INFANT ROOM · AGES 0–12 MONTHS

Plain-English Observation Clipboard Cheat Sheet

The Camera & Microphone Rule: If a camera couldn't see it and a microphone couldn't record it, leave it out.

3-Part Formula: Context (When/Where) + Action (Body, Hands, Eyes) + Exact Sounds (Coos, Cries, Babbles).

10 COPY-AND-ADAPT INFANT EXAMPLES

Skill Area	Plain-English Observation (Swap in [Name] & Date)
Caregiver Bond	When Ms. [Teacher] walked up to the crib and said hello, [Name] kicked both legs, widened their eyes, and smiled.
Signaling "Done"	While looking at a board book, [Name] turned their head away, arched their back, and pushed the book away with both hands.
Eye Tracking	Lying on the play mat, [Name] kept eyes locked on the red rattle and turned their head slowly left to right as it moved.
Back-and-Forth Coos	During a diaper change, [Name] looked at Ms. [Teacher] and made an "ooo-aaa" sound; when repeated, [Name] kicked and did it again.
Pointing	In the high chair, [Name] pointed one finger toward the puffs on the counter and said, "Da!" while looking at Ms. [Teacher].
Finding a Toy	When Ms. [Teacher] draped a light scarf over the plastic duck, [Name] grabbed the edge, pulled it off, and picked up the duck.
Tummy Time	On the foam mat, [Name] pushed up onto both forearms and held their head and chest off the floor for 15 seconds while watching the mirror.
Small Fingers	On the high chair tray, [Name] picked up 4 oat O's one by one using thumb and pointer finger and put each in their mouth.
Pulling Up	[Name] gripped the low wooden shelf with both hands, pulled up to standing, and took three sideways steps without letting go.
Care Routine	When Ms. [Teacher] held up clean pants and said, "Lift your bottom," [Name] bent both knees and raised their hips off the pad.

10 WORDS TO CUT (AND WHAT TO WRITE INSTEAD)

Cut This Word	Write What You Saw	Cut This Word	Write What You Saw
Fussy / Cranky	Cried 10 min, pulled ears, arched back	**Good / Easy**	Watched mobile quietly for 4 minutes
Happy / Content	Smiled, relaxed shoulders, cooed softly	**Clingy**	Held teacher's shirt, cried when set down
Tired / Sleepy	Rubbed eyes, yawned 3x, rested head	**Wanted / Tried**	Reached right arm twice toward rattle
Hungry	Rooted toward chest, sucked on fists	**Recognized**	Turned toward Mom's voice and kicked
Teething	Drooled through 2 bibs, chewed cold ring	**Loves / Hates**	Grinned during patty-cake 3 days in a row

Fast Capture Tip (Station Sticky Notes): Tape a sticky pad and pen above the changing table, by the rocker, and near high chairs. Jot *Initials + Date + Raw Action/Sound* in 5 seconds, then log during nap overlap.

Plain-English Observation Clipboard Cheat Sheet

> **The Camera & Microphone Rule:** If a camera couldn't see it and a microphone couldn't record it, leave it out.
> **3-Part Formula:** Context (When/Where) + Action (Hands, Feet, Body) + Exact Words or Sounds.

10 COPY-AND-ADAPT YOUNGER TODDLER EXAMPLES

Skill Area	Plain-English Observation (Swap in [Name] & Date)
Side-by-Side Play	[Name] sat beside [Peer] on the rug for four minutes, pushing a wooden train back and forth while [Peer] stacked rings nearby.
Seeking Comfort	After tripping on the foam mat, [Name] cried, walked to Ms. [Teacher], leaned against her knees for 30 seconds, then returned to play.
Pointing + Word	Standing by the window, [Name] pointed one finger toward the parking lot, looked back at Ms. [Teacher], and said, "Bus!"
Two-Word Phrase	At snack, [Name] held up their empty plastic bowl toward Ms. [Teacher] and said, "More banana."
1-Step Direction	When Ms. [Teacher] held out her hand and said, "Bring me the red ball," [Name] walked across the rug and placed it in her palm.
Early Imitation	In the house area, [Name] picked up a plastic spoon, held it to a baby doll's mouth twice, and made a smacking sound.
Shape Matching	Sitting with the wooden shape sorter, [Name] turned the round peg twice until it slid through the circle hole, then clapped both hands.
Walking & Pushing	[Name] pushed the wooden shopping cart across the room, paused at the shelf, turned it around, and walked back without falling.
Early Scribbling	Gripping a chunky crayon in their whole fist, [Name] moved their arm back and forth to make wide blue marks across the paper.
Using a Spoon	At lunch, [Name] scooped oatmeal onto a plastic spoon and brought it to their mouth four times, spilling a few drops onto the bib.

