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**AUTHOR** McDaniel, Ernest; And Others  
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**ABSTRACT**

Observer Rating Scales are a means of recording observed teaching behavior on nine dimensions: warmth, enthusiasm, clarity, variety, individualization, feedback, cognitive demand, freedom, and on-task activity. The trained observer rates the behavior on a scale from one to six representing points along a continuum. The positions are defined by accompanying statements to assist the rater in assigning an appropriate rating. A relatively high degree of construct validity is purported. Reliability coefficients were computed by nine observers rating four teachers independently on all nine dimensions. Reliability ranged from a high of .95 (warmth) to a low .79 (freedom). Samples of the teaching behavior of the four teachers have been filmed to accompany this manual and are available through Purdue Educational Research Center. Also included in this manual is information on training observers and scoring rationale for use with the 16 mm sound-color training films. (Author/RC)

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# MANUAL FOR OBSERVER RATING SCALES



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**MANUAL**  
**FOR**  
**OBSERVER RATING SCALES**

**BY**

**Ernest McDaniel**  
**with the assistance of**  
**Joan Lohmann and Camille Little**

**Purdue Educational Research Center**  
**Purdue University**  
**West Lafayette, Indiana**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Observer Rating Scales are designed as a tool for research on instructional processes. Explicit descriptions of teaching processes, replicable from one observer to another, are an essential step in systematic studies of instruction. The Observer Rating Scales are offered as a first formulation of scales in which the dimensions have emerged directly from the research literature (Rosenshine, 1973). The development of the Observer Rating Scales is described in McDaniel *et al.* (1973). It is anticipated that subsequent users will evolve refinements, revisions, and expansions.

Samples of the teaching behavior of four teachers have been filmed to accompany this manual. These samples appear on two half-hour 16 mm sound-color training films, available through the Purdue Educational Research Center. Training in the use of the Observer Rating Scales should include viewing the filmed teaching behavior, rating the teaching samples on each scale, and comparing these ratings with the scoring and rationale provided in this manual.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SCALES

The Observer Rating Scales provide an observation instrument for recording observed teaching behavior on nine dimensions:

1. Warmth. The extent to which the atmosphere of the class is relaxed and comfortable; the degree to which the teacher maintains positive interpersonal relationships with pupils.
2. Enthusiasm. The enthusiasm or interest level expressed by the teacher and students during class activities.
3. Clarity. The clarity of communication, instructions and expectations conveyed to the students.
4. Variety. The extent to which the teacher uses a variety of materials and activities.
5. Individualization. The degree to which the teacher provides students with different levels of work that are suited to their particular needs, interests and abilities, and the amount of individual assistance provided.
6. Feedback. The extent of communication to the student of information about the adequacy, acceptability, completeness or correctness of his response.
7. Cognitive Demand. The level of intellectual activity that the teacher expects from the student.
8. Freedom. The degree to which the teacher provides arrangements which facilitate independence and individual freedom.
9. On-Task Activity. The amount of student activity that is directed toward the accomplishment of instructional objectives.

Each dimension is described in a few brief paragraphs. The observer rates the teaching behavior on a scale from one to six. The six positions represent points along a continuum. These positions are defined by accompanying statements to assist the rater in selecting the appropriate point.

The scales are high inference scales. The rater must observe a wide range of behaviors, sense the impact on the students, and summarize the major thrust and intent. This task requires a delicate balance between objectivity and the intuitive perception of subtle meanings and connotations. For example, warmth may be indicated by the number of times a teacher smiles and praises his students, but it also includes less tangible qualities of empathy which must enter into the observer's rating. Appropriate ratings depend on attention to the teacher's behavior and a sensitive monitoring of both the pupils' and observers' own responses.

### Validity

The Observer Rating Scales have a relatively high degree of construct validity. Each construct (warmth, enthusiasm, etc.) is described so as to minimize ambiguity. The constructs are further specified by providing definitions of the behaviors that lie at various points along the continuum. By describing these behaviors, the possibility of projecting subjective interpretations into the dimensions has been minimized.

### Reliability

Reliability coefficients were computed on ratings of the teaching behavior that appear in the training films. Each of the four teachers was rated independently by nine observers on all nine dimensions. The observers were staff members who had participated in the development and exploratory use of the scales. Reliability coefficients were computed using analysis of variance procedures (Winer, 1971, pp. 283-9) for an index of reliability among multiple judges. These reliability coefficients are as follows: warmth, .95; enthusiasm, .83; clarity, .87; variety, .93; individualization, .91; feedback, .94; cognitive demand, .82; freedom, .79; and on-task activity, .93.

