



Behavior Assessment: Duration and Latency Recording

Est. Time: 25 Minutes

Objective

To gain experience collecting data using duration recording and to gain experience collecting data using latency 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 **duration and latency recording**.

Duration recording documents how long a student engages in a specified behavior. This type of data collection is appropriate for behaviors that have a distinct beginning and ending or for those that occur at very high rates (e.g., tantruming, being out of seat, not completing a task). To collect data on the duration of a behavior:

1. Start the stopwatch when the behavior begins.
2. Stop the stopwatch when the behavior ends.
3. Record the length of time the behavior occurred.
4. Repeat the above steps until the end of the observation period.
5. Calculate the total duration by adding the duration of each episode during the observation period.

FYI

Most educators find it difficult to collect duration data while teaching. It is best to have an additional observer collecting this type of data in your classroom. If you are going to use this technique yourself, it would be helpful to have a stopwatch with you at all times and have the data sheet close by (e.g., on a clipboard or on a mailing label taped to your shirt sleeve).



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Overview [Cont.]

Tips for Implementation

When collecting this type of data, be sure your behavior definition specifies the length of time that the behavior must occur in order to “count.” For example, you might specify that a student is off-task when his or her behavior lasts for longer than five (5) seconds.

Latency recording measures the amount of time that lapses between an antecedent (e.g., teacher’s directive) and when the student begins to perform a specified behavior. This type of data collection is appropriate for behaviors that follow a command or directive, or a distinct stimulus. For example, the teacher might expect the student to be in his seat and ready for class within ten seconds of the bell ringing. To collect data on latency:

1. Start the stopwatch when the antecedent is provided.
2. Stop the stopwatch when the behavior occurs.
3. Record the number of seconds or minutes that elapsed between the end of the antecedent and the onset of the behavior.
4. Repeat the above steps until the end of the observation period.

FYI

As with duration data, latency data can be difficult to collect while teaching. To make it easier, have your stopwatch and data sheet readily available. Also, take care to define exactly what behavior you are looking for that will “count” as the behavior occurring. For example, if a teacher is collecting data on a student who is chronically tardy, she would start timing when the bell rings. She might stop timing when the student was physically sitting in his desk. Another teacher may take the same type of data, but stop timing when the student entered the classroom. Defining these behaviors is crucial to maintain consistency in your data-collection efforts.



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Activity

View the video at <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/mcontent/duration-and-latency/>. Use the attached **duration recording form** to record instances of the student's off-task behavior. Then view the video again and use the attached **latency recording form** to record how long it takes the student to begin a task after the teacher gives a prompt. Be sure to use the stopwatch when recording your data.

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. According to the duration data, what percentage of time was the student off task?
2. Do you think the percentage of time that the student was engaged in off-task behavior is problematic? Explain.
3. According to the latency data, when the teacher gave the initial directive for the class to begin working, how long was it before the student began the task?
4. After redirecting the student, how long was it before the student began the task?
5. Do you think the amount of time it took the student to begin the task after the teacher's initial directions and after being redirected is problematic? Explain.



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Duration Recording Form

Student: Kailyn Date: 1/01/xx

Class/ Teacher: Language/ Mrs. Oliver Observer: Mrs. Hand

Target/problem behavior: During independent math activities, Kailyn engages in off-task behaviors, which refers to any behavior lasting 5 seconds or longer that deviates from teacher instruction (e.g., looking around the room, playing with her hands or other objects).

Start Time	End Time	Duration

Total time observed:	
Total time off-task (sec):	
Percentage of time off-task:	



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Latency Recording Form

Student: Kailyn Date: 1/01/xx

Class/ Teacher: Language/ Mrs. Oliver Observer: Mrs. Hand

Time/Length of Observation: During independent math activities, Kailyn will begin working on her assignment within five seconds after a teacher prompt (e.g. directions, redirection).

Start Time (Time of request)	Time (behavior was initiated)	Latency