

Words & Phrases to Use When Documenting Observations

The language used to record anecdotal observations must be factual - record what you see and hear, what the child does and says. Avoid interpretations, judgments and conclusions.

Here are some **words and phrases to avoid** because they reflect judgment and/or interpretation:

- The child loves...
- The child likes...
- He or she enjoys...
- She or he spends a long time at...
- It seems like...
- It appears...
- I felt...
- I wonder...
- She or he does...very well...
- He or she is bad at...
- This is difficult for...
- He or she can...
- He or she can't...
- He or she always...
- He or she never...
- Emotional words, i.e., happy, sad, shy, angry, frustrated

Instead, **use words and phrases that convey only the facts**, such as:

- I saw her or him...
- She or he said...
- When given a choice, he or she chose...
- While..., she or he ...
- She or he played with...
- She or he used...
- I observed...

When describing emotions, describe what the child **looked like or did** rather than just saying the emotion.

For “happy” or “excited” you could write:

- Bright eyes
- Big smile
- Jumped up and down
- Shouted “hurray!”

For “angry” or “frustrated” you could write:

- Frowned
- Pounded fists
- Said “I can’t!”
- Stomped feet

For “shy” you could write:

- Did not talk
- Looked down
- Sat by him or herself