

- “Tony’s right hand started inching slowly toward Joe.” (Your turn—observable behavior?)
- “. . . narrowed his eyes, smiled, and then poked Joe’s shoulder.” (Your turn again—observable behavior?)
- “Joe called out, ‘Hey!’” (Observable behavior?)

**Avoid Using Subjective Phrasing** Subjective phrasing is “slanted” writing, in which phrasing displays the observer’s bias and opinion. Subjective phrasing cannot be verified by another observer. For example, it is not possible for a different observer to verify a subjective phrase such as “He was mean!” How would a person ever be able to verify or corroborate such a statement?

Subjective phrasing interprets a scene rather than just reporting the facts. Subjective phrasing gives little or no observable behavior or data. It makes observations unusable in making sound decisions about children and can even be dangerous if important decisions are made based on such inadequate reporting. Some illustrations of subjective phrasing from Example 2 include the following examples. Again, you will have a chance to make some judgments about how certain phrases are subjective.

- “Tony and Joe are friends . . .” (Subjectively phrased because there is no way to verify from the data that they are friends)
- “Tony and Joe . . . were happy to sit together.” (Subjectively phrased because this is an interpretation with no observable data to back up the statement.)
- “Tony wiggled around, annoying the teacher.” (Subjectively phrased because there is no evidence that the teacher was annoyed, just the observer’s opinion.)
- “Both boys enjoyed the story . . .” (Your turn—subjectively phrased because \_\_\_\_.)
- “Joe rudely interrupted . . .” (Your turn—subjectively phrased because \_\_\_\_.)
- “He was angry and . . .” (Subjectively phrased because \_\_\_\_.)

We now turn to methods for observing children’s behavior and development.

## ❖ PRACTICAL AND EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR OBSERVING CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR

Constructive positive guidance rests on observing, reflecting on what you see, then wisely using the information to make decisions about children and, for this text, about guidance decisions. This part of the chapter focuses on practical information that teachers need to observe well. There are several major methods for observing, and you will learn how to choose the format best suited to your needs. Whichever method you choose, remember that objectivity is the goal with all methods. The rules for remaining objective—using descriptive and avoiding subjective phrasing—apply to all observational strategies.

Choosing the most helpful format for observing depends on whether you need to tell or narrate a story. If you need to tell or narrate a story, then you would choose a **narrative method**, such as anecdotal or running records. If you do not need to write an account, then you would

**Narrative method**  
Observation that tells a story