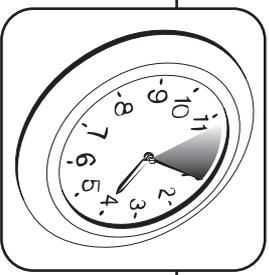


# Observation Booklet 7c

Time and event sampling



This is Booklet 7c in a series of seven booklets

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## Introduction – Booklet 7c

### In this booklet you will find:

- Sections to read.
- 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 do a time sample;
- how to do an event sample;
- what the advantages and disadvantages are of using time and event samples;
- when to use a time or event sample.

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## Time and event samples

These methods of recording observations are usually longitudinal records. This means they involve doing a series of observations using the same format and focussing on the same things. Observations are repeated over a period of time rather than just a one-off snapshot of a brief moment in time. You are aiming to get as much information as possible and greater detail about a specific aspect.

### Using a time sample

**Time samples are used in two main ways.** The **first** is to observe one child to see how he or she is behaving and what he or she is doing at specific intervals throughout the day. You can observe one child over a fairly long period – usually a morning or an afternoon for a fixed period of time, such as two minutes, at specific intervals, for instance every ten minutes or every half hour.

The length of time and the intervals will be decided by the aim of the observation. Here are some examples:

- If you are trying to find out how a child settles into a new setting at the beginning of the day you may want to observe for one minute every five minutes for the first hour.
- If you want to observe how well a child concentrates on writing you may want to observe every one minute of three for half an hour.
- If you want to find out if a child makes relationships and interacts with other children you may want to observe for two minutes every half an hour throughout the day.

For all these observations it would be best to observe again later in the week or at a different time of day. Whatever your aim this method of observing should enable you to collect data through a series of notes recorded at specific intervals over a period of time.

The time sampling method is sometimes used to check concerns you may have about a child's social or emotional development. If you have informally observed a child and wonder whether they are withdrawn or very attention seeking, for example, you can use a time sampling method.

This will help you find out whether there is a real problem or whether the concerns are not as worrying as you first thought. Time samples can provide a clear picture of when the behaviour is most likely to occur throughout the day.

The **second** way that time sampling is used is to find out how often certain toys or pieces of equipment are used. You may discover that some pieces of equipment are more popular than others. You would then need to assess whether they are not popular because of their location or accessibility or it maybe because they have become shabby. Sometimes just moving a piece of equipment around can increase its popularity.

## Activity 1 – Complete the blanks

1. Imagine that you have been asked to observe a child who seems to spend a lot of time quarrelling with other children. Devise a schedule for this by completing the blanks.

I would observe the child for \_\_\_\_\_ (total length of time) for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes at intervals of \_\_\_\_\_.

2. A time sample can be used in two ways.

The first use is to observe

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The second use is to find out

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## Activity 2 – Significant points

### Keys to the code

A time sampling observation can be written in note form. You can use a code to save you writing too many words. Here is an example:

FC = focus child      SP = solitary play  
 A = adult              PP = parallel play  
 C = another child    CP = co-operative play  
 tt = talks to

Look at the example of a time sampling observation on the following pages.

Time started	Time finished
9.00 am (observed for 2 minutes every half hour during the first 2 hours of the morning)	11.02 am
<b>Background information on child</b> Alice (the focus child FC) is 4 years and 5 months old. She has been attending school on afternoons only for 6 weeks and this is the first day she is going to stay at school for the whole day. Alice has an older brother in the school.	<b>Environment</b> The reception class of a small primary school. There are 25 children in the class and they are allowed to choose activities throughout the day.

<p><b>Aims</b></p> <p>To observe a child on her first full day at school during the morning (social and emotional development).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to see how well the child has settled into school</li> <li>to see how she socialises with other children</li> <li>to look for signs of independence</li> <li>to see how the child interacts with adults.</li> </ul>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Talk/interaction</b>
9.00	<p>FC walks into the class holding mother's hand. Kisses mother who leaves. FC walks to the window, sees her mother, jumps up and down waving. FC watches mother walk out of playground. FC turns away from window, looks around the classroom.</p>	<p>FC tt A "Bye mummy – see you lunch time:"</p> <p>A tt FC "No it will be at tea time because you are having your lunch here today:"</p>

9.30	<p>FC is sitting with rest of class in book corner listening to a story. FC watches teacher's face as story is read. FC smiles and laughs at pictures.</p>	<p>When teacher asks a question about the story FC shouts out answer.</p>
10.00	<p>FC puts on coat and does button up. Turns to help C who cannot start zip on her coat. FC cannot do it either. Looks round for the teacher. Skips out of door with other children into playground.</p>	<p>FC tt A "Miss Brown, Sally can't do her coat up"</p>
10.30	<p>FC paints a picture. Has large sheet of paper and has painted a circle on it. Paints another circle on paper and adds arms, legs and features. Stops painting. Looks at hand, which has some paint on it. Screws face up. Goes to the sink and washes her hands.</p>	<p>FC (to no one in particular) "This is a picture of my mum".</p> <p>FC tt A "Yeuch" (showing her hand).</p>

### Activity 3

Look at the observation sequences identified by your teacher or trainer.