**THE SCALES**

### Warmth

This dimension refers to the extent to which the atmosphere of the class is relaxed and comfortable or tense and uncomfortable. It also encompasses the degree to which the teacher maintains positive interpersonal relationships with pupils.

A classroom that is warm is one in which the teacher is positive to the students, demonstrating friendly and warm behavior. The children show signs of feeling secure and appear to like or enjoy the classroom experience. There is an atmosphere of acceptance of students. This teacher demonstrates sensitivity to students. The teacher is sensitive to the private lives of his students, and concerned about the personal and social growth of each student. Students are praised and reasoning is used rather than punishment. The teacher smiles and uses physical contact and humor in a positive way.

A classroom that is cold is one in which the teacher is demeaning to students. The teacher is critical and stern. The atmosphere is one of apparent insensitivity to students. This teacher seems to think of students as "things" or "objects" to be dealt with. Verbal or physical punishments are given for misbehavior. Sarcastic humor may be used to degrade or ridicule. There may be some differential treatment of students. Students exhibit feelings of insecurity and tension.

Rate this classroom on a warmth continuum.

1	2	3	4	5	6
cold					warm

1. A cold teacher treats students in a rejecting way. This teacher rejects not only undesirable behavior, but the students as well. By using negative words and a harsh tone of voice when correcting students, a cold teacher leaves students feeling "bad" or guilty. His speech is commanding or scolding. Sarcasm may be used to ridicule or degrade students. If he touches students, it is for disciplinary purposes. This teacher has an angry or cross disposition and a frowning appearance.
2. This teacher is formal and distant in his relationships with students. He is insensitive to students' feelings. Students do not approach him with their problems. This teacher is lesson-centered to the extent that getting the job done takes priority over responding to students in a tactful or considerate way.
3. This teacher is not always aware of students' feelings or may ignore them. While the teacher tries to temper the tone of his corrections, the child still senses the negative overtones.

4. This teacher is business like and intent on getting the academic job done. He tries to be friendly and is interested in his students. If this teacher disapproves of student behavior, he is tactful and understanding when correcting students. In general, he uses more praise than criticism.
5. This teacher is sensitive to students' feelings. He uses positive words when correcting students, leaving the students feeling secure even when corrected. This teacher is helpful and supportive. Students approach him with their problems. He frequently praises and compliments.
6. A warm teacher treats all students in an accepting way. He responds to each student as a person. When a student's behavior is undesirable, this teacher remains accepting of the student but rechannels the behavior or suggests an alternate behavior in a positive way. He uses positive words and his tone of voice is gentle. He feels free to touch students in a guiding and encouraging manner. This teacher has a pleasant disposition and a smiling appearance.

### Enthusiasm

This dimension refers to the enthusiasm or interest level expressed by the teacher and students during class activities.

The enthusiastic teacher conveys a great sense of commitment, excitement, and involvement in the subject matter. The students seem responsive and appear to enjoy the activity. The teacher seems to expect students to do their best. The teacher's tone of voice varies.

The dull teacher does not appear interested in the subject matter. The students seem nonresponsive and do not appear to be involved in the activity. The teacher doesn't seem to care whether or not students do their best.

Rate this class on an enthusiasm continuum.

1	2	3	4	5	6
dull					enthusiastic

1. This teacher does not seem to care about what he is teaching. He is both apathetic and boring. His voice is generally monotonic. This teacher usually remains stationary in the classroom. He uses few gestures and has little eye contact with the students. Most students direct their attention elsewhere.
2. This teacher is dry; he sticks strictly to the facts. His attention is focused principally on the black board or the materials rather than on the students. This teacher uses little voice modulation or eye contact.
3. This teacher is poised and controlled. He wants his students to learn but his presentation lacks sparkle. Most students pay attention but they are not inspired.
4. This teacher is interesting and confident. He demonstrates an earnest desire for his students to grasp the material. His presentation is attractive and most students appear eager to answer questions posed by the teacher.
5. This teacher is stimulating. He uses expressiveness and variety in tone of voice and eye contact. He includes facts or ideas which stimulate interest. Students are willing to do more than just answer the teacher's questions. Students offer their opinions to add to the ideas of the teacher. There is much interaction between the teacher and students.

