

A Beginner's Guide to Observations

For the purposes of this leaflet, observations will be defined as the intuitive and internal reflections of the visual stimuli in the natural environment.

The Nature of the Technique

1. Observation of the environment, body language, social interaction and activity that allows for the promoting of the interview
2. Observations that are coded using a standardised measure
3. Observations that result in the production of a running record of the internal observation

Assumptions underpinning the Technique

- Accurate interpretation of the behaviour in the naturalistic environment
- Ability to notice everything we need to observe

Practical Issues that a novice researcher should be aware of and corresponding examples

- Note taking needs to be done quickly so that the researcher does not miss substantial data
 - Use shorthand for noting down observations
- Important to conduct a trial of the observation technique
 - Recording of the observation allows the researcher to revisit the interaction and test reliability with written record
- The presence of the researcher may alter the typical behaviour of the participants
 - Have an initial introductory period that allows both the researcher and the participant to get acquainted so as to better facilitate a less threatening environment
- Be prepared for unexpected occurrences
 - Allowing extra time in research design

Reflection of the Strengths and Limitations

- **Strengths:** Eye witness into the details of the natural environment
- **Limitations:** Bias as a result of researcher interpretation, time constraints