

Appendix A

Examples of Observational Methods and Guidelines

Environmental Checklist

An environmental checklist is often used to identify areas not being used and to ensure that the environment is being utilised to its potential. A well set up and monitored environment caters for children interests and needs and provides more child chosen activities for children, which gives caregivers more time with individuals and small groups of children.

Some of the features of an environmental checklist

- desirable components of a child care environment to be observed are listed
- can be customised to a certain environment and age group
- can be completed in one go
- may be checked off with a 'yes' or a 'no'
- can have any number of items on them
- can identify areas that are well used and those that are not
- can observe the environment for its potential to foster all areas of children's development and well being

Below is an example of an environmental checklist for a preschool room.

Room/Service <u>Bunyips Room</u>		Observer <u>Kathryn</u>
Age of users <u>3 – 5 years</u>		Date of observation <u>31/3/03</u>
Directions: Put a Y where the item is present Put a N for items that are not present Leave all other items blank		
YES/NO	ITEM	EVIDENCE
Y	Children are able to self-select a range of arts materials	Arts materials are displayed on open shelves for children to access
Y	Materials available to children are predominately open-ended	Materials such as sand, water, paper are available, along with many natural materials
N	There are quiet places where children can be alone	The room is very open plan to allow for easy supervision of children. We may need to block off a couple of areas.
N	Children are able to view the room from different levels	
Y	Walkways are clear and uncluttered	Walkways are wide enough for children to walk through 2 at a time. Some walkways are divided by child sized furniture.
N	Objects and items in the room represent the children and their families	We could use photo's or ask children to bring special items in to the centre for display or use.
Y	Children are able to use their senses to see, touch hear and smell a variety of things	The outdoor environment provides varying surfaces and smells in the garden. Perhaps we could encourage children to listen to sounds

Where the item is not observed the space is left blank. You may choose to make note of why and list strategies.

Evidence provided tell the reader why the observer has indicated a 'Y' for each item.

Even though you have checked a Y, you may still think that more could be done.

The following templates are in Appendix B

One blank environmental checklist template


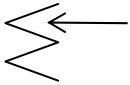

Anecdotal Observation

Anecdotal observational methods are widely used, due to them being easy and useful. It is really like telling a story, using objective language.

Some common features of anecdotal records are

- events and actions that occur can be recorded
- generally short in length, although may be long at times
- children's and adults language is included
- spoken language is highlighted by underlining words
- a rough sketch or a work sample to describe children's actions can be included

Below is an example of an anecdotal observation.

Anecdotal Record	
Child's Name <u>Toby</u> DOB <u>29/3/99</u> Date <u>10/5/02</u>	
Observer <u>Charlene</u> Time of observation <u>10.34 am</u>	
Focus for observation <u>Toby's fine motor skills</u>	
Context Toby is in the drawing centre, with 3 other children. DH (3.2), AR (4.1) and TH (2.11). 	
Observation <p>Toby holds a green marker in his right hand and begins to draw from the bottom of the page upwards in a zig-zag movement, as below. He draws like this all the way to the top.</p>  <p>Toby then changes direction and Draws a mirror image down the other side. Carer says, <u>that looks like something familiar to me.</u> Toby says, <u>It's a Christmas tree.</u> </p> <p>Toby picks up the scissors in his right hand and begins to cut slowly around the outside of the tree shape. When he finished he folded the shape in half twice, before unzipping his bag and putting it in.</p>	Inference / implication for planning <p>Shows preference for right hand</p> <p>Using drawing tools with control</p> <p>Can draw in many directions</p> <p>Can use scissors with skill</p> <p>Can undo a zipper and fold a piece of paper</p>

Children 's initials and ages are recorded

Examples of children's actions may be recorded

All language recorded is underlined

The following templates are in Appendix B

One template for short anecdotal observations (2 per page)

One anecdotal template for longer anecdotal observations

Checklists

Checklists are usually used along with other methods of observation. They are useful for collecting a wide range of information in a brief and more formal way. By designing your own checklist, you are ensuring that the information you check for is relevant to your setting and the child you are observing.

