

# Observation



*Observation* is a powerful tool to support coaching during the home visit. It provides an important window into learning what is happening already while simultaneously identifying moments for intentional teaching, intervention strategies, and the structure and sequence of the interaction.

When EIs observe during a home visit, they watch the caregiver and child interactions without participating or engaging with them, sending the message to the caregiver that the EI is there to support the caregiver and child as they work together, not to work directly with the child. The EI may step back a bit and observe the environment as well as the interaction. EIs observe the child and caregiver gathering important information about the strategies used by the caregiver (**How**), the child's participation and use of targets (**What**) in a routine or activity (**When/Where/Who**), and the caregiver's expectations for the roles of the child in the routine or activity as typically occurs (**Is it Working**).

The EI intentionally watches a routine identified by the caregiver before actively coaching. The EI may set up the observation with a verbal explanation or statement to the caregiver about why she is observing and what she is watching for. The observation is followed by specific positive feedback that connects the caregiver and child's interactions with the intent to build on the caregiver's strengths or what is already working for them in the routine. After observing and feedback, the EI will coach the caregiver using the specific coaching strategies most appropriate for the caregiver and child in that routine.

The EI may also observe the caregiver and child interaction during an incidental (i.e., not specified) routine or interaction and may provide feedback on child targets, caregiver use of strategies, and interaction between the caregiver and child. This is important for the identification of additional routines and interactions and to observe generalization of intervention.

Practices and Principles	How to...
Promote the caregiver's confidence and leadership.	Observe the routines and activities the caregiver identifies for your coaching support before you begin to coach.
Build on strengths observed in the child and caregiver interactions.	Offer feedback specific to the actions and interactions observed in the routine that promote the caregiver and child strengths.
Minimize unnecessary change in the family and child's typical activities.	Observe the way the family's routine works for them, noting their sequence, expectations, and outcomes. Learning what works for them keeps their routine theirs!



When observing family routines and activities, the EI gathers information about the family's approach to routines, child and caregiver participation, and dyad interaction. The EI is looking for much more than specific child skills. For example, EIs may look for a clear beginning and ending to the routine, a predictable sequence that facilitates opportunities for repetition and joint attention, and meaningful roles for the child and the parent. They gather information about the child's level of participation in the activity, looking for clear opportunities for the child to anticipate, respond, initiate, imitate, and increase independence through practice.

The EI gathers information about the caregiver, too, looking for various responsive teaching strategies, using natural reinforcers, and expanding or extending of interactions (a reinforcer is something that increases the likelihood of the desired behavior being repeated). They gather information about the dyad's interactions through observation, checking for evidence that the caregiver is in a position that is optimal for interaction, as well as turn-taking and successful reading of communication cues.

Feedback provided to the caregiver after the observation can be used to connect the discussions that occurred during Setting the Stage about child development, use of strategies, child's demonstration of targets, or to follow up on a question asked by the caregiver. While the feedback is likely to serve as a transition to coaching on the targets identified for that routine, the EI and caregiver may also use Problem Solving and Planning to add new targets or routines for embedding intervention if they are confident everything is working as intended.

## Remember

*Observation* should be used throughout the home visit. It helps EIs learn about the child and family in their environment. EIs use observation to learn about the routine, the child, the caregiver, and the dyad to match learning targets, teaching strategies, and coaching methods to best meet the child and family's priorities and needs.