

INFANTS & TODDLERS

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ABC EVENT SAMPLING RECORDS

What is an ABC record?

An ABC Record is a specialized type of anecdotal record, where the observer selects a targeted behaviour or situation, then records the **A**ntecedents (what came before), the **B**ehaviour, and the **C**onsequences (what came after). Over time, the observer records a sampling of events when the targeted behavior occurred, using a specific format to organize the information (see below).

Why use ABC event sampling?

As each record is divided into the three columns, patterns of behaviour often become evident, so educators often choose this tool when they want to analyze the causes and/or consequences of a negative behaviour they have concerns about. It is important to note, however, that ABC records can also be used to record observations about positive, pro-social behaviours (e.g. helping and sharing). As well, educators can use ABC records to gather data about themselves, focusing, for example, on their use of non-verbal behaviours like smiling or eye contact.

How do I write ABC records?

The first step in using ABC Records is to select a targeted behavior (e.g. “Richard initiates play with other children” OR “biting”) or situation (e.g. “interactions at the sand box”). After that, the observer waits for the targeted behavior to occur, then records their observations, dividing the information into antecedents (A), behaviour (B) and consequences (C). Each time the targeted behavior occurs, the observer adds the information to the ABC record.

ABC Records are written after the fact, so use the past tense when writing them (click [here](#) to see an Exercise that will help you practice your verb tenses).

Being [positive](#), [objective](#) and using [descriptive language](#) are also important things to keep in mind when writing your ABC Records (click [here](#) to see some related Exercises).

Event sampling using ABC records

The easiest way to proceed to use the ABC method is to create an ABC recording form with a space for the date and time, and three columns. It might look something like this:

Targeted Behaviour: **Flavio hits another child**

Date/Time	Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences

Then, wait until this target behaviour occurs. After the first day, your record could look something like this:

Date/Time	Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
April 9/ 10:15 a.m.	The group (10 children) was in the outdoor play yard. Catherine had gotten out the balls and Flavio was kicking the Caillou ball across the yard. Diego picked up the Caillou ball and clutched it to his chest.	Flavio stomped over to Diego and hit him on the head with the flat of his hand, shouting, "Gah!"	Diego let go of the ball, rubbed his head and walked off to the slide.
April 9/ 11:30 a.m.	The 10 children were in the classroom washing their hands before lunch. As Litsa helped Maya wash her hands, the other children sat on the carpet, looking at books.	Flavio reached out and hit Charlotte on the leg three times with a closed fist.	Charlotte started to cry and Thresa intervened. She hugged Charlotte and reminded Flavio to be gentle. Flavio looked at Charlotte and Thresa, then stroked Charlotte's face with the palm of his hand.

Over the next few days, keep adding information if the target behaviour happens again. Your form might start to look like this:

Date/Time	Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
April 9/ 10:15 a.m.	The group (10 children) was in the outdoor play yard. Catherine had gotten out the balls and Flavio was kicking the Caillou ball across the yard. Diego picked up the Caillou ball and clutched it to his chest.	Flavio stomped over to Diego and hit him on the head with the flat of his hand, shouting, "Gah!"	Diego let go of the ball, rubbed his head and walked off to the slide.
April 9/ 11:30 a.m.	The 10 children were in the classroom washing their hands before lunch. As Litsa helped Maya wash her hands, the other children sat on	Flavio reached out and hit Charlotte on the leg three times with a closed fist.	Charlotte started to cry and Thresa intervened. She hugged Charlotte and reminded Flavio to be gentle. Flavio looked at Charlotte and Thresa, then stroked Charlotte's

	the carpet, looking at books.		face with the palm of his hand.
April 10/ 11:15 a.m.	The children (8 in total) were sitting on the carpet waiting to wash their hands before lunch. When Litsa called Arianne to come to the sink, Arianne stood up, stepping on Flavio's hand in the process.	Flavio yelped and hit Arianne's leg.	She toppled over on top of him, and both children began to cry. Flavio called out, "No Ayianne, no!" Thresa intervened, reflecting, "You both got hurt!" Flavio crawled into Thresa's lap and, still whimpering, stuck his thumb in his mouth.

At the end of the time period you have set (e.g. a week), you will have collected quite a few descriptions of the target behaviour in different contexts. By organizing your data into the three columns, you are ready to start to [analyze](#) the information. A good place to start might be by writing up a thorough summary of your data, making note of any overall patterns or specific trends.