Some common features of checklists are

- skills or abilities to be observed are listed beforehand
- items can be dated on entry
- 'yes', 'no' or 'no opportunity to observe' responses can be recorded
- can be any length
- can be used as a tool to observe children, the environment or even communication within the room between carers or parents and carers
- one area or all areas of development can be observed

Example of using a checklist to observe 'self-help skills'

Checklist

Child's name <u>Cheryl</u>		Observer <u>Kathryn</u>	
Age <u>3.5</u>		Date of commencement <u>31/3/03</u>	
Directions: Put a Y where the item has been observed frequently Put a N for items where there is no opportunity to observe Leave all other items blank			
YES/NO	ITEM	EVIDENCE	DATE
Y	Can pour self a drink with minimal spills	Poured water from a jug into a cup at morning tea time	5/4/03
	Can manage a range of clothing fasteners. Eg. Zip, buttons, buckles		
Y	Can use the toilet unassisted	Used toilet without assistance 3 times today	31/3/03
Y	Can wash hands with minimal assistance	Washed hands following use of the toilet, only needing verbal prompts	31/3/03
N	Often wants to do things for him/herself		
Y	Can use a spoon or fork to eat, without many spills	Observed using utensils today at both morning tea and lunchtime. No spills evident.	5/4/03
Y	Knows where to find own belongings	Collected belonging when parent arrived to collect her.	5/4/03

Where a child is not yet able to do an item, the space is left blank to be recorded later.

You can see that the evidence is where you record what the child actually did.

An **N** does not mean they cannot do it. It just means no opportunity to observe them.

The following templates are in Appendix B

One blank checklist template

Time Sampling

Time sampling is very useful for finding out what children are doing over a length of time. It is a good way to see how they are interacting with each other, or using the materials and equipment within the environment.

Some common features of time samples

- actions are recorded at set time intervals
- can be code or uncoded
- allow for the observer to write down what the child is doing
- recorded over a length of time to ensure children's full range of behaviours or abilities are recorded
- allow the observer to record information about more than one child in the same period of time
- coded behaviours must be well understood by observers to give accurate information

Below is an example of a time sample

Time Sample		
Child's name <u>Ashlea</u> Date of birth <u>4/10/98</u> Age <u>4.6</u> Date of observation <u>12/04/03</u> Observer <u>Karley</u> Room/Service <u>Preschoolers room</u> Behaviour code: N = Non play S = Solitary play P = Parallel play G = Group play		
Time	Code	Brief description
9.30	N	Ashlea is holding a paintbrush watching others in the room
9.35	S	Ashlea is painting at the easel on her own
9.40	P	Ashlea is painting at the easel with another child
9.45	P	Ashlea is in the sandpit, making a 'dam' next to other children
9.50	G	Ashlea, Clare (4.2) and Samantha (5.0) are making a large hole in the sandpit together, talking to each other and telling each other what has to happen next.
9.55	G	Sandpit play as above. Samantha is taking the lead role.
10.00	G	As above. Some pretend play with people figures swimming in the 'dam'
10.05	N	Transition to group time
10.10	N	Group time – Carer led story
10.15	N	As above
10.20	P	Free movement to music as a group

This group play is complex, as children need each other to fulfil play goals and make the game fun.

These are coded as non-play times as they are structured and directed by adults, not children.

Free movement in groups is parallel play due to some child control during the experience. A dance with set steps would not be play.

10.25	N	Handwashing and moving to morning tea.
Inference Ashlea has spent much of this time engaged in play near or with others. She has demonstrated an ability to engage in complex group play with similar age peers for the duration of approx. 15 minutes. Ashlea also showed an interest in painting in the arts area. Engaging in painting both on her own and with others. Most non-play time observed was due to transitions or routines.		

Descriptions of the coded play behaviours

N = Non play, which includes the following sub categories

Unoccupied behaviour

Which as it states is used to code unoccupied behaviour, routines and transitions.

Onlooker behaviour

A child who is looking at others play, and may ask questions, but is not active.

S = Solitary play

The child is involved in play that may be near others, but is psychologically apart.

P = Parallel play

Similar to solitary play, however in parallel play, children are engaged in the same type of play at the same time.

G = Group play, which includes the following sub categories

Associative play

Children play side by side and engage in cooperative conversation, but the goal of their play or activity can be carried out without the input of assistance of another.

Cooperative play

Children play together in a group, assigning and carrying out roles to ensure that the stated or unstated objectives of play are met.

The following templates are in Appendix B

Template of coded play behaviours

Template for other coded behaviours

Template for a time sample without any codes (no coded behaviours)

Event Sampling

Event sampling is used to develop an understanding of a child's behaviour during a specified event. Often event sampling is used to record information about difficult or challenging behaviours.

