

Types of Observation Tools

Type of Tool	Description	Advantages	Challenges
Anecdotal Records of Observation	<p>Short descriptive detailed narrative of a specific event</p> <p>Example: <i>Shawn describes the interaction between two children as they negotiate to share a toy</i></p>	Flexible, open-ended	<p>Need record keeping system such as index cards, adhesive notes, or notebooks</p> <p>Must be aware of developmental indicators to watch for</p>
Running Records or Narratives of Observations	<p>Sequential narrative spanning a longer period of time than an anecdotal record.</p> <p>Example: <i>Sheila writes a description of all of Anthony's activities one morning during free play</i></p>	Flexible, open-ended	<p>Time consuming</p> <p>Need record keeping system such as index cards, adhesive notes, or notebooks</p> <p>Must be aware of developmental indicators to watch for within large amount of narrative information</p>
Time Sampling	<p>Observation of what happens during a given time period often using tallies</p> <p>Example: <i>While outdoors, Steve notes the number of children who use the climber, the swing set, and the sandbox during the entire hour of play</i></p>	<p>Objective</p> <p>Can collect information on more than one child at a time</p>	<p>Closed-ended</p> <p>Does not give a context for the information – what else impacted the time</p>
Frequency Counts	<p>A tally of each time a behavior is observed to occur</p> <p>Example: <i>For an entire day Fay notes the number of times a child chooses a book from the book shelf</i></p>	<p>Can document change over time</p> <p>Shows if changes in activities or the environment resulted in changes in behavior. For example, <i>did buying more books result in children choosing books more often?</i></p>	<p>Close ended</p> <p>Does not give a context for the information – what else impacted the time</p>

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Checklists	<p>A list of behaviors or traits that the caregiver checks off when observed</p> <p><i>Example: Mai uses the indicators from the Exploration and Discovery component of the Birth to 3 ECIPs to create a checklist. She watches over one week to check off which indicators she observes for each child using the ‘examples’ from the ECIPs as a guide</i></p>	<p>Easy to use</p> <p>Time efficient</p>	<p>Closed ended</p> <p>Does not give a context for the information – what else impacted the observation</p>
Work Samples or Portfolio	<p>Tape recording, video recording, photographs, and artifacts (Documents from children’s work – drawing, writing, etc) that show children’s current work and thinking</p> <p>May be collected in a ‘portfolio’ or used to illustrate descriptions of observations</p> <p><i>Example: Chris takes a picture of LaShawn’s block tower and clips it to the description of his block building time from this morning’s play</i></p>	<p>Can be used to show progress over time</p> <p>Provides a visual for accomplishments that may be hard to describe</p> <p>Quick</p>	<p>Need collection system to keep and store most important samples</p> <p>Analysis of artifacts can be time consuming</p>

Based on a table presented in *Creating Environments for Learning* by Julie Bullard, 2010