Use the record sheet when observing the sequence:

11.00	Wanders around the room and then finds teacher. Teacher takes FC to snack table and sits and talks to her while she drinks her milk.	FC tt A "Is it time to go home yet?" A tt FC "No, but it's time for you to have a snack – I expect you're hungry"
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Use the space below to list three significant points about the child in this observation.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Devise an action plan – frequency, length of time to spend, intervals.
2. Decide on a piece of equipment for which you would like to check out the usage in your placement. For instance, the water tray, role play area, writing corner and so on. (You may need to discuss this with your placement supervisor first.)
3. Write the aim of your observation.
4. Use the recording sheet (Handout 1) to show who used the equipment at certain times.
5. Observe the sequence using the recording sheet.
6. Analyse your results and write down some significant points about what the data you have collected is showing you.
7. Discuss your completed observation sheets with your teacher or trainer and other learners.

For this activity the observation sequence was decided for you. If you were completing this observation in your work placement you would need to consider steps 1 and 2 first.

## Event sampling

An event sample is different to a time sample – instead of noting whatever happens at set periods of time you note the particular ‘event’ or behaviour of a child which he or she often exhibits whenever it occurs over a period of days or a week. You need to discover how often it happens, for how long it occurs each time and whether it is serious or mild – in other words, whether there is cause for concern.

With an event sample you need to spot specific aspects of behaviour – positive or negative. Although event samples are often used for looking at anti-social behaviour, for instance aggressive, disruptive or withdrawn behaviour, you do **not** have to focus on social or emotional development. You could be looking for positive events in the child’s development such as intellectual development. Examples of this might be every time the child takes an interest in writing or mark making; or every time the child displays a certain schema. You could be looking for progress in physical development such as every time a child uses a tricycle or climbs higher on the climbing frame and so on.

An **ABC Chart** is a special event sample which is sometimes used to check the causes of unwanted behaviour. By trying to eliminate the causes of the unwanted behaviour it will help you think about how you can respond to the child’s behaviour in positive ways. You can help the child modify their behaviour through devising ways of dealing with the behaviour. You will need to involve everyone who works with the child and the parents or carers for the strategy to be successful. You may have to seek further professional advice if the behaviour is serious or persistent.

The aim of an event sample using an ABC chart (it is sometimes called an ABC of behaviour) is to record the behaviour you identified (**B** = behaviour); what happened to cause it (**A** = antecedent); and what followed (**C** = consequences) to see if there is a pattern. If a pattern of a particular behaviour emerges, then the early years practitioner can often find a suitable way of avoiding the ‘antecedent’. This often stops the unwanted behaviour. Your detailed observations of the child could be helpful at a later date.

The following are some suitable topics for event sampling:

- tidying up sessions
- how and when equipment is used
- problem-solving behaviour
- identifying schemas
- meal-times
- child who seems constantly tired
- listening to a story
- temper tantrums
- seeking adult attention
- signs of independence
- settling into a new childcare setting

## Activity 4 – Event consequences

Read the following scenario and observation by Harry's key worker.

Harry often shouted out across the reception classroom to the other children. This disrupted their activities. At first the EYP thought that Harry might have hearing difficulties so she decided to do an event sample and note down every time Harry shouted out across the room and looked for the causes. This is what she observed:

No.	Antecedent	Behaviour	Consequences
1	FC is sitting with rest of class in book corner listening to a story. FC watches the teacher's face as the story is read. FC smiles and laughs at the pictures.	When the teacher asks a question about the story, FC shouts out the answer.	
2	A child pushed Harry when he thought no one was looking.	Harry walked past the construction sets and shouted at a boy who was playing there.	

3	An older child came into the classroom from another class and poked out her tongue at Harry as she walked past his table.	Harry ran across the classroom shouting out to other children on the way. He went outside and shouted to the classroom assistant who was in the playground.	
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Below you will find the observed consequences of each disturbance. They are jumbled up. Match them to the most appropriate behaviour and write next to box 1, 2 or 3.

- the boy went to complain to an adult about Harry
- the assistant told Harry to calm down and stop shouting
- the boy at the next table became upset and put his head down on the table.

Once the key worker had established that Harry only shouted when someone else teased him, she was able to talk to him and tell him what to do if that happened again. If you decide to do this type of observation you will need to concentrate and enlist the help of other people in the setting by explaining what you have noticed about a child and what you are looking for, as you cannot follow the child all day. They may be able to give you some extra information they have observed.



## Activity 7

### Learner evaluation

#### How did I do?

#### Well done! You have now completed Booklet 7c.

Now spend a few minutes thinking about how you did and answer the questions 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?

