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Mrs. Sandal has concluded, after several observations, that Brian (far left) works very well with other children.

choose a **non-narrative method**, such as a checklist or rating scale. You could also choose a sampling format such as time sampling or event sampling.

Anecdotal Records

Anecdotal records tell a story; therefore, they are a narrative form of observation. An **anecdotal record** allows a teacher to observe an incident, then to tell about it in brief notes that form a snapshot of the incident. There is just enough detail to describe the incident accurately and to recall it later. Teachers can use this method to observe a variety of behaviors or any aspect of children's development or learning. The observations can be spontaneous or planned. For example, a preschool teacher might plan to record anecdotal records on every child's social skills. He might then make a few unplanned entries about how other children react to a child's improved social skills.

Using anecdotal records provides clear advantages. Teachers write anecdotal records while they teach; therefore, they do not have to take time away from the children. Anecdotal records are easy to learn to use and take very little of a teacher's time. Anecdotal records also have two disadvantages, the first that there is very little information given—an anecdotal record is, after all, a snapshot, a very short story. Another disadvantage is that an observer might come up with conclusions unsupported by data presented in the notes.

Figure 6.1 shows the format for anecdotal records. Some teachers duplicate a form and make several copies readily available. They file completed forms in a child's folder. Some teachers use sticky notes instead of the form and place these very brief entries in the file. Still other teachers prefer to use a digital voice recorder, with a file for each child, or they like recording anecdotal records on a computer or other electronic device. Taking a digital photograph of a child during an episode about which one is writing is an effective addition to the file. Whichever format they choose, teachers are responsible for maintaining files in a confidential manner and guarding the child's privacy.

Non-narrative method

Observation method that does *not* tell a story

Anecdotal record

Brief written notes about an incident; like a snapshot; gives less information than the longer running record