

# Assessing children



Child development  
Recording observations  
Growth and development  
Interpreting the data

Key skills in child care



## Introduction

'You also help them to develop and meet their potential.'

Your responsibilities as a childcare practitioner are not just about keeping the children you work with safe and happy. It is essential that you also help them to develop and meet their potential. You must be able to observe and assess their progress to inform your plans and report to parents/carers and other professionals.

## Child development

To assess children effectively you must have a good understanding of the expected patterns of children's physical, communication, intellectual, social, emotional and behavioural development.



Find two documents or reports about children's physical or social development. Make a summary of the key points.

## Recording observations

Recording observations is an important part of your role. All children attending nursery have a profile completed on them which is forwarded to their primary school. Any observations you do at this stage will feed into these profiles. You will need to share these observations with other members of staff, parents or carers and other childcare professionals.

There are many methods of recording observations.



Write down some of the methods you could use to record observations.



You might have included:

- free description or notes to record a child's activity or behaviour over a short period of time
- checklists and tick charts to assess stages of development
- time sample to look at an activity over a predetermined length of time
- event sample to look closely at one aspect of a child's development.

For the observation to be successful, you must consider the aim of the assessment – in other words, what you hope to achieve. This will determine the type of assessment to carry out.

## Free descriptions

'You should note down as much as possible.'

The idea of a free description, or notes, is to provide a detailed description of an activity and the way the child carries it out. You will be observing what they are doing, how they are doing it and possibly the way in which they interact with others. You should note down as much as possible.

Read the following examples of written observations and answer the questions below.

*Poppy and Jade are playing together in dressing up corner. Theyr tryin on lots of clothes and seem 2 b havin fun and learning lots.*

*Monday 5th September 10 a.m.*

*Poppy and Jade were playing in the dressing up corner. Poppy asks Jade to sit at the table and asks her 'What shall we try on?' Poppy answers, 'I want to dress up like Mummy.' Poppy smiles at her and they both look through the basket together to find some clothes. Jade finds a dress, opens the zip and puts the dress over her head. She puts her arms into the sleeves. She turns to Poppy and asks her to do up the zip. Poppy finds a pink blouse and puts it on. She struggles to do up the buttons and asks Jade to help. Jade tries but can't do them up. Poppy goes to the nursery nurse to ask her to help.*



- Which report is better and why?
- What additional information could you include in the first report?



Carry out a written observation on a child in your setting using the following guidelines and your setting's preferred format.

- Make sure that you have permission to carry out the observation.
- Talk to the other members of the team to tell them that you are carrying out an observation.
- Record the date and time.
- Write a running commentary of what you have observed.
- Include notes on facial expressions, gestures and speech.
- Write clearly and check your spelling.

## Event sample

An event sample records how often a child demonstrates a behaviour or activity. It may give you an idea as to why a child is behaving or reacting in a certain way. The assessment is usually recorded on a prepared sheet like the one below.

Read the assessment below. It is about a boy called Jack at the after-school club who does not seem to interact well with others.

Event	Time	Activity	Others involved	Comments
1	16.00	Reading a comic	None	No interaction with others
2	16.15	Playing with Playstation	Waseem play station	Jack said to Waseem 'I'm going to get you. You'll never beat me'
3	16.30	snack time	All sitting together round the table	All children talking about school, Jack not saying anything
4	16.45	Watching DVD	James, Harveer, Olivia	James and Harveer engrossed in the DVD. Olivia trying to engage in conversation. Jack ignoring her
5	17.00	craft activity - all asked to get involved	James, Harveer, Waseem	Jack refused to take part
6	17.30	Football	Waseem, James, Fu	Jack asked to be the goalkeeper. Didn't take an active part in the game



Based on this assessment, write a report about Jack to give to your supervisor to discuss with his parents/carers.



## Growth and development

Growth and development are commonly measured and recorded on a percentile chart. They are frequently used to measure a child's height and weight and the head circumference of babies under 2 years old.

