



Behavior Assessment: Frequency and Interval Recording

Est. Time: 25 Minutes

Objective

To gain experience collecting data using interval recording and to gain experience collecting data using frequency recording.

Overview

By collecting data, educators can determine whether a student's behavior is problematic and warrants intervention. Once educators operationally define the target behavior, or the behavior to be changed, they should choose a data collection system that provides the most accurate picture of student performance in the classroom. Two such methods are **frequency recording and interval recording**.

Frequency (or event) recording is a way to measure the number of times a behavior occurs within a given period. Frequency recording is best for behaviors with a distinct beginning and end. To conduct an event or frequency tally:

1. Note the time the observation begins.
2. Record each occurrence of the behavior. Teachers can easily do this by making a tally mark for each occurrence of the behavior.
3. Note the time the observation ends.
4. Calculate the length of time for the observation.
5. Calculate the rate by counting the total number of times the behavior occurred and dividing by the length of the observation.

Note: When using event recording to assess academic skills, it is beneficial to count both correct and incorrect responses. You want to make sure incorrect responses are not increasing along with an increase in correct responses.



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Overview [Cont.]

Interval recording documents whether a behavior occurred during a particular period. There are two types of interval recording: whole interval (an observer indicates whether the behavior occurred during the entire time) and partial interval (an observer indicates whether the behavior occurred at any point during the time interval). To record interval data:

Tips for Implementation

Frequency recording is an easy recording method for teachers to utilize while teaching. Besides using the data sheet provided, some other ways this can be done are as follows:

1. Take data on a piece of masking tape attached to a shirt sleeve or pants, then put the tape directly on the data sheet after the observation.
2. Put a handful of pennies, paper clips, or other markers in one pocket. Each time the behavior occurs, move one marker to the other pocket. Count the number of markers moved during the observation session and write on the data sheet.

1. Divide the observation period into equal intervals (usually between five and fifteen seconds long).

Note: If teachers are trying to collect data themselves during an instructional period, the time intervals need to be longer. It is recommended that an observer collect the data.

2. At the end of each interval, record whether or not the behavior occurred.

Note: For whole interval recording, the behavior must occur throughout the entire interval. For partial interval recording, the behavior must occur during some portion of the interval.

3. After the session is over, count the number of intervals during which the behavior occurred.

4. Divide this number by the total number of intervals and multiply by 100 to determine the percentage of intervals during which the behavior occurred.



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Overview [Cont.]

Tips for Implementation

Teachers cannot typically collect this type of data while teaching. It is best for another observer to collect this data during class time. If one is collecting this type of data, a timer that goes off indicating a set interval makes this type of data collection easier.

Activity

View the video at <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/mcontent/frequency-and-interval/>. Use the attached **event recording form** to record instances of the student's target behavior, determining the frequency and the rate. Then view the video again and use the attached **interval recording form** to record this same behavior. Be sure to use the stopwatch when recording your data. Also, a beep at each twenty-second interval has been included to help with collecting the interval data.

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. What was the frequency of the student's target behavior?
2. Based on the frequency recording data, what was the rate of the student's target behavior?
3. For what percentage of intervals did the student exhibit the target behavior?
4. Compare the results of the frequency recording and the partial interval recording.
5. Based on the data, do you think the student's behavior is problematic? Explain.



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Frequency Recording Form

Student: Joyce Date: 10/21/xx

Class/ Teacher: Language/ Ms. Sample Observer: Mrs. Dover

Target/Problem behavior: During journal writing activities, Joyce makes comments to herself or to others (e.g., "This is boring") or gestures (e.g., heavy sighing) unrelated to the academic material.

Note: The teacher starts the stopwatch at 10:30. Be sure to count verbalizations and sighs as separate events.

Time Started	Time Ended	Tally	Length of Observation	Rate



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Partial Interval Recording Form

Student: Joyce Date: 10/21/xx

Class/ Teacher: Language/ Ms. Sample Observer: Mrs. Dover

Time/length of observation: 5 minutes Length of interval: 20 seconds

Target/problem behavior: During journal writing activities, Joyce makes comments to herself or to others (e.g., "This is boring") or gestures (e.g., heavy sighing) unrelated to the academic material

Codes: + target behavior occurred during some portion of the interval
- target behavior did not occur

Interval	Code	Behavior
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

Total intervals during which target behavior occurred:	
Total intervals coded:	
Percentage of intervals during which target behavior occurred:	