos
- Samples of work such as drawings
- Written observations in many forms and can be as simple as written on a post-it note with the date.

For further information on what to expect for age development see the [development section](#).