6. **This teacher is a dynamic showman. He dramatizes the lesson and captures the attention of students by facial expression, gestures and voice modulation. There is constant and continual teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction. There is never a dull moment. The students are in the middle of the action. The activity in the classroom is lively and it is obvious that both the teacher and students are enjoying the lesson.**



5. This teacher comes across as clear and organized. Although his language level is appropriate for most of the class, it may be inappropriate for a few of the students. He provides a sufficient number of good examples and usually completes instructions and explanations. There is little evidence of uncertainty.
6. This teacher presents material in an explicit, logical and organized manner. He uses an appropriate language level. He illustrates generalities with ample specific examples and carries all instructions and explanations through to completion. He makes sure that all of the students understand.



6. This teacher uses a wide variety of activities and a diversity of materials during the lesson. He brings unique materials into the classroom and makes ingenious use of the physical resources available to him. The children work on many different activities and have access to an abundance of materials and equipment. The class schedule is flexible and adaptable.

### Individualization

This dimension refers to the degree to which the teacher provides students with different levels of work that are suited to their particular needs, interests, and abilities, and to the amount of individual assistance provided.

The teacher whose classroom is individualized shows an awareness of individual differences. He makes different plans for different ability levels. This teacher makes use of special talents and interests of students in planning activities. Different students or groups of students are working on different assignments.

The teacher whose classroom is not individualized uses the entire class or large groups as the primary instructional unit. He displays little awareness of individual abilities or interests. All students generally work on the same assignment for the same period of time. No provisions are made for students at different ability levels. Many students experience stress due to time pressure.

Rate the instruction in this classroom on an individualization continuum.

1	2	3	4	5	6
not individualized					individualized

1. All students use the same materials and work on identical assignments. Time allowed to complete assignments is the same for everyone.
2. All students use the same materials and work on identical assignments, but some individual assistance is available and time requirements are somewhat flexible.
3. Pupils are grouped according to ability level. The same materials are used by all groups, but each group works at a different pace. One group may be far ahead of another.
4. Pupils are grouped according to ability level, but each group receives different assignments and materials based on the needs of the group. The pace varies between groups.
5. Pupils are grouped according to ability level. Groups work with different materials and individuals within groups receive supplementary enrichment or remedial materials as needed.
6. Each student works at his own pace on an individual assignment designed to meet the needs of each individual student. Individual assistance is available to aid a student in accomplishing his assignment.

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## Feedback

This dimension refers to the extent of communication to the student of information about the adequacy, acceptability, completeness, or correctness of his response.

Effective feedback indicates to the student the specific characteristics of the response that make it adequate, inadequate, correct or incorrect.

Ineffective feedback does not provide the student with specific information about his response and therefore has little or no effect on improving performance. Feedback is ineffective if it is very general, inconsistent or unclear.

Rate this teacher on a feedback continuum.

1	2	3	4	5	6
ineffective feedback					effective feedback

1. This teacher does not frequently respond to his pupils' written or oral work. He may keep a record of pupil performance for term grading purposes, but such information is rarely communicated to the student.
2. This teacher responds to pupils' written and oral work with a general response, such as "B," "O.K.," or "Good" without going into detail about what is good or bad about it.
3. This teacher gives a general response, with some specific comments about the overall quality of the work.
4. This teacher lets pupils know which responses or answers are right or wrong without indicating what is right or wrong about them.
5. This teacher lets pupils know which answers are right or wrong and tries to be as specific as possible, pointing out those parts that are well done and those parts that need improving.
6. This teacher uses materials or methods which provide the pupil with a constant step by step check on whether each answer is right or wrong.





5. The students are consistently offered freedom of choice in the academic domain, but the teacher sets definite limits. For example, the content area for study may be specified in terms of time spent, but the student is allowed to choose what to do from a predetermined list of activities, or how long to spend on a given assignment, or the order in which he prefers to perform activities. There is limited reference to rules. Rather, the emphasis is on student awareness of the appropriateness of his own behavior. Students are free to express opinions.
6. In an open classroom, the teacher provides freedom of choice not only in terms of when and how long to study, but also in terms of subject matter, and method of inquiry. There are learning centers around the room and students are free to move from one activity to another or to create their own learning experiences. There is a noticeable lack of specific assignments or direction giving. The teacher functions primarily as an information resource or sounding board. There may be considerable cooperation and conversation between students. Students are given individual responsibility for their behavior. There is little reference to rules. Free expression of ideas prevails and students are free to challenge the teacher's ideas.

