

# Recording Methods

## Introduction

Even though teachers watch and observe children *every minute of every day*, they certainly don't have the time to write down *everything* they learn from their observations.

Careful planning, focus in certain observation times, and use of quick, efficient documentation strategies can provide excellent documentation of progress.

Recording your observations can be done in a number of different ways and may vary to suit a particular purpose. Most teachers experiment with a variety of methods before settling on the approaches they find most efficient and/or comfortable.

After viewing this section, you will be able to describe:

- how and when to use a summative record;
- how and when to use a quick recording sheet; and
- how and when to use brief notes.



## Recording Tips

Good documentation doesn't happen by accident - you have to include time for observation and documentation in your daily planning.

Here are some helpful tips:

Plan, plan, and then plan some more!

Prepare in advance to be sure you have what you need. What will you write anecdotes on? Sticky notes? Index cards? Computer labels? Notebook paper? Portfolios forms? Decide which forms you want to use and have them handy.

Select optimal times to observe and record while you are with the children and have your clipboard handy in the midst of your teaching. Sometimes you may be able to plan time "out of the action" for watching and writing.

Other times you will plan time for reflection at the end of the day and write down your notes.

Focus your observations by individual children, domains or specific indicators.

Share responsibilities with colleagues.

Involve the children by inviting them to share their work with you.

Be brief - jot down a few words and add details later.

Be flexible - things don't always go as planned. Don't be too hard on yourself on days when things just don't work out.



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## Summative Record

A summative record is a quick way to record what a child did and or said after the fact. It's a summary of what you observed, not an evaluation. You are still writing only the facts. It is a good tool to use when reflecting on the day's activities. It can be as brief as two to three sentences or phrases and can be written on something like a 4 by 6 inch index card or sticky note.



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## Example

Observe these two children as they play.

Without viewing the video clip again, can you recall key observations to note for a summative record?

A summative record for this vignette might look like this:

*Paula and Pedro built a corral with blocks and played together with horses and a cow. Pedro shared several ideas in Spanish with Paula about what the cow and horses were doing as they moved them around the corral. Then Paula and Pedro crawled away from the corral with the animals chasing each other.*



This example recalls enough of the interaction between Paula and Pedro to help you recall the incident when you are preparing to report on progress.

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## Quick Check Recording Sheet

Some observations can be recorded simply and easily by using a "Quick Check Recording Sheet." Twelve Essential Indicators have been identified by the PreK leadership for this kind of documentation and special forms have been designed for this purpose. This type of documentation can be quick and efficient. Each form is for documentation of children's performance related to a specific Essential Indicator and includes five columns for the five rubric ratings of that EI. A teacher writes down all the children's names and then the date of observation under the rubric rating that matches the child's performance.



The twelve Essential Indicators identified for this type of documentation are:

- #1 coordinates eye-hand movements using beads, laces, pegs, puzzles and other manipulatives and small objects, and when dressing and undressing.
- #2 listens with understanding to directions and conversations
- #3 hears and discriminates the sounds of language in words to develop phonological awareness
- #5 demonstrates an interest and enjoyment in books, listening to stories read aloud, and/or looking at books using illustrations or familiar text

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- #7 progresses in understanding and using concepts of print
  - #10 recognizes, names, describes, compares and creates familiar shapes
  - #11 demonstrates emerging knowledge of measurement
  - #12 sorts, classifies and groups materials by one or more characteristic
  - #15 makes predictions and forms hypotheses
  - #17 cares for personal and group possessions
  - #20 shows interest in exploring the environment, learning new things and trying new experiences
  - #21 develops increasing independence during activities, routines and play

Quick Check Recording Sheets are especially helpful in observing several children in small group work, but they are not meant to be used to record every child's performance on the same day. Instead, teachers should have them on clip boards around the room, ready to use when they see children engaged in activities over a few weeks. In this way, teachers can look at the performance of the whole group of children with one glance, noting the levels of performance and using that information to change curricular strategies.

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### Brief Notes Recording Sheet

Some observations are too involved to be documented with a check mark. In cases like this, writing brief notes will help you describe what you saw or heard and will be useful to review when making reports.

By keeping a class list handy with space for brief notes by each child's name, you can take advantage of group work to observe several children at one time.

