



1. Controlled vs Naturalistic Observation

Naturalistic Observation

Behaviour is observed in a real-life setting.

Features:

- Takes place in a natural environment (school, street, home, etc.)
- Behaviour is more realistic
- Participants may not know they are being observed

Strengths: High ecological validity

Weakness: Less control over variables

Controlled Observation

Behaviour is observed in a structured or lab setting.

Features:

- Researcher controls the environment
- Often uses standardised tasks or situations
- Easier to replicate

Strengths: More control, more reliable

Weakness: Behaviour may be less natural



2. Overt vs Covert Observation

Overt Observation

Participants know they are being observed.

Features:

- Ethical (consent can be obtained)
 - Behaviour may change due to awareness (Hawthorne effect)
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Covert Observation

Participants do NOT know they are being observed.

Features:

- Behaviour is more natural
 - Raises ethical issues (no consent, privacy concerns)
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3. Participant vs Non-Participant Observation

Participant Observation

Researcher becomes part of the group.

Features:

- Researcher interacts with participants
 - Can gain deeper insight
 - Risk of bias or losing objectivity
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Non-Participant Observation

Researcher stays separate.

Features:

- Researcher does not join the group
 - More objective
 - Less detailed understanding of context
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4. Structured vs Unstructured Observation

Structured Observation

Uses a pre-prepared checklist of behaviours.

Features:

- Specific behaviours are counted or timed
 - Produces quantitative data
 - Easier to compare between observers
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Unstructured Observation

Observer records everything that seems relevant.

Features:

- No fixed checklist
 - Produces qualitative data
 - Rich detail but harder to analyse
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⌚ 5. Sampling Methods (How behaviour is recorded)

Event Sampling

- Every time a specific behaviour happens, it is recorded

Time Sampling

- Behaviour is recorded at fixed time intervals (e.g., every 30 seconds)
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Summary for Exams

Observation studies in Psychology 9990 are defined by decisions about:

Feature Type	Options
Setting	Naturalistic / Controlled
Awareness	Overt / Covert
Researcher role	Participant / Non-participant
Recording style	Structured / Unstructured
Sampling	Event / Time