

Naturalistic Observation

Naturalistic Observation by definition is a descriptive technique of observing and recording behavior in naturally occurring situations without trying to manipulate and control the situation.

For this assignment, you are to perform and write up a brief naturalistic observation. Follow the guidelines below.

STEP 01: Decide what you will observe and develop a hypothesis – What do you THINK you will see during your observation?

For example, ‘It is hypothesized 60% of women will look in the mirror while only 25% of men will look in the mirror while passing by.’

STEP 02: Field Notes

Choose a setting and time for the observation. You are to spend approximately 15 to 20 minutes watching and making a detailed record of the subject(s), gathering data which will test your hypothesis.

Plan your observational method to be sure you are not discovered (so that the naturalistic quality of the observation is not lost. Take notes on everything you can observe about the subject(s). *Attach the notes to your write up.* (The notes do not need to be typed.)

STEP 03: Write-Up

Write a one page typed (12 pt. font, double-spaced) report of your observations. Try to be as objective as possible, but feel free to make well-reasoned inferences about what you have seen. Your report should include the following:

- An introduction which tells what the observation is about. You should explain how you came up with your hypothesis and why you chose the particular setting and subject(s) to test.
- An account of the subject(s) and of the behaviors you observed is needed (Data either in the form of percentages or raw numbers) or you may take a qualitative approach and describe common behaviors and patterns
- A discussion of any conclusions you can draw from the observation
- Finally, an evaluation (or critique) of your observation, mentioning any problem areas where you feel you could have improved your results. You could, for example, explain any flaws in your method which led to inaccurate data.

Possible ideas (but please BE CREATIVE!)

- Observe students leaving school, walking in the mall, or sitting in a restaurant, how many are on their cell phone?
- How many people driving are on a cell phone?
- How many people go through a yellow light?
- Observe parenting behavior. How many raise their voice?
- Observe children interacting at a playground. What types of behavior do they show?
- Observe a particular 'social group'. What similarities do they show? What differences do they show?
- How many people wipe down the gym equipment after they use it?
- How many people return their shopping carts to the cart area?

REMEMBER – YOU ARE NOT TO SPY ON ANYONE! THERE IS A DIFFERENCE. YOU MAY ONLY WATCH PEOPLE IN PUBLIC PLACES. DO NOT INTERFERE WITH ANYONE OR LET THEM KNOW YOU ARE WATCHING THEM. ALL YOU DO IS OBSERVE & TAKE NOTES.