Some common features of event samples

- information about an event that you want to know more about is recorded
- records what happened before, during and after the event
- may be recorded at the time or shortly after the event
- more than one is needed to form and understandings of overall patterns and behaviours and elements contributing to the behaviour/event.
- inferences are best made after several observations have been recorded

Below is an example of an event sample

Event Sample		
Child's name <u>Bart</u> Observer <u>Maranda</u>		
DOB <u>22/8/00</u> Age <u>2.8</u> Service/Room <u>Toddler</u>		
Event being observed <u>Arrival time – Settling into care</u>		
Before	Event	After
Mum arrived with Bart, holding on to her leg. Bart did not respond to carers greeting but hid behind Mum. Mum stayed for 6 minutes and said good-bye to Bart	Bart became upset when Mum said she was going. He ran to the door after her and fell on the floor crying when she left. Carer tried to calm Bart by letting him know that it was OK to feel sad and telling him that Mum would be back after he had played outside.	Bart cried for 3 minutes, before settling with Joseph and the carer in the sandpit. He appeared settled after 10 minutes and was interacting with carer and other children.

Everything that happens before the event

Everything that happened during the event

Your strategy and how the child responded.

As stated above, you will need more than one event sample to decide whether or not this strategy is most useful. Once you have collected several samples you can record what is happening and which strategies you have tried. You then select the strategies that seem to be most effective and use these each time the event or behaviour occurs. So as you can evaluate the usefulness of the strategies you decide on, you will also need to record further event samples.

Benefits of this approach

- Allows discussion of the process with parents and other caregivers, using evidence of strategies and their effectiveness
- Allows the observe to monitor his/her own responses for effectiveness over time
- Assists the observer to understand the child and his/her behaviour or reactions to this event in depth, which may assist with planning in other areas of the program or child's learning




The following template is in Appendix B

Event sample (2 per page)

Gaining an understanding of children's interests through communication with families/parents

Talking to parents about their child often is the best way to increase your understanding of the child. Written communication is also a good way to find out about children you are caring for. The following form is designed to collect basic information about a child's interest and strengths and can be used along with frequent face-to-face communication with children's families.

Please tell us about your child.

		
What are your child's favourite books?	What toys does your child like to play with most?	What does your child do well?

How will you ask the child's parent/caregiver?

It is important that you let parents know that the information they give you will remain confidential. It is also important that you highlight how this information will assist you to offer experiences and resources that best meet the interests of their child. You may like to offer examples of what you will do with such information. The following are some examples.

You may

- make up a story about favourite things
- offer books by the same author as those who authored children's favourite books
- ensure that favourite toys are available when settling children or when they are feeling unwell or upset
- write a song about something of interest
- organise an excursion or visitor to talk about something of interest

The possibilities are endless.

The following template is in Appendix B

Please tell us about your child

Individual Planning Form

Child's name

Age

Date of plan

What do you know about this child based on information you have collected?

(Information could be collected from parents, caregivers, other children and through direct observations of the child)

Daniel is frequently observed attempting to initiate play with other same-age peers. Often his attempts are met with rejection by others. Other carers in the room and Daniel's Dad have also indicated that this has been occurring on a regular basis.

Routine experience

(Which routine are you planning for?)

OR

Play-based experience

(What is the name of this experience?)

Pretend play

What is your aim for the child?

(What are you hoping the child will gain from this experience?)

For Daniel to develop some strategies that he can use to join in with others in group play

What role will you fulfill to help achieve your aim?

Provision of materials and resources

Interactions / communication style

Open-ended resources

- *Pebbles*
- *Water*
- *Leaves and twigs*

A large container to hold the water

Waterproof aprons

Other resources as selected or requested by children

Support children's spontaneous play by

- *Commenting on actions*
- *Engaging in parallel play*
- *Providing encouragement*
- *Providing verbal strategies*
- *Giving suggestions for play directions*

Ensuring that I do not take over the play

Briefly describe the planned experience

(How you will begin the experience? How will you motivate, guide and support children during the experience? How will you end the experience and manage transition to another experience or program area?)

This is an open experience designed to promote interaction and social play between children. All items as listed will be set up in a quiet area outside.

Children will be shown or told about the experience and will be encouraged to participate. Children's wishes not to participate will be respected.

Interactions will be used to provide support and guidance, through the use of strategies as outlined in the previous section.

I will respond to children's play choices and lead and model enthusiasm and interest in what they are doing

Care will be taken not to take over the play, as the aim of this experience is peer-to-peer communication and interaction.

Evaluation

(How did you go overall? Did you achieve your aim? Were your expectations appropriate for the child's abilities and interests? How did children respond? What changes could be made to improve the experience, if any?)

