



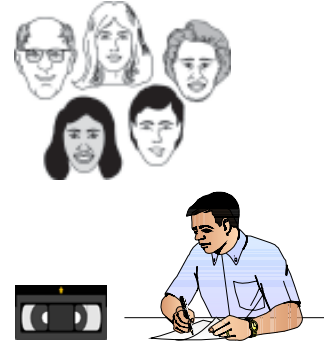
How to Plan Good Projects

How to Watch and Listen

The “watch and listen” method is good if you want to know about people’s skills or how they behave or act. Behaviour includes what people say, as well as what they do.

If you do this kind of project, you need to pick

- who or what kind of people to watch,
- where or what kinds of places to watch in,
- when is a good time to watch,
- what actions or behaviours to look at, and
- how you will record what you see.



Your project question should tell you what kind of people you need to watch or listen to. Then you must pick a good place and time when those people do what you are interested in. You must ask people if it is OK to watch them, if it is not in public.

For example, what if you want to know about how much people with disabilities control meetings of self-advocacy groups. You would need to observe self-advocates and non-disabled advisors (or helpers). You could watch them at self-advocacy group meetings.

Code what you see and hear

You must then pick a behaviour or set of behaviours to observe that are related to your question. There are many actions you could pick in a meeting that relate to who controls the meeting. You could write down everything that you see. But then you would be so busy writing that you may miss a lot. Or you could videotape the meeting. But sometimes people are shy when there is a camera.



It takes them a while to forget about the camera and act like themselves.

So it is important to plan what to look for before you go. Then you can make a form to mark down what you see, instead of writing a lot. This is called “coding the data.” *Data* is another name for the information you gather in your project.

First you decide what behaviours relate to your project question. If you want to know who controls meetings, you could look at who speaks more often, how long they talk, whose ideas get picked, who moves the meeting to the next agenda item, and so on. You will need to pick which ones you think tell you the most about who is in control. It is good to look for more than one behaviour. But if you have many to look for, it is hard to keep track of them.

Most people make up a sheet of paper to use to code what they observe. They divide the paper into sections and label each section with a few words that stand for the behaviour they want to look for.

Each time they see that behaviour, they put a mark in the section with the label for that behaviour. The mark can be a line or an “x” or a check mark. It is up to you. If you want to look at how long someone talks, you will put in a number, like the number of seconds they talk before someone else talks. When you are done watching and listening, you can add up the number of times each kind of behaviour happened.

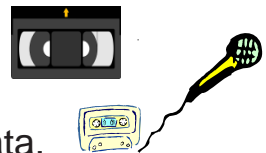


If you watch and listen to more than one kind of person at a time (like self-advocates and advisors), you can fold the paper or draw a line down the middle. You can use this to keep track of how often each group did what you picked to observe. When you add up the numbers on each side, you can compare who did each thing more.

Record behaviour to look at later

If you have a lot of behaviours to watch for, you may decide to record what people do with a video camera or a tape recorder.

Then you will watch and listen to the video or tape to code the data.



You use the same kind of paper to code what you observe as we talked about already. The good thing about recording is that you can watch or listen to what people did a few times. That way you do not miss anything. You can also add codes for behaviours you did not think about when you picked what to look for. The bad part about recording what people do is that you have to give them time to forget about the recorder and be natural.

People have the right to say “yes” or “no” to making movies or tapes of what they do and say. You must also keep the tapes safe and private until you are done. Then you should erase them to protect people’s privacy.

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