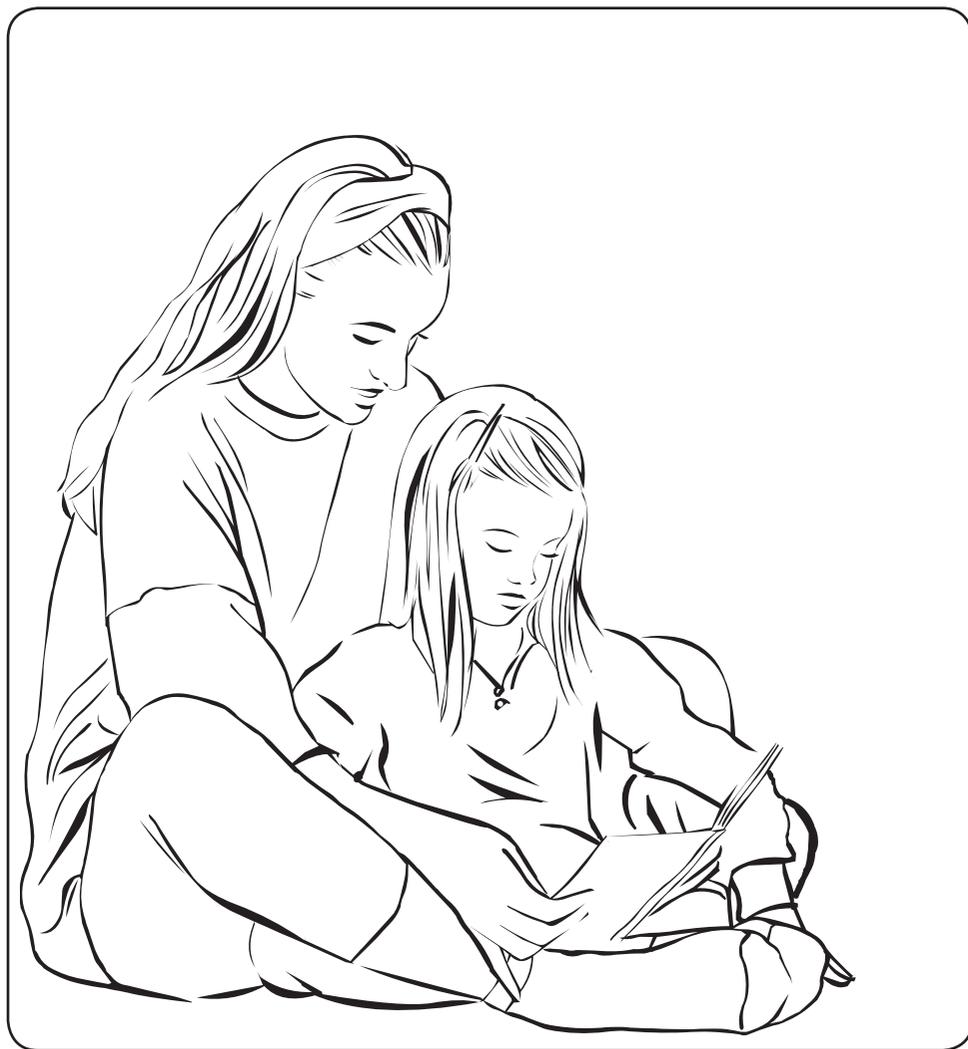


Observation

Booklet 2

How to plan and record
observations



This is Booklet 2 in a series of seven booklets.

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Introduction – Booklet 2

In this booklet you will find:

- sections to read;
- suggestions about how to plan and record your observation;
- activities to complete.

As you work through the booklet, you should discuss with your teacher or trainer:

- your thoughts about the activities;
- new words and terms for your glossary;
- your self-assessment in the **How did I do?** section.

By completing this booklet, you will learn:

- how to plan your observation;
- how to record your observation;
- what can be observed.

