

Structured observations

It is important before starting an observation to be clear about what it is you are looking for, what you will not be looking at and how you will record what you wish to measure. These steps will help to ensure that your data has validity and reliability.

The principal, practical, method to use for structured observations is time sampling. You need to consider:

- Which times of the day/week, or in relation to particular events/activities, the behaviour you wish to measure occurs, most or least frequently.
- If you are going to use real time observation (recording with pencil and paper at the time) or video recording and then 'scoring' the behaviour later. Both can be intrusive in the classroom for students and staff. Video recording gives you the advantage of looking at the observation period more than once and to use an inter-rater to check your measures.
- You may wish to draw up your own recording sheets. You may choose to count the number of times a behaviour occurs in the observation period (tally), how long each behaviour lasts for (duration) or how frequent a behaviour is over a longer period of time. Here are two formats that may be helpful.

Engagement Observation Record			
Baseline Record			
Date	Time period	Engagement Score	Summary of behaviour observed
Intervention Record			
Date	Time Period	Engagement Score	Summary of behaviour observed