10 WORDS TO CUT (AND WHAT TO WRITE INSTEAD)

Cut This Word	Write What You Saw	Cut This Word	Write What You Saw
Tantrum	Dropped to floor, cried 90 sec, kicked legs	**Clingy**	Held teacher's leg 5 min after drop-off
Stubborn	Shook head, turned away, said "No!"	**Picky**	Ate 6 banana slices, left peas untouched
Aggressive / Biter	Bit peer's arm when peer grabbed truck	**Cute / Sweet**	Handed duck to teacher and smiled
Selfish	Pulled both trucks to chest, yelled "Mine!"	**Scared / Shy**	Stepped behind Dad's legs, watched from 3 ft
Wild / Hyper	Ran laps around rug, climbed chair 3x	**Tried / Wanted**	Stacked 3 blocks; swept table when 4th fell

Fast Capture Tip (Apron Label Strip): Stick a strip of 5 blank return-address labels on your apron with a click pen clipped beside it. Jot *Initials + Date + Raw Quote/Action* on the move, then peel onto portfolios at nap time.

OLDER TODDLER ROOM · AGES 24–36 MONTHS

Plain-English Observation Clipboard Cheat Sheet

> **The Camera & Microphone Rule:** If a camera couldn't see it and a microphone couldn't record it, leave it out.
> **3-Part Formula:** Context (When/Where) + Action (What They Did) + Exact Words (What They Said).

10 COPY-AND-ADAPT OLDER TODDLER EXAMPLES

Skill Area	Plain-English Observation (Swap in [Name] & Date)
Simple Turns	At the slide outside, [Name] stood at the bottom of the ladder behind [Peer] and waited until [Peer] reached the bottom to climb.
Peer Conflict	When [Peer] picked up the red fire truck beside [Name], [Name] yelled, "Mine!" and grabbed [Peer]'s shirt sleeve with both hands.
Calming Down	After crying at drop-off, [Name] walked to the soft chair, hugged the bear for two minutes, wiped their eyes, and joined playdough.
Short Sentence	Looking out the window during snack, [Name] pointed at the street and told [Peer], "Big blue truck go fast!"
2-Step Direction	When told, "Throw your napkin in the trash and sit on the rug," [Name] dropped the napkin in the bin and sat on a carpet square.
Sorting Color	At the sensory table, [Name] pulled all five yellow bears out of the bin and lined them on the tray, leaving red and blue inside.
Pretend Play	In dramatic play, [Name] stirred a plastic pot on the play stove, scooped onto a plate, and told [Peer], "Hot soup—blow on it!"
Jumping	Outside on the grass, [Name] bent both knees, swung both arms, and jumped forward off the curb with both feet leaving the ground.
Potty Learning	During block play, [Name] grabbed the front of their shorts, ran to Ms. [Teacher], and said, "Go potty!" before walking to the bathroom.
Cleanup	When the cleanup song started, [Name] carried three plastic animals from the rug to the shelf bin and put on their own slip-on shoes.

10 WORDS TO CUT (AND WHAT TO WRITE INSTEAD)

Cut This Word	Write What You Saw	Cut This Word	Write What You Saw
Tantrum	Lay on rug, kicked legs, yelled "No!" 2 min	**Refused**	Stepped back from toilet, said "Diaper"
Stubborn	Crossed arms and walked away at cleanup	**Picky**	Ate crackers and apple; pushed beans aside
Aggressive / Biter	Pulled truck to chest and bit peer's arm	**Cute / Sweet**	Handed plate to peer: "Hot soup—blow!"
Selfish	Grabbed peer's sleeve and shouted "Mine!"	**Scared / Shy**	Hid face in Dad's shoulder at greeting
Wild / Hyper	Jumped off step 5x, ran across block rug	**Tried / Wanted**	Hooked thumbs in shorts, pulled waistband up

> **Fast Capture Tip (Apron Label Strip):** Keep a strip of blank labels on your apron and a pen clipped to your collar. Jot *Initials + Date + Exact Quote/Action* right after the moment, then peel onto portfolios at nap time.

PRESCHOOL ROOM · AGES 3–4 YEARS

Plain-English Observation Clipboard Cheat Sheet

> **The Camera & Microphone Rule:** If a camera couldn't see it and a microphone couldn't record it, leave it out.
> **3-Part Formula:** Context (When/Where) + Action (What They Did) + Exact Words (What They Said).