Daniel, Peter (3.4) and Ellie (4.2) engaged in this experience for a period of approximately 25 minutes. Children engaged in some interactions with parallel play, along with some verbal strategies from myself proving to be highly effective in promoting conversation and social exchanges.

Daniel showed a high level of interest making leaves float on the water. Several times he referred to them as boats and briefly talked about his boat at home. Ask Daniel's father about the boat.

Offer this experience again and provide more resources that may float on the water. Encourage Daniel to talk about what happens with other children.

Feedback and validation – (for service staff or field workers)**Feedback on performance (Optional)**

(Based on the learner's performance – what did the learner do well? What did the learner seem unaware of?)

The learner showed a high level of ability in gaining children's attention and enhancing their use of resources. She was able to assist Daniel to communicate and engage in some social play through suggestions, and through engaging in parallel play with the children.

Feedback on learner reflection (Optional)

Does the learner demonstrate an ability to learn through reflection? – eg. Is the evaluation accurate? Are there any 'blind spots' that the learner should be aware of?)

Reflection demonstrates the learner's ability to accurately evaluate her skills and the experience.

Please sign to validate the learner's implementation of this experience

Name _____ Room Supervisor _____ Signature _____ *sign here* _____ Date 22/08/03

Appendix B

Blank Templates

Environmental Checklist

[illegible]

<u>Anecdotal Record</u>	
Child's Name _____	DOB _____ Date _____
Observer _____	Time of observation _____
Focus for observation _____	
Context	
Observation	Inference / implication for planning

<u>Anecdotal Record</u>	
Child's Name _____	DOB _____ Date _____
Observer _____	Time of observation _____
Focus for observation _____	
Context	
Observation	Inference / implication for planning

Anecdotal Record

Child's Name _____ DOB _____ Date _____

Observer _____ Time of observation _____

Focus for observation _____

Context

Observation

Inference / implication for planning

Checklist

Child's name _____

Observer _____

Child's age _____

Date of commencement _____

Directions:

Put a **Y** where the item has been observed frequently

Put a **N** for items where there is no opportunity to observe

Leave all other items blank

[illegible]

Time Sample

Child's name _____ **Date of birth** _____ **Age** _____

Date of observation _____ Observer _____

Room/Service _____

Behaviour code:

N = Non play

S = Solitary play

P = Parallel play

G = Group play

Time	Code	Brief description

Inference

Time Sample

Child's name _____ Date of birth _____ Age _____

Date of observation _____ Observer _____

Room/Service _____

Behaviour code:

Time	Code	Brief description

Inference

Time Sample

Child's name _____ Date of birth _____ Age _____

Date of observation _____ Observer _____

Room/Service _____

Time	Brief description

Inference

Running Record

Child's name _____ Date of birth _____

Date of observation _____ Observer _____

Room/Service _____

Observation	Inference

Event Sample

Child's name _____ Observer _____

Age _____ Date of Observation _____ Service/Room _____

Event being observed

Before	Event	After

Event Sample

Child's name _____ Observer _____

Age _____ Date of Observation _____ Service/Room _____

Event being observed


Before	Event	After

Please tell us about your child




Books I like are...

**What are your child's
favourite books?**



**Toys I like are...
What kinds of toys does your
child like the most?**

**What kind of toys does
your child like the most?**



**What does your
child do well?**

Thank you for your help.

Individual Planning Form

Child's name _____ Age _____ Date of plan _____

What do you know about child based on information you have collected?

(Information could be collected from parents, caregivers, other children and through direct observations of the child)

Routine experience

(Which routine are you planning for?)

OR

Play-based experience

(What is the name of this experience?)

What is your aim for the child?

(What are you hoping the child will gain from this experience?)

What role will you fulfill to help achieve your aim?

Provision of materials and resources

Interactions / communication style

Briefly describe the planned experience

(How you will begin the experience? How will you motivate, guide and support children during the experience? How will you end the experience and manage transition to another experience or program area?)

Evaluation

(How did you go overall? Did you achieve your aim? Were your expectations appropriate for the child's abilities and interests? How did children respond? What changes could be made to improve the experience, if any?)

Feedback and validation – (for service staff or field workers)**Feedback on performance (Optional)**

(Based on the learner's performance – what did the learner do well? What did the learner seem unaware of?)

Feedback on learner reflection (Optional)

Does the learner demonstrate an ability to learn through reflection? – eg. Is the evaluation accurate? Are there any 'blind spots' that the learner should be aware of?)

Please sign to validate the learner's implementation of this experience

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____