Planning the observation

When you start to observe a child, you will have already made some decisions about:

- the child you will observe;
- the activity you will observe.

You may also have ideas about:

- why you are planning the observation;
- how to plan your observation;
- whether you are going to plan a particular activity to observe;
- whether you are planning to observe a situation that is naturally occurring, for example, children sharing a book.

Points to consider when observing children

Before you even consider observing, you must remember the rights of children and parents. Permission must always be sought before commencing an observation.

When considering the rights of children, parents and carers:

- remember that every child is unique;
- gain any necessary permission;
- keep parents/carers informed and involved;
- be clear about your aim;
- work only in the best interests of the child;
- choose an appropriate method of observation;
- use the findings to plan future activities;
- aim to gain a holistic overview of the child.

REMEMBER

Confidentiality issues are important and you should not name an actual child, the setting or other people working in the setting. It should not be possible for anyone to identify a child you have observed.

Writing the observation

When you write up the observation, you should ensure that you cover the following items:

- The title (what).
- The aim of the observation (why).
- The methods used (how).
- When the observation took place (when).
- The environment (where).
- The child and significant adults involved (who).
- Background information (what and who).
- What you observed (what).

REMEMBER

When planning an activity or experience for your observation, the finest detail should be considered and recorded, including health and safety issues. However, your careful planning may not always turn out as you expected. Do not worry! This is a common experience for the most skilled early years practitioner observing a child or children as they go about their everyday activities.

The title (what)

This should be short, but precise. Here are some examples:

- Story time.
- Arriving at nursery.
- Treasure basket play.
- Using the computer.

The aim of the observation (why)

Your aim should state precisely what you are about to observe. These are general aims. Here are some examples:

- To observe a child entering the nursery first thing in the morning.
- To observe a child's balance and confidence on a piece of playground apparatus (a climbing frame).
- To observe a child playing with water.
- To observe a group of children during a free play session.

You should then identify more exactly what it is you are observing or have observed. These are specific aims. Here is an example of this:

Title: Lunchtime

General aim: To observe a child at lunchtime.

Specific aims:

- To find out which food the child likes.
- To note whether the child has conversations with friends.
- To note fine motor skills (child using cutlery).

You should then link the information to areas of development.

REMEMBER

The information on the areas of development can be found in Booklet 1.

Method of observation used (how)

This will be covered in Booklet 3.

When the session took place (when)

The time and date of the observation.

The environment (where)

You should include:

- the kind of early years setting it is (do not name the setting), for example, a private home, a school (type and class), a nursery (type);
- a description of the setting where you did the observation;
- the equipment or resources that were available to the children.

Here are some examples of the environment (where):

The pre-school room in a private day nursery in a small rural town. The messy play area: there are two groups of children playing with the sand and water, and two smaller groups of children who are painting.

A private family home, in the kitchen. The child's carer has just prepared lunch and is feeding the eight-month-old baby in its highchair. Nursery rhymes are playing on the sound system.

The reception class of a large primary school in the middle of town. Children are working in groups. They are involved in a number of activities such as playing in the home corner and the dressing up corner. The teacher is working with individual children, a classroom assistant is working at the science table and a volunteer helper is assisting individual children with their reading.

People involved (who)

You should include:

- details of the focus child or children;

- what the other children nearby were doing;
- details about other adults in the setting, their role and what they were doing.

The child (who)

Remember the good practice of keeping the confidentiality of those involved in the observation.

Do not:

- name the child (follow the guidelines provided by your teacher or trainer. This may be to use an initial, number, code or first name only);
- name the setting;
- name any other children or adults present (you can refer to them by role, for example, 'volunteer' – refer to your teacher or trainer for guidance on this).

Background information (what and who)

This should include:

- date of birth;
- age in years and months;
- language skills;
- any additional needs;
- position in family;
- culture, ethnicity.

It might also be useful to note anything that might affect the child's behaviour during your observation. For example:

- Has anything recently happened in the child's life such as a new baby in the family?
- Did anything happen immediately before the observation that upset the child, such as a fall?