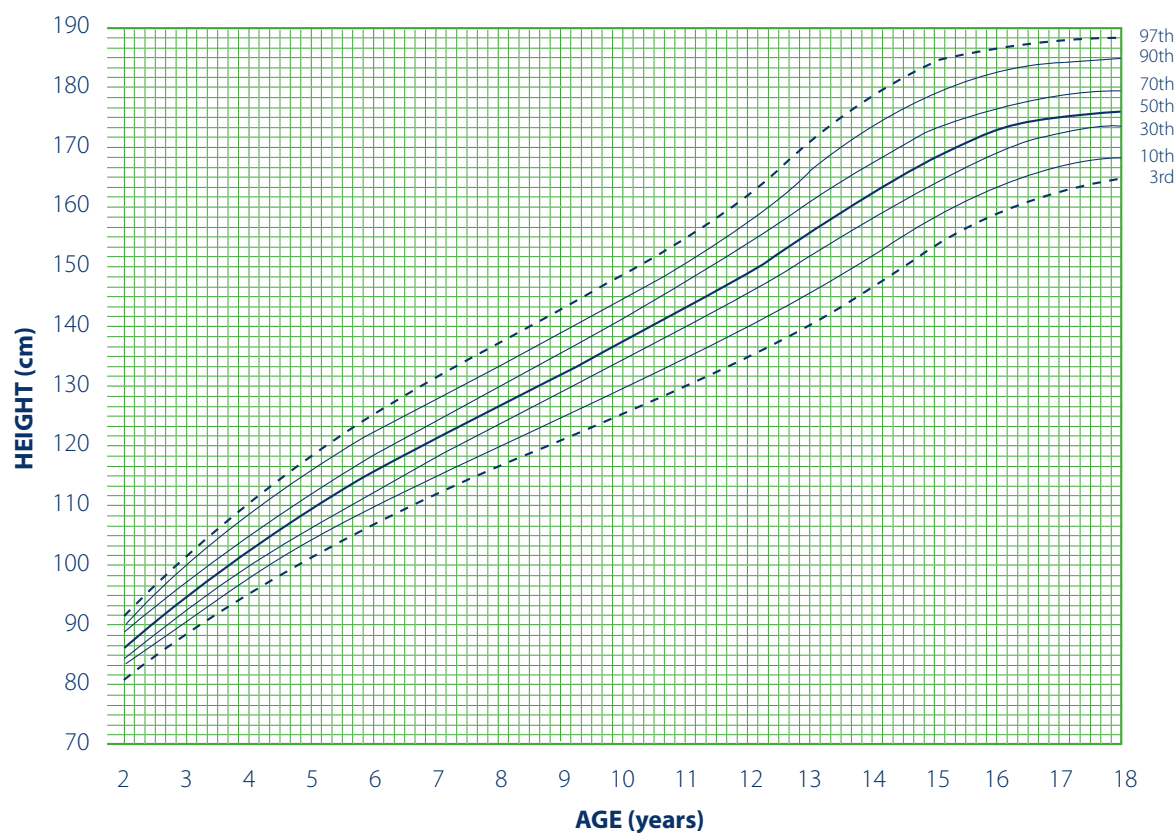
### What do percentiles mean?

The chart below shows the growth patterns for boys between 2 and 18 years of age. It uses percentiles to rank a child by showing what percentage of children would be smaller or taller than that child.

If the child is in the 3rd percentile, 97 out of 100 children (97%) of the same gender and age would be taller than the child. Only 3% would be smaller.

If the child is in the 70th percentile, he or she is taller than 70 out of 100 children of the same gender and age and shorter than 30 out of 100 (30%).

**Growth chart – Boys 2–18 years** (based on WHO data)





Use the chart on the previous page to plot the heights of boys and find out their percentile score.

To use the chart:

- 1 Find the child's age on the horizontal axis and follow the line up.
- 2 Find the child's height on the vertical axis and follow the line across.
- 3 Put a cross where the two lines intersect (meet in the middle).
- 4 Look at the graph line where the cross falls.

Fill in the boys' percentile scores on the table. The first one has been done for you as an example.

Name	Age (years)	Height (cm)	Percentile
Rory	4	94	3rd
Ellis	6	122	
Zack	9	132	
Adam	11	151	
Asad	14	159	
Charlie	5	112	

## Interpreting the data

'A child's percentile doesn't necessarily indicate how well they are growing.'

A child's percentile doesn't necessarily indicate how well they are growing. A child at the 10th percentile can be growing just as well as a child at the 90th percentile – the first child is just smaller. It is more important to look at the child's growth over time. If he/she has always been at the 10th percentile, then he/she is likely to be growing normally. What would be a cause for concern would be if the child had previously been at the 50th or 75th percentile and had now fallen down to the 25th or lower percentile.

It is not uncommon for children under the age of 2 to change percentiles. After this age, though, children should follow their growth curves fairly closely.



The following table gives the heights of children in a class of 8-year-olds.

Child	Height (cm)
A	115
B	130
C	128
D	119
E	140
F	132
G	122
H	116
I	135
J	128
K	133
L	116
M	125
N	125
O	130
P	119
Q	124
R	127
S	121
T	129



A table of scores like this can be difficult to interpret. It may be helpful for you to work out an average height. You need to decide which of the three different types of average (mean, median or mode) to use.



Now work out:

- the **mode** score – this is the height which occurs most often
- the **median** score – you do this by working out the mid-point between the highest and the lowest scores (i.e. the tallest and the shortest)

Highest score =            Lowest score =            Median =

- the **mean** score – you do this by adding up all the heights and dividing by the total number of children (20).

This workbook will help with the following parts of your qualifications:

**NVQ in Children's Care, Learning and Development**

Unit 203: Support children's development

Unit 208: Support the development of babies and children under 3 years

Unit 303: Promote children's development

Unit 310: Assess children's progress according to curriculum frameworks for early education

Unit 312: Plan and implement positive environments for babies and children under 3 years

**Key skills**

Communication: C2.2 and C2.3

Application of number: N2.1 and N2.2

**Skills for Life**

Adult literacy level 2:

- Reading
- Writing

Adult numeracy level 2:

- Understanding and using mathematical information
- Calculating and manipulating mathematical information

**Technical certificate**

Certificate in Children's Care, Learning and Development