10 COPY-AND-ADAPT PRESCHOOL EXAMPLES

Skill Area	Plain-English Observation (Swap in [Name] & Date)
Taking Turns	During block play, [Name] handed two wooden blocks to [Peer] and said, "You build the garage, I'll make the road."
Peer Conflict	When [Peer] reached for the yellow dump truck, [Name] pushed [Peer]'s shoulder with both hands and shouted, "No, I had it!"
Helping a Peer	After [Peer] spilled water at lunch, [Name] walked to the sink, grabbed three paper towels, and laid them over the puddle.
Asking Questions	While looking at the classroom fish tank, [Name] pointed at the filter and asked, "Why are bubbles coming out of that black box?"
3-Step Direction	When told, "Put your cup in the gray bin, push in your chair, and grab a book," [Name] completed all three steps without a reminder.
Counting Objects	[Name] lined up 6 plastic bears on the table, touched each bear once with one finger, and counted aloud, "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6."
Cause & Effect	At the water table, [Name] dropped a wood block and metal spoon in, watched the spoon sink, and said, "The shiny one is heavy."
Scissor Use	[Name] held child scissors with thumb facing up, opened and closed blades with one hand, and made four snips along green paper.
Pouring Milk	At snack, [Name] held the small plastic pitcher with both hands and poured milk into their cup, stopping below the rim with no spills.
Task Focus	[Name] sat working on a 12-piece wooden puzzle for 9 minutes, rotating pieces until each fit, and stood up once the last piece clicked.

10 WORDS TO CUT (AND WHAT TO WRITE INSTEAD)

Cut This Word	Write What You Saw	Cut This Word	Write What You Saw
Happy / Excited	Clapped hands, jumped 2x, shouted "Look!"	**Stubborn**	Crossed arms, turned away, said "No"
Angry / Mad	Pulled truck from peer, yelled "My turn!"	**Good job / Nice**	Put 4 puzzles on shelf at 2-min chime
Frustrated	Pulled zipper 3x, dropped arms: "It's stuck"	**Smart / Advanced**	Sorted large/small buttons into 2 bowls
Shy	Stood behind Dad's legs, looked down	**Tried / Wanted**	Placed 2 heavy blocks under sliding ramp
Aggressive	Threw 2 wooden blocks toward shelf at 10:15	**Loves / Hates**	Chose art easel three mornings in a row

Fast Capture Tip (30-Second Sticky Note): Keep a Post-it pad and pen clipped to your room clipboard. Jot *Initials* + *Date* + *Raw Quote/Action* mid-play, then transfer or snap a photo during nap time.

PRE-K ROOM · AGES 4–5 YEARS (KINDERGARTEN READINESS)

Plain-English Observation Clipboard Cheat Sheet

> **The Camera & Microphone Rule:** If a camera couldn't see it and a microphone couldn't record it, leave it out.
> **3-Part Formula:** Context (When/Where) + Action (What They Did/Wrote) + Exact Words (What They Said).

10 COPY-AND-ADAPT PRE-K EXAMPLES

Skill Area	Plain-English Observation (Swap in [Name] & Date)
Conflict Solution	When both reached for the magnifier, [Name] grabbed the 2-minute timer and said, "You go until the sand runs out, then my turn."
Losing a Game	When [Peer] won Candy Land, [Name] sighed, slid their game piece into the box, and said, "You won that one. Play again?"
Writing Name	At sign-in, [Name] wrote all six letters of their first name left to right—uppercase first, then lowercase—without a name card.
Letter Sounds	After drawing a doghouse, [Name] said each sound slowly—"/d/ - /o/ - /g/"—and wrote "D O G" at the top of the page.
Counting to 20	At the math tray, [Name] slid 18 wooden beads from left to right one by one, counting 1 to 18 without skipping or repeating.
Patterns	Using linking cubes, [Name] built red-red-blue-red-red-blue and said, "Two reds, one blue—next I need two more reds."
Cutting Curves	Holding scissors thumb-up, [Name] turned the paper with their other hand and cut all the way around a drawn circle along the line.
Zipping Solo	Before outdoor time, [Name] lined up the metal pin inside their jacket zipper on the second try and zipped it all the way up solo.
Project Focus	[Name] worked at the Lego table for 18 minutes straight, sorting wheels by size and attaching a roof before showing Ms. [Teacher].
Morning Routine	At 8:30, [Name] hung up their backpack, moved their attendance magnet, washed hands, and picked a book without a reminder.

10 WORDS TO CUT (AND WHAT TO WRITE INSTEAD)

Cut This Word	Write What You Saw	Cut This Word	Write What You Saw
Ready / Not ready	Zipped coat solo; needed 3 prompts at circle	**Confident**	Spoke loudly enough for whole rug to hear
Mature / Immature	Cried and threw blocks when timer ended	**Poor sport**	Swept game cards off table, walked to rug
Smart / Bright	Predicted sun ice cube would melt faster	**Knows / Understands**	Measured shoe (9 cubes) vs. block (6 cubes)
Distracted	Called out 4x without raising hand in story	**Neat / Messy**	Stayed on black cutting line around circle
Bossy	Told peers: "You be the baby, I'm doctor"	**Tried / Meant to**	Erased backward E, checked chart, rewrote it

Fast Capture Tip (5-Kids-a-Day Rotation): Tape 4–5 names to the top of your clipboard for Mon–Thu (keep Fri for catch-up). Capture one 30-second sticky note per focus child so quiet kids never get missed.