

NAMAORA

CHILD OBSERVATION STARTER SHEET

Pause • Observe • Wonder • Respond • Reflect

A simple practical tool for teachers

Use this guide to slow down before deciding what a child needs. Notice what is happening, ask what it might be telling you, try a thoughtful response, and reflect on what happens next.

“The more carefully we observe, the more thoughtfully we can teach.”

For classroom use • Teacher reflection resource • Not a diagnostic tool



1. Why Observation Matters

Observation is more than watching. It is the practice of slowing down, noticing patterns and becoming curious about what a child's behaviour, interests and responses may be telling us.

When teachers observe before they intervene, they can respond with greater understanding and create learning experiences that better meet the child where they are.

Before changing the child, understand the child.

Observation does not mean making a quick judgment about why a child behaves a certain way. It means collecting what you can actually see, hear and notice before deciding what to try.

2. Look Beyond the Behaviour

The same behaviour can have many possible explanations. Observation helps us stay curious rather than jumping to conclusions.

Observation	Stay Curious
A child looks around during a lesson.	Could the activity be too easy, too difficult, or simply not engaging at that moment?
A child keeps moving while others are seated.	Would a movement opportunity help the child participate more comfortably?
A child avoids an activity.	Is the child unsure how to begin, frustrated by the task, or interested in something else?
A child asks many questions.	What part of the topic is capturing the child's curiosity?

Remember: Use language such as "may," "might," "I noticed," and "I wonder." Avoid treating one observation as proof of a cause, diagnosis or fixed label.

3. The 5-Minute Observation

You do not need a long form or a special assessment session. Start with one child, one situation and a few quiet minutes.

Step	What to do
1. Choose	Choose a normal classroom moment: free choice, group work, reading, practical activity, outdoor play or independent work.
2. Watch	Observe without immediately correcting, helping or redirecting.
3. Record	Write short, factual notes about what you can actually see and hear.
4. Wonder	Ask what the observation might suggest. Keep more than one possibility open.
5. Try	Make one small change and see what happens.

4. Child Observation Record

Use one sheet for one observation. Keep the notes factual and brief. Avoid labels such as “lazy,” “naughty,” “weak,” or “unmotivated.” Describe what happened instead.

Child / learner: _____

Date & time: _____

Activity / setting: _____

Observer: _____

WHAT DID I NOTICE?

Record only what you saw/heard. What did the child do, say, choose, repeat, avoid or attempt?

WHAT SEEMED TO CAPTURE ATTENTION?

What materials, people, topics, movements or questions seemed engaging?

WHEN DID CONCENTRATION APPEAR?

What was happening when the child focused deeply or stayed with an activity?

WHERE DID FRUSTRATION APPEAR?

What happened immediately before the child stopped, rushed, withdrew or became upset?

HOW DID THE CHILD INTERACT?

How did the child communicate, collaborate, participate or respond to others?

WHAT MIGHT THIS TELL ME?

List two or three possible interpretations. Keep them as questions, not conclusions.

WHAT SMALL CHANGE WILL I TRY?

Change one thing: materials, instructions, choice, timing, movement, grouping, modelling or amount of help.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

After the change, what did you observe? What stayed the same? What changed?

5. Real-Time Classroom Examples

These examples show how to move from quick judgment to observation-led thinking. They are examples, not rules. The same behaviour can mean different things for different children.

Example 1 — “He never pays attention.”

Instead of writing: “He is inattentive.”

Record: “During a 15-minute whole-group explanation, he looked toward the window several times, tapped his pencil and became more involved when the teacher demonstrated the materials.”

Wonder: “Does the child engage more when learning becomes visual or hands-on?”

Small response: Add a brief hands-on demonstration and observe again.

Example 2 — “She doesn't like reading.”

Instead of: “She is not interested in books.”

Record: “She chose a picture book, looked closely at the illustrations and talked about the characters, but moved away when asked to read a full paragraph aloud.”

Wonder: “Could the child be more comfortable discussing stories than reading aloud in front of others?”

Small response: Offer quiet reading, paired reading or picture-to-story discussion and observe.

Example 3 — “He is always moving.”

Instead of: “He cannot sit still.”

Record: “During a seated task, he stood twice, walked to the shelf and returned to complete the activity. During a short movement-based activity, he remained engaged throughout.”

Wonder: “Does planned movement help this child participate?”

Small response: Add a purposeful movement break and compare engagement.

Example 4 — “She keeps asking questions.”

Instead of: “She interrupts too much.”

Record: “During the plant activity, she asked why leaves changed colour, where roots grow and what would happen without sunlight.”

Wonder: “What part of the investigation is generating curiosity?”

Small response: Invite her to record questions and choose one to investigate.

6. The Namaora Observation Cycle

OBSERVE	What is happening?
WONDER	What might this be telling me?
RESPOND	What small change could I try?
REFLECT	What happened next?

Good observation doesn't end with noticing. It helps us make thoughtful decisions—and learn from what happens next.

7. Quick Observation Prompts

☐ What captures this child's attention?
☐ When do they concentrate deeply?
☐ What makes them want to keep trying?
☐ What seems to make the task harder?
☐ How do they communicate their ideas?
☐ How do they respond when something does not work?
☐ What choices do they make when choices are available?
☐ What kind of support seems to help them participate?
☐ What happens when I step back?
☐ What happens when I change one small part of the environment?

8. Especially in the Early Years

During ages 0–6, children are rapidly developing language, movement, social skills, emotional understanding, curiosity, independence, concentration and practical life skills. Observation can help adults notice emerging abilities and meaningful opportunities for learning.

Try observing without rushing to teach.

Notice how a young child approaches a material, repeats an action, communicates a need, solves a small problem, chooses an activity or responds to another child. These everyday moments can reveal useful information about the child's current interests and ways of engaging.

9. Teacher Reflection

1. What did I learn about this child that I did not notice before?	
2. Did my first assumption change after observing?	
3. What small change did I try?	
4. What happened after I tried it?	
5. What will I continue, change or observe again?	

10. Use Observation Thoughtfully

This starter sheet is a reflection and teaching-support tool. It is not a diagnostic assessment and should not be used to label, diagnose or make definitive judgments about a child.

For significant or persistent concerns about a child's development, safety, learning or wellbeing, follow your school's safeguarding and professional support procedures and involve appropriate qualified professionals when needed.

Keep children's information private. Store observation notes securely and share them only with people who have a legitimate educational or safeguarding reason to see them.

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**OBSERVE DEEPLY.
CONNECT GENUINELY.
GUIDE THOUGHTFULLY.
EMPOWER COMPLETELY.**

One observation. One question. One opportunity for independence.

The more carefully we observe, the more thoughtfully we teach.

Namaora • Empowering Parents • Inspiring Teachers • Nurturing Children

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