

How should I observe my own setting?

It is great practice to make time to observe your own setting from time to time. Just standing back and observing how the space is used by both adults and children is a valuable exercise.

Some tips for doing your own observation might include asking yourself some of these questions:

- ★ How is the space used?
- ★ Are there areas that children never go to or only spend a short time in? Why is this?
- ★ Are there areas that you hadn't considered as a 'child space' but that children always take toys to?
- ★ Is there an area where fights and squabbles always seem to start?
- ★ How are children flowing through the space? Do they get stuck in a bottle neck? Have they turned a piece of furniture into a roundabout to run around?
- ★ How are children accessing outside space? Can they easily access their coats?
- ★ What happens at lunch time?



★ ★ ★ Our advice for ensuring you make a good observation: ★ ★ ★

1

Do it when the child is engaged in a freely chosen activity. You will learn much more about their interests, characteristics of learning, and their abilities when they are engaged in something they have chosen to do.

2

Stick to the facts. Remember you are collecting evidence, not making a judgement. Just record what you see (not what you think is happening).

3

Make it meaningful. If you already have six observations of the same thing you don't need to do another as you won't be learning anything.

4

Note the date and time. It is crucial you can pinpoint when the observation was carried out.

5

Annotate photos to explain what they are showing. (Remember to keep it factual.)

6

Don't observe against a checklist. Not only will this bias your observation, but you may miss all the great stuff that will help you to support the child's learning and development.

7

Capture the child's voice. Write word for word what the child says, or for younger children, describe clearly how they make their wishes known, or what they were doing.

8

Observation doesn't need to be time-consuming. Keep post-it notes with you and when you observe something, simply note it down. In this way, you can easily take observations as part of your daily routine for both your key children and your colleagues without the need to remove yourself from the care of the children.

9

Set aside time for longer observations and ensure you won't be interrupted.

