

Introduction to Assessment and Observation

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Key concepts, purposes, processes, and best?practice guidelines

1. What Is Assessment?

Aspect	Description
Definition	Systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of information about a learner, client, or situation to make informed decisions.
Types	• Formative – ongoing, guides instruction/intervention. • Summative – final, evaluates overall achievement or outcome. • Diagnostic – identifies strengths, gaps, and needs before instruction. • Screening – quick check to flag possible concerns.
Goals	• Identify current performance levels. • Set realistic goals and learning targets. • Inform planning of instruction, support, or treatment. • Monitor progress and adjust strategies. • Provide evidence for accountability and reporting.

2. What Is Observation?

Aspect	Description
Definition	Direct, systematic watching and recording of behavior, interactions, or processes in natural or controlled settings.
Forms	• Anecdotal notes – brief, narrative records of notable events. • Event sampling – record every instance of a specific behavior. • Time?sampling – record behavior at predetermined intervals. • Continuous recording – note behavior throughout the entire observation period. • Structured checklists/rubrics – predefined criteria for quick scoring.
Purpose	• Capture authentic performance data. • Reveal patterns, triggers, and contexts. • Validate or supplement assessment results. • Provide a basis for individualized feedback.

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3. Relationship Between Assessment & Observation

Connection	Explanation
Data Source	Observation is a primary method for gathering raw data used in many assessments (e.g., behavioral assessments, language sampling).
Triangulation	Combining multiple data sources (tests, observations, interviews) increases reliability and validity of conclusions.
Feedback Loop	Observation informs formative assessment; assessment results guide where to focus future observations.

4. The Assessment Cycle (Step?by?Step)

1. Identify Purpose & Stakeholders

- Clarify why the assessment is needed (e.g., placement, progress monitoring).
- Determine who will use the results (teachers, therapists, parents).

2. Select Appropriate Tools

- Align instruments with the purpose (standardized test, rubric, observation protocol).
- Consider age, language, cultural relevance, and accessibility.

3. Plan Data Collection

- Decide on setting (classroom, clinic, home).
- Set schedule, duration, and frequency.
- Prepare materials and consent forms.

4. Collect Data

- Follow standardized administration procedures.
- Record observations systematically (date, time, context, observer).
- Ensure consistency (same observer, same conditions when possible).

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5. Analyze & Interpret

- Score tests, code observation notes, calculate rates or percentages.
- Compare results to norms, benchmarks, or individualized goals.
- Look for trends across time and settings.

6. Report Findings

- Use clear language, visual aids (charts, graphs).
- Highlight strengths, areas for growth, and actionable recommendations.
- Provide copies to all relevant stakeholders.

7. Plan Intervention & Reassessment

- Design or adjust instruction, therapy, or support based on findings.
 - Set dates for follow-up assessment or additional observation cycles.
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5. Best?