

Observing Children

Directions To learn about child development, observe a preschooler for about an hour. This might be in a child care center or while you visit a family. Your observations are confidential, so do not reveal the child’s name for this project. After observing, answer the questions that follow and complete the Discovery activity.

To do observations, make a two-column chart like the one below. As you watch the child, record times at the left and observations on the right. Briefly write what happens, without judging or analyzing. Do not say “the child appears to be spoiled.” Just state the facts, with as much detail as time allows. Observe physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and moral development. Do not interact with the child or interfere. Stay off to the side if possible.

Child’s birth date: _____ Male or female? _____ Observation date: _____	
Place of observation: _____	
Time	Observation
8:00	Building with blocks. Stacks five blocks easily. Other child knocks structure over. Pushes other child and runs to reading area. Told to go back and put blocks away. Reluctant to go back but does.
8:10	Looking at book. Looks up every few seconds to see what other children are doing. Laughs at a page in book. Chooses another book, opens it, and hides face behind it. Peeks out with silly expression, making other child laugh.

1. What activities took place during your observation period? _____

2. Describe the physical appearance of the child you observed. (Size, general health, alertness.)

3. What signs of developing physical skills did you observe? (Examples: holding a toy, self-feeding with a spoon, riding a tricycle, building with blocks.)

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4. Did the child attempt any physical skills without success? Explain. _____

5. What evidence of intellectual development did you observe? _____

6. Describe any emotional reactions. _____

7. Describe social activities. _____

8. Describe any signs of moral development. _____

Discovery

Analysis Meet with other students to compare observations. What common behaviors do you find in children of a similar age? How do different ages compare? What developmental conclusions can you suggest?

A Day Out

Directions When you spend time with children, you can learn more about them and help them learn as well. Follow the steps below to plan an outing to enjoy with a young child.

- 1 Choose a child.** Do you know a child who might enjoy an outing? Consider a relative, such as a younger sibling or a niece or nephew, someone you babysit, or the child of friends.
- 2 Decide what to do.** What might be an adventure for a child? Some possibilities include:
 - Zoos and Museums* Many science museums have hands-on exhibits specially designed for children. Look into special deals that make it possible to get in for a reduced price (for example, on a particular day or at a certain hour).
 - A Trip to the Park* Your visit might include playing at the playground, a nature hike, or a picnic. You could fly a kite together or throw a ball.
 - A Scavenger Hunt* You could come up with a list of things to look for together, such as a red leaf, a purple house, or a double-decker bus. Ideally, these should be things that can be found in your neighborhood, but not without some searching.
 - A Tour of a Local Business* A factory or a newspaper could be interesting.
 - The Library* You might select interesting books or videos. Follow this up by reading or watching your selections together at home. Many public libraries also offer activities for children from time to time, such as crafts or story hour. There may be artwork to view or areas for listening to music with headphones.
 - Craft Activities* You could try finger painting, making models with clay, cutting out figures from paper, or making and decorating cookies.

As you think about activities, consider the child's interests. Even at a young age, many children have certain things they like best. For example, a child who is fascinated by dinosaurs might enjoy the dinosaur exhibit at a natural history museum. A child who loves sports might like to watch a sporting event or spend an hour kicking a ball around a soccer field.

- 3 Arrange and carry out your plan.** Ask for parental permission first. You might make the activity part of a babysitting job or have the child's parents join you. Observe the child during your time together to get a sense of the success of your day out. Report to the class on what went well and anything you might have changed.

Story Time

Directions Children love to hear stories. They are often an eager and appreciative audience for an original tale written by someone they know. Follow the steps below to write and illustrate a story for young children.

- 1 Examine children's books.** Visit the library to study storybooks for children. Read some stories and examine the illustrations. Try to figure out what ages the stories are aimed at, based on wording and illustrations. Try to get a sense of what subject matter and writing style are appropriate for children of different ages.
- 2 Think of a story idea.** With an age in mind, choose an idea for an entertaining story. Check the idea with your teacher. Your story might fall into one of these categories:
 - Tales of Fantasy or Adventure* Stories of this type can include magic or fantastic beasts, such as dragons. Many fairy tales fall into this category.
 - Realistic Stories About Other Children* These stories might focus on real issues in the lives of children, such as schoolwork, sibling rivalry, or disagreements with friends. One way to write such a story is to base it on events from your own childhood or the life of someone you know.
 - Stories About Animals* These might be real animals, as in *Black Beauty*, or animals that behave like humans, as in Aesop's fables.
 - Stories of Pure Imagination* In these stories, the real world turns topsy-turvy. Fantastic things happen, but not necessarily the same as in fairy tales. Small children may have the strength of giants, or elephants the size of mice may be living in people's furniture. In this type of story, there are no limits.
- 3 Create a plot and write.** After deciding on an idea for your story, outline the plot (the storyline) and begin writing. You may need to write several drafts.
- 4 Choose illustrations.** Decide which parts of your story to illustrate. The age you are aiming for may influence the balance of pictures to words. Very young children like illustrations on every page and only a sentence or two of text. Preteens can handle pages of nearly solid text with only the most interesting images illustrated. Real photographs could be used, or pictures cut from old magazines.
- 5 Prepare the final storybook.** It will probably be easiest to put the illustrations in place on the pages first and fill in the text around them. You may use page-layout software to help you or simply cut and paste the drawings onto plain paper. You can bind the pages together by punching holes in them and storing them in a ring binder. Share your completed storybook with a child and report results to the class.

Emergency Encounters

Directions If you think ahead about what to do in emergencies, you can react more effectively when faced with one. Read the following situations that could occur when you are around children. Use classroom, library, or personal resources to help you determine the best steps to follow in each situation. Write your answers on the lines provided.

1. You are upstairs babysitting for a small child at the child’s home, and you hear someone breaking a window on the first floor. What should you do?

2. You are preparing lunch for your younger siblings, and a small grease fire starts on the range. What should you do?

3. You are taking care of a two-year-old child in a third-floor apartment. While there, you notice that an open window by a table has no screen. What should you do and why?

4. You are babysitting two small children who are sleeping upstairs. You smell smoke. What should you do?

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Focus on *Emergencies*

5. You are walking by the playground in a park. A young woman is sitting on a bench reading a magazine. The only other person in the park is a child about two or three years old who has climbed to the top of the slide's ladder. What should you do?

6. You notice an exposed electrical outlet that is not being used. The baby you are caring for is very curious and is crawling toward the outlet. What should you do?

What steps should have been taken to prevent this situation?

7. You are babysitting for the children next door when the toddler gets into the cupboard under the kitchen sink. You walk into the room just as the child is dumping sink cleanser on the floor. The child seems fine, but you are afraid she may have swallowed or inhaled some of the cleanser. What should you do?

What steps could have been taken to prevent this situation?

8. You are the first one by the side of a child of about age eight who has been hit by a car while riding a bicycle. The child is conscious. What should you do?
