**Page ID**: **#.# Observation**

# Primary Content

**Title**

Enter the **Title** of the **Method** here (REQUIRED).

**Observation**

**Description -- i.e., What it is:**

Enter the **Description** here (REQUIRED).

Observation is a class of methods where the researcher observes phenomena (behaviors, interactions, etc.) of interest as they happen in a natural context. There is no experimental control used in these studies and the data generated are mainly qualitative in nature. Many human factors make use of observational design features such as usability testing, contextual inquiry, and ethnography.

**Recommended Uses**

Enter the **Recommended Use** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

Observational design methods are used when the researcher wants to observe behaviors or tasks in a natural context to understand how they occur. Observation should be used very early in the design cycle, where it can be used to identify tasks, subtasks, user requirements etc.

**Limitations**

Enter the **Limitations** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* Rich qualitative data requires heavy time and effort costs for data collection and analysis
* Can only really be used at the very early stages of the design cycle.

**Outcomes**

Enter the **Outcomes** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* Strong understanding of user requirements
* Strong understand of task goals and subgoals
* Strong understanding of task steps and sub-steps.

**Required Skills and Expertise**

Enter the **Required Skills** **and Expertise** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* Training in qualitative methods
* Training in human factors methods.

**How to Proceed**

If there are no details, insert TBD.

* **How-To Guide.** Review step-by-step instructions on how to conduct an observation and access tools and instruments to support your evaluation.
* **Schedule a Consult.** Connect with a usability specialist for support on your project.

[BEGIN: How to Do It]

**Introduction**

Enter the **Introduction** here (REQUIRED).

Observational designs, as the name implies, involve the researcher observing users engaging in some task of interest or some behavior of interest. The idea is that the researcher is able to observe the task or behavior occur in a natural context. This allows the researcher to record notes about what is happening such as errors, emotional displays, work hand offs etc. This results in a very rich data set that allows the researcher to understand all facets of the task.

**Procedure**

Enter the **Steps** here. (Required).

Observational designs are relatively simple since the researcher is merely observing user behaviors. However, there are some considerations that should be taken into account. For example:

* Who are the users?
* How much experience do they have with technology?
* What tools are being used?
* What communication is there between individuals as part of a team?
* What knowledge, or skills are being used to complete tasks?
* In what setting are tasks being completed?

Taking into consideration all facets of the environment, the tasks, the tools, and the users allows the researchers to develop a complete understanding of what is happening.

**Tools**

If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* N/A

[END: How to Do It]

**Author**

Enter the **REFERENCES** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* Human Factors Engineering (HFE), Office of Health Informatics, Veterans Health Administration

**Sources**

Enter the **REFERENCES** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* N/A

**References**

Enter the **REFERENCES** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* N/A