

Systematic Observation Procedures

A minimum of three 20-minute observations are needed.

1. Choosing times to observe

We want to document “an inability to manage or complete classroom tasks within routine timelines.” Be selective and prearrange times with classroom teachers. Choose 20-minute blocks of time without transitions. Choose instruction times, i.e. times when listening/attention is required or independent work times. Choose a variety of settings, teachers, activities and subjects.

2. Basic Method

We are using a “partial interval” observation method with six-second intervals.

- a. Situate yourself in the room so that you have a clear view of the target student.
- b. Identify comparison students: at least two or three same sex students whom you can also see well.
- c. Observe the target student. Record at the end of the interval. Next, observe a peer and then record. Observe target and record. Observe second peer, etc. Alternate between target and peers for 20 minutes. (You will then have 100 data points for each).

3. Recording Codes

- a. Basic codes are on “+” and off “o” task.

The definitions of “on” and “off” task are very important. Define them for yourself in terms of observables and concretes. Avoid inference.

On-Task

Appropriate behavior for classroom
Meets teacher expectations or behavior in the classroom
Eyes on work
Writing or group responding at appropriate time
Eyes on teacher
Eyes on student who is responding
Eyes on visuals used by teacher
Doing as expected even if accompanied by body movements

Off-Task

Doing something that is not allowed
Out of seat when not permitted acceptable
Talking out/blurting out
Doing something inappropriate
Not following teacher directions
Motor behavior, e.g. playing with something
Talking when not allowed
Passive staring
On wrong page in book
Working on wrong assignment, page

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b. More sophisticated codes allow more information about off-task behaviors:

e.g. “V”=verbal off-task “P”=passive off-task “M”=motor off-task

c. Most sophisticated – use additional codes

Instead of “V” can use “SV”=social verbal

Instead of “M” can use “OOS”=out of seat, “MG”=gross, “MF”=fine

Instead of just “+” can use “+M” to indicate on-task but excess motor movement (kicking feet, chewing pencil, playing with hair)

“EC”=made eye contact with observer

Your comments are very important. Record on the observation sheet as soon as possible after the observation. Include date, time of day, situation/activities, demand/expectations on the student, observations not able to be coded and anything else significant such as physical location of the student in the room.

4. Calculation and Reporting Time On-Task and Discrepancies

a. Calculation percentage of time on-task

$$\frac{\text{\# of intervals on-task}}{\text{\# of intervals observed}} \times 100 = \text{percentage of time on task}$$

Example: $\frac{63 \text{ intervals on-task}}{100 \text{ intervals observed}} \times 100 = 63\% \text{ on-task}$

We generally calculate and report the type of behavior we want to increase (i.e. on-task behavior). The results of this calculation should be reported as “target child was observed to be on-task during x% of the observed six-second intervals”, not as “target child was on-task x% of the time”.

b. Calculating discrepancies

$$\frac{\% \text{ on-task peers}}{\% \text{ on-task target}} = \text{discrepancy}$$

Note: Use this formula only when peers are more on-task than target

Example: $\frac{\text{Peers were on-task } 90\%}{\text{Target was on-task } 60\%} = 1.5$

Target was on-task 60%

“Target student was 1.5 times more off-task than his/her peers”.

We are recommending the use of a 1.5 or larger discrepancy as significant. This level is equal to the target being off-task about two thirds as often as peers. A discrepancy of 2.0 means target was on-task only half as often as peers. A discrepancy of 1.0 means no discrepancy – they were on-task the same proportion of time.