Children's Services
Since 1895

Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequences (ABC) Recording

Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequences (ABC) recording

An ABC recording can be used to determine whether what happens before and after the behaviour might be influencing the behaviour.

To apply for the 2026 High Learning Support Needs funding under the Disability and Inclusion Program, or the 2027 Inclusion Funding program, observations demonstrating the frequency, intensity and duration of the concerns should be made across the preschool routine.

Child's name	
Focus behaviour	
Educator(s) name(s)	

Date and Time	**Setting/Context** *(location/ activity/ learning experience)*	**Antecedent** *What happened right before the behaviour?*	**Behaviour** *Describe the behaviour*	**Consequence** *What happened immediately after the behaviour? What happened as a result of the behaviour?*

- ABC recordings are used for identifying the function of a behaviour. It clearly identifies the behaviour you are observing.
- **Antecedent –** What happened right before the behaviour?
  - Was there a transition time?
  - Was there a change in routine?
  - Was there an interaction with another child?
- **Behaviour –** Document the behaviour and exactly what you see. Be factual and objective when describing the behaviour. Remember, you do not need to analyse or interpret the behaviour.
- **Consequence –** What happened immediately after the behaviour?

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Using Observation Templates

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- What do others do immediately after the behaviour?
    - Do they move away, become angry, give 'attention,' ignore them, redirect or distract, give them what they want, stop the demand or activity, help or fix their problem?
- What does the child do immediately after?
    - Do they calm down, appear happier, remain upset or agitated, become angry or aggressive, withdraw, cries, runs away, the behaviour increases?

Anecdotal Observation

Anecdotal observations

An anecdotal observation tells a story. Make your records short and focussed, with descriptions of the focus behaviours.

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Child's name	
Focus behaviour	
Educator(s) name(s)	

Date	**Start Time**	**Finish Time**	**Setting/Context** *(location/ activity/ learning experience)*	**Observation** *Describe the behaviour*

- Anecdotal records are usually performed after an event and are written in the past tense.
- They are sometimes described as diary records and focus on what is important, recorded in chronological order, with a beginning and an end.
- This may include focusing on a single area of child development, or going through a number of developmental areas, or aspects of a child's play at once.
- When creating an anecdotal record, you must record what the child has said and done, including their body language, pronunciation, direct quotes and facial expressions.

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Frequency Tally

Frequency tally

A frequency tally records the number of times that a focus behaviour was observed.

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Child's name	
Focus behaviour	
Educator(s) name(s)	

Date	**Start time**	**Finish time**	**Setting/Context** *(location/ activity/ learning experience)*	**Tally of the number of times that the behaviour was observed**	**Total**

- Can be used to document how many times a behaviour may occur or a rate (per hour), such as, number of times a child presents with aggressive behaviour (hits, pushes, kicks) towards another child or educator.
- How long a child can participate in the program, such as, sitting on the mat at group time, engage in activities.
- Sometimes you may feel like the behaviour occurs 'all day' however, when documenting the frequency, this may help you notice patterns around particular times of the day, such as, drop off and pick up, transition times, open-ended free play.
- This can be useful to see the frequency of the behaviour occurring, and when/ where it is happening.

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Using Observation Templates

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Language Sample

Language sample

A language sample records the language used in an interaction and can include both verbal and non-spoken (non-verbal) communication. You can use a transcription of a video or an audio recording of the interaction.

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Child's name	
Educator(s) name(s)	

Date and time	**Setting/Context** *(location/ activity/ learning experience)*	**Language Transcript**

- Records the verbal and non-verbal language used in an interaction between child-to-child, child-to-adult and adult-to-child communication.
- Can be used to document concerns with language and communication delays.
- *Hot tip:* use a transcription of a video or an audio recording of the interaction, to replay and record the conversation after the interaction has occurred as you may need to be present in the interaction.

Running Record

Running record

A running record is an exact record what the child does and says as it happens.

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Child's name	
Educator(s) name(s)	

Date	**Start time**	**Finish time**	**Setting/Context** *(location/ activity/ learning experience)*	**Observation** *Describe the behaviour*

- A running record is written in the present tense as it is being recorded as it happens.
- Running records involve describing everything a child says and does in a specified period.
- It provides a detailed description of the child's actions and behaviours during a specific time frame.

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Using Observation Templates

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- These can help determine why a child may be behaving in a particular way and can provide significant information on a range of developmental areas.
- It is recommended to observe in time increments, such as 2 to 5 minutes.
- Running records could be used for gathering information about a child's social interactions because you are concerned about their social skills.
- *Hot tip:* Take a video to view and document at a later time.

Scatterplot

Scatterplot

A scatterplot tracks and counts behaviours and helps to identify frequency and patterns across times of the day.

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Child's name	
Focus behaviour	
Educator(s) name(s)	

Instructions: Add the relevant date at the top of each column. If a behaviour occurs during a particular time interval, fill in the space using the codes below.

Behaviour does not occur during the time interval (leave blank):

Behaviour occurs sometimes during that time interval (add "/") (e.g. 1 to 3 times):

/

Behaviour occurs regularly during that time interval (add "X") (e.g. 4 or more times):

X

Time	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]	[Date]
8:30am-9:00am													
9:00am-9:30am													
9:30am-10:00am													

- Tracks and counts behaviours.
- Select a focus behaviour, however you can complete multiple scatterplots for different behaviours.
- Helps to identify frequency and patterns across different times of the day.
- It uses a symbol to document when something does not occur (leave blank), occurs sometimes (add '/'), occurs regularly (add 'X').

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Using Observation Templates

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Time Sample

Time sample

A time sample maps a child's experiences/behaviour at regular intervals for a whole day or part of a day. Time samples are often conducted half-hourly but the frequency can be as often or infrequent as is appropriate to the child and situation. Time samples of different days need to be completed before a picture of the child's day can be formed.

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Child's name	
Educator(s) name(s)	
Date completed	

Time	**Observation** *Describe the behaviour*
9:00 am	
9:30 am	

- Time samples record a child's behaviour and how often that behaviour occurs during the day.
- Observe and describe the behaviour.
- Time samples are an effective way of finding out how children are engaging in various play areas as well as providing insight into children's behaviour at different points in the day.
- A time sample is often described as taking a series of 'snapshots' similar to time-lapse photography and can assist in seeing the particular patterns in how children experience the program.
- Time samples can be undertaken every 30 minutes throughout the day or in shorter increments of 5 to 10 minutes. One important consideration is to have a clear pre-determined purpose for undertaking the time-sample.
- Can be used to map a child's experiences/behaviour at regular intervals for a whole day or part of a day.
- Can be used to document participation, for example, how long a child does something for (e.g. sits on the mat at a group time; engages in a task).
- Can be used to document social interaction with peers.

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