

# Direct Observation Methods Reference

Quick guide to choosing the right classroom data collection method

classroompulse.io

## Method Reference Table

Method	Best For	Metric	Watch Out For
Frequency	Discrete countable behaviors	Count or rate	Can miss severity or duration
Duration	Behaviors that last over time	Minutes or seconds	Needs clear start and stop
Latency	Delay to respond or comply	Seconds to start	Requires exact prompt timing
Whole interval	Desired sustained behavior	% of intervals	Usually underestimates
Partial interval	High-frequency behavior	% of intervals	Usually overestimates
Momentary time sampling	Long observations with limited staff tim	% of checks	Can miss brief behavior
ABC	Finding function patterns	Narrative events	Takes longer to record
Scatterplot	Time-of-day or setting patterns	Pattern grid	Best over multiple days

## Quick Selection Questions

- Can I count each instance clearly? Start with frequency.
- Is the length of time more important than count? Use duration.
- Is the issue how fast the student starts? Use latency.
- Is the behavior too frequent to count accurately? Use interval recording.
- Do I need to understand triggers and outcomes? Add ABC data.

### Pro Tip

When the team is uncertain, collect one direct measure plus one contextual measure. A count alone rarely explains why the behavior happens.

## Choose Faster, Document Better

Classroom Pulse recommends the right method for the behavior you are tracking and keeps your data collection consistent across staff.

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