- Is there anything else such as a cold or recent illness that may affect the child's behaviour?

REMEMBER

Ensure that you have permission for the observation

Here are some examples of background information:

S – a boy, 3 years 11 months.

Background: first day in the nursery after a bout of illness. Still a little weak.

T – a girl, 5 years 2 months.

Background: she can read and speak English and Bengali.

L – a boy, 2 years 8 months.

Background: L has a new baby brother who is 2 weeks old.

E – a girl, 5 years 6 months.

Background: E has problems with walking and, when she was younger, she had operations on both legs.

What you observed (what)

Look again at the list of areas of development in Booklet 1. You should decide which aspect of the development areas listed you aim to observe.

Here are some examples:

- Rosa's large body movements, in particular head control and rolling over.
- Gina cooperating with others and taking turns when making biscuits.
- Tim and Cheung's ability to recognise repeated sounds and sound patterns.
- Ali's ability to identify and name mathematical shapes.

Activity 1

Think about the areas of development that you should observe, read the statement and then complete the question.

Statement a)

S – a boy, 3 years 11 months.

Background: First day in the nursery after a bout of illness. Still a little weak.

Question a) What might you be observing about S that makes the details of his recent illness and return to the nursery significant?

Statement b)

T – a girl, 5 years 2 months.

Background: She can read and speak English and Bengali.

Question b) What might you be observing about T that makes the details of her ability to speak and read two languages significant?

Statement c)

L – a boy, 2 years 8 months.

Background: L has a new baby brother who is 2 weeks old.

Question c) What might you be observing about L that makes the details about his new baby brother significant.

Statement d)

E – a girl, 5 years 6 months.

Background: E. has problems with walking and, when she was younger, she had operations on both legs.

Question d) What factors would you consider when observing E ensuring social inclusion.

Activity 2

Sundip is standing on the second bar of the apparatus with her back to the frame. She has her hands in her pockets. She is tipping her feet backwards and forwards a little. A young boy comes along and talks to her. She replies and chats to him without taking her hands out of her pockets. Sundip removes her hands and turns round to face the frame. She moves her feet down to the first bar (left-right) and grips the third bar with her hands. After a few minutes, Sundip climbs down from the frame, then, ducking under the cross bar, goes inside the frame. She puts her left foot on the second bar of the frame. Her hands are gripping the third bar. In this way, Sundip walks her feet alternately and slides her arms along the third bar. At the other side, Sundip removes her hands and balances for approximately three seconds before jumping down, landing on two feet. A classroom volunteer is close by and says at intervals 'Well done Sundip, well done'.

Now complete the following headings based on the extract.

Title: _____

Environment: this observation is carried out in the playground during morning play. All the children are involved in various playground activities.

Aim: _____

No. of adults present: _____

Role of the adult(s): _____

No. of children present: _____

Aims (with links to areas of development): _____

Age of child: 5 years 0 months.

Background: on previous occasions, Sundip has lacked confidence when she has used the climbing frame.

Activity 3

Areas of development

Complete the following table. You will need to use the areas of learning and development in your textbook or in *Birth to Three Matters* or the *Foundation Stage Profile Handbook*.

Number of the drawing)	What can you see the child doing?	To which area of development does this relate?
1)		
2)		
3)		
4)		

Activity 4

Glossary (words and terms to remember)

Continue to build your own glossary of terms that are new to you or that you have come to understand in a new way.

General _____

Specific _____

Culture _____

Ethnicity _____

Activity 5

Learner evaluation

How did I do?

Well done! You have now completed Booklet 2.

Now spend a few minutes thinking about how you did and fill in the boxes below. Try to give examples when you make a comment. Then discuss your responses with your teacher or trainer.

What have I learnt so far?

What areas do I need to concentrate on?

What help do I need? Where will I get this help?

When will I take action on this?

What skills do I need to practise and develop in the workplace?