

INFANTS & TODDLERS

- [VIDEOS](#)
- [OBSERVING](#)
- [EXERCISES](#)
- [OBSERVING LAB](#)
- [ABOUT](#)



- [OBSERVING](#)
- [ANECDOTAL RECORDS](#)
- [RUNNING RECORDS](#)
- [ABC RECORDS](#)
- [TALLY SAMPLING](#)
- [CHECKLISTS AND RATING SCALES](#)
- [OBJECTIVITY](#)
- [DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE](#)
- [POSITIVE LANGUAGE](#)
- [ANALYSIS](#)
- [DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS](#)

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

What is descriptive writing?

Descriptive writing requires an effort on the part of the observer to use specific, vivid vocabulary to record an observation. The observer endeavours to paint a picture of what has happened through a deliberate choice of words.

How do I use descriptive writing when I record my observations?

Most often, writing in a more descriptive way involves choosing the exact right verb to describe the action that is being recorded. A good place to start is by replacing verbs like "said," "went" and "moved" with verbs that are more descriptive. As well, being specific about quantities (e.g. "five children" instead of "some children") and duration (e.g. "three minutes later" instead of "later") can help to make your observations more descriptive.

Why is using descriptive language important?

When an educator records observations using vague or non-specific language, there is a greater chance that an element of bias might slip in. When it comes time to analyze the observations, educators usually re-read what they have written, to jog their memories. For example, if the educator has written: "a few children started to

move around,” this vague language will not help her remember exactly what happened. When we can’t recall all of the details about a specific situation, behaviour or interaction, our brains try to fill in the missing information by relying on our past experiences and assumptions. This is where bias comes from. If, on the other hand, the anecdote reads: “six of the children started to hop around the room,” there is much less room for a biased re-interpretation or recall of the event.

Example of descriptive language

Here are two anecdotal records that record the same event ([see clip](#)).

The anecdote on the left is written with very little effort to choose specific, vivid verbs.

The anecdote on the right is written using more descriptive vocabulary.

“Pass”, said Matteo, as he came up on his riding toy. After Karen and Rory got out of the way, Matteo moved his riding toy forward on the floor.

“Pass!” demanded Matteo, as he rode up on his riding toy. After Karen and Rory stood up, Matteo inched along the floor on his riding toy.

[Click here](#) for exercises to help practise using descriptive language.

©INFANTS & TODDLERS 2014. All rights reserved. [Contact us](#)