

Conducting a Time Sample

Time sampling is a closed observation method that allows the observer, in a short period of time to gather information about a group of children at the same time. Depending on the focus of the observation and the age of the children being observed, the observer selects a time interval (e.g. every 5 minutes, every ten minutes etc.) and then scans the room at these intervals, making notes related to the focus of the observation. Observations forms can be designed/adapted to fit a variety of situations. For example, a time sampling could be conducted in order to measure the frequency of challenging behaviors among a selected subset of children. The observer would list each child's name down the left hand side of a piece of paper, and list time intervals of 15 minutes across the top (9:00, 9:15, 9:30 etc.) At 9:00 the observer scans the room, observes the activities of the identified children, and records hatch marks if the child is engaging in the identified behavior.

To use time sampling to gather information about children's interests, attention and peer relationships, list activity areas/learning centers in the classroom down the left hand column. List time segments across the top. Develop a simple coding system to allow you to quickly record what you need to – arrows to denote continuing play in the same area for example, circle the names of children who are playing cooperatively with each other in a given area, draw a squiggly line children who have conflict in play.