

Early Childhood Assessment: Social Skills

Est. Time: 6 Hours

Objective

Use different observational systems and curriculum-referenced or criterion-referenced measures to assess the social skills of children in early childhood environments.

Overview

Social relationships are a critical outcome of early intervention. Frequent and positive interactions are a foundation upon which relationships can be established, and social play is often the context in which those interactions are promoted. However, some children engage in relatively few social interactions and little social play. For this reason, assessing social interactions and levels of social play is an important part of planning effective interventions.

Activity

Use the steps outlined below to complete this activity. To avoid issues with confidentiality, use the child's initials or a pseudonym instead of the child's full name on the forms you complete.

1. Identification

- a. Identify a child with a disability to observe.
- b. Identify activities during the day when it is appropriate for the child and his or her peers to play and interact with one another.

2. Observation

- a. Become familiar with observational codes and data recording procedures for social play and interactions.
- b. Social play—Use Parten's stages of social play (see box on the following page). You are allowed to combine associative and cooperative play categories.
 - Define each play category with examples and non-examples related to the planned observational activities.
 - Use a partial interval recording system. Define its parameters and prepare a data collection sheet.
 - At a minimum, observe the child on two separate occasions for 20 minutes each. If needed, complete more observations to ensure that a comprehensive picture of the child's social abilities is recorded.

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Parten's Stages of Social Play

- **Unoccupied Behavior:** Children are not playing but are engaged in "unoccupied behavior."
- **Onlooker Behavior:** Children watch other children at play. They may verbally interact but do not join in the play.
- **Solitary Play:** The child engages in play by him or herself. The play is totally independent.
- **Parallel Play:** The child plays near other children. The child is involved in his or her own play.
- **Associative Play:** The child plays with others in a group. He may exchange play materials but there is no planned purpose to the play.
- **Cooperative Play:** The child plays with other children, and the play has an intended purpose or goal. The children plan and assume roles.

c. Social interactions

- Define each category of behavior and include examples and non-examples related to the planned observational activities.
- Use an event recording system to measure the following categories of behavior: (a) initiation, (b) response to an initiation, (c) continuation, (d) positive interaction, (e) negative interaction, and (f) neutral interaction.
- At a minimum, observe the child on two separate occasions for 20 minutes each. If needed, complete more observations to ensure that a comprehensive picture of the child's social abilities is recorded.

3. Assessment of Social Abilities

- a. Use a curriculum- or criterion-referenced measure (e.g., AEPS, HELP, Carolina Curriculum, Brigance, Battelle) to assess the child's social abilities.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

- a. For social play, calculate the proportion of intervals spent in each type of behavior.
- b. For social interactions, analyze the data in terms of the:
 - Number of initiations (to and by the child with a disability)
 - Number of responses to initiations (to and by the child with a disability)
 - Percentage of initiations by the child with a disability resulting in a response
 - Percentage of initiations by peers resulting in a response
 - Length of interactions when initiated by the child (range and mean number of turns)
 - Length of interactions when initiated by a peer (range and mean number of turns)
 - Tone of interactions (positive, negative, neutral)

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- c. Identify 1) the behaviors the child exhibits, 2) the conditions under which they occur, and 3) the behavior the child needs to learn to do.

5. Identification of Needed Changes

- a. Determine what objectives or intervention practice changes should be made to promote the child's social play and interactions.

6. Report

- a. Write your report using the headings identified in the table below. Keep in mind:
- Only one report should be submitted for each group.
 - Each report should include all of the required information outlined in the table below.
 - The report should be written in a style that is professional yet can be understood by individuals without advanced training.
- b. Attach the completed data sheets and other notes (raw data). These do not have to be typed.

Headings	Required Information
Identifying Information <i>Who was observed?</i>	Using a column format, list the child's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • Gender • Date of birth • Age in months • Disability
Methods of Observation <i>What did you do?</i>	a. Using a table with the dates as rows, record the context of the measurement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dates • Purpose of observing/measuring (e.g., social play, social interactions) • Activities and routines observed • Where the activities occurred • How many adults and children were present • Beginning and end times of each observation

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Headings	Required Information
<p>Methods of Observation <i>What did you do?</i></p>	<p>b. For social play, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition for each category with examples and non-examples specific to the activities observed • A description of the observational system and how the data were recorded <p>c. For social interactions, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A definition for each category with examples and non-examples specific to the activities observed • A description of the observational system used and how the data were recorded <p>d. For the curriculum- or criterion-referenced test, list the APA reference and describe what items were used and how they were administered</p>
<p>Results <i>How did the child do?</i></p>	<p>a. For social play, make a table of the data by observation and category and write a narrative of the data in the table. List observations in rows and the categories in columns.</p> <p>b. For social interactions, make a table of the data and write a narrative of the data. Again, list observations in the table's rows.</p> <p>c. For the curriculum- or criterion-referenced test, provide a summary of what the measure says the child can do, the conditions under which those behaviors occur, and the behaviors she or he needs to learn.</p>
<p>Recommendations <i>How would you use the data?</i></p>	<p>Based on your analysis:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. List two objectives that could be established for the child in the social domain. b. Provide a three-to-four sentence rationale for each objective. c. List an intervention practice that could be used for each objective.