

Observation Form

A dated, factual record of what you saw and heard.

ResourceCareConnect

Free to use, print, and share.

Date it happened

Time it happened (from / to)

 to

Date & time written

Child's full name

Written by

Others present *names or roles*

Type *(check one)*

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| ☐ General Note | ☐ Behavioral | ☐ Injury / Health |
| ☐ Doctor Visit | ☐ Dental Visit | ☐ Eye Doctor / Optometrist |
| ☐ Mental Health / Therapy | ☐ School / Education | ☐ Activity / Extracurricular |
| ☐ Positive Moment / Achievement | | |

Observation (What happened?) *What you saw and heard, not what you think it meant. Exact words in quotes.*

Context (Antecedent) *What was happening before? Where, who was there, what was the child doing?*

Actions Taken (Consequence) *How did you respond, and what happened next?*

Urgency *(check one)*

- ☐ Routine (Documentation) ☐ Discuss Soon ☐ Urgent / Crisis

If a child is in danger, call 911 or your state's child abuse hotline FIRST, then write this down.

Oregon: 1-855-503-SAFE (7233)

Follow-up

Photos or documents sent with this form? ☐ No ☐ Yes What:

Shared with Date ☐ Phone ☐ Email ☐ In person

Signature

This is a personal record, not an official report. It does not replace required reporting to your caseworker or your state's child abuse hotline, or your agency's own incident forms. When in doubt, call. **Terms vary by agency:** caseworker / social worker / case manager; certifier / licensing worker / home developer; resource parent / foster parent / kinship caregiver. Nothing typed into this PDF is sent anywhere. Store completed forms the way you store other placement records.



How to Write a Good Observation

Write what a camera would record. A camera sees actions and hears words. It doesn't know why, or how anyone felt.

Five habits

1. **Write it the same day.** If you can't, write it anyway and note when you wrote it.
2. **Be specific.** Times, durations, counts, places, and the child's exact words in quotes.
3. **Describe behavior, not labels.** Leave diagnoses to professionals.
4. **Include what you did.** Your response is part of the record.
5. **Record the good days too.** A record of only bad days tells an incomplete story about the child, and about you.

Weak vs. strong

1. Venting

Weak: "I'm at my wits' end. He destroyed the living room again and I can't keep doing this."

Strong: "4:15 pm. After I said screen time was over, he threw two couch cushions and knocked a lamp off the end table. The lamp base cracked. I moved the other kids to the kitchen and stayed in the doorway. He sat on the floor and was calm by 4:30."

Your frustration is real. Write it somewhere else: a journal, or a conversation with your certifier or support group.

2. Labeling or diagnosing

Weak: "She was being manipulative and obviously has ADHD."

Strong: "Homework, 6:00 to 6:40 pm. She left her chair 9 times and asked for water 3 times after drinking. A note from her teacher today describes the same thing in class."

Let the pattern speak. If you're concerned, write "I'd like to discuss an evaluation" under Follow-up.

3. Vague

Weak: "Bad day at school."

Strong: "School called 11:20 am. His teacher said he pushed a classmate at recess and was sent to the office. I picked him up at 1:00 pm. In the car he said, 'He called me a foster kid.'"

4. Only the bad days

Weak: (no entry)

Strong: "Positive Moment. 8:10 pm. Without being asked, she read a full chapter aloud to her younger sister and said, 'I like reading to her.'"

5. Loose interpretation

Weak: "He was angry because he misses his mom."

Strong: "Phone visit ended 5:30 pm. He went to his room, slammed the door, and said, 'I hate everyone.' He came out for dinner at 6:15 and ate normally."

If you have a theory, label it as yours: "I wonder if this is related to the visit."

Word swaps

Instead of	Write
always / never	how many times, over what period
freaked out, meltdown	what the child did (screamed, threw, ran, cried) and for how long
attitude, defiant	the instruction given and the words said back
lied	"She said X. [Fact] shows Y."
for no reason	"no trigger I observed"
he / she / they (unclear)	names or roles

If a child tells you about abuse or neglect

Write down their **exact words**. Don't ask leading questions or try to investigate. Report it right away to your caseworker or your state's child abuse hotline, following your agency's rules. If the child is in danger, call 911. **Oregon Child Abuse Hotline: 1-855-503-SAFE (7233), 24/7.**