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### On-Task Activity

This dimension refers to the amount of activity that is directed toward the accomplishment of instructional objectives.

In a classroom with high on-task activity, the students are actively engaged in learning activities. Students appear to be accomplishing instructional goals.

In a classroom with low on-task activity, most of the students are not engaged in learning activities. There are many instances of day-dreaming and/or disruptive behavior and "goofing-off". Time is not effectively utilized and there is little evidence of productive behavior.

Rate this classroom on an on-task activity continuum.

- |                      |   |   |   |   |                       |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
|                      | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6                     |
| low on-task activity |   |   |   |   | high on-task activity |
1. In this classroom, there is constant aimless activity, disruption, rowdiness, and/or "goofing off." Little if any task accomplishment is evident. Attempts by the teacher to get students to return to learning activities are generally ineffective.
  2. In this classroom, a considerable degree of inattention is exhibited. Most of the students are not involved in the assignment or lesson. There is much commotion and chatter, or quiet behavior such as wandering, doodling or day-dreaming, little of which is related to the task.
  3. In this classroom, some students are busy working on the lesson, but many direct their attention elsewhere. Task related behavior may be evident at the start of the lesson but attention does not last and restlessness or day-dreaming results.
  4. In this classroom, many students are participating in the learning activities. Some temporary off-task behavior may be exhibited by a few students, but attention is quickly restored.
  5. In this classroom, a majority of students are engaged in the learning activities. There are a few students who are searching for "something to do," but the class is work-oriented most of the time.
  6. In this work oriented classroom, all students are engaged in the learning activities. Whether they are working in a group or individually, students are actively involved in the task. A high degree of accomplishment is evident.

## Observer Rating Scale

### Coding Sheet

School \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time in \_\_\_\_\_ Time out \_\_\_\_\_

Observer \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the ratings at the end of the observation period. Circle the rating for each dimension.

1. wm.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. enth.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. clr.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. var.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. ind.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. fdbk.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. cog.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. fr.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. on-tsk.	1	2	3	4	5	6

## TRAINING OBSERVERS

### Using the Scales

Before beginning actual observations, the observer should thoroughly familiarize himself with the scales. During the observation, the observer should be consciously alert to factors that permit classification of behavior. For example, to rate cognitive demand, the observer must attend to the teacher's questions, types of assignments, nature of drills, and other behaviors which indicate the cognitive processes required of the student.

After viewing a sample of teaching behavior, the observer should then complete his ratings on the coding sheet. Sometimes this process will involve narrowing down the tenable ratings to two possible points on the scale and then attending more closely to the descriptive sentences to place the teacher at one position. At times, an observer may feel that he has not seen enough to convince him that any point on the scale is truly characteristic of that teacher. In this case, the observer should record his best approximation, despite his feelings of uncertainty.

Occasionally an observer may encounter a teacher who does not seem to fit into the descriptive sentences for one of the scales. In such a case, the observer should concentrate on the descriptive paragraphs introducing the dimension and consider the continuum as a whole, with the midpoint falling between 3 and 4. Then the observer should try to place the teacher on this continuum at the appropriate point. In these cases the observer may disregard the specific examples associated with the numbered scale positions in order to arrive at a rating.

### Using the Training Films

Filmed records of four classrooms are presented on the training films. The observer should view one classroom at a time. After viewing, he should complete his ratings on the coding sheet. He should then compare his rating with the ratings and scoring rationale provided in this manual.

The beginning observer may feel insecure about his ratings or feel that it is impossible to decide upon a rating for certain scales. For training purposes, it is recommended that the observer force himself to make a choice so that he can compare his reasoning with the scoring rationale.

The limitations of rating filmed teaching behavior must be recognized. The film sequences are, at most, 18 minutes long, whereas live observations will cover a longer period of time. In addition, the selectivity of the camera limits the scope of behavior recorded for observation. A live observer concentrating on the teacher is still aware of the amount of random movement, small group activity, and task orientation exhibited by students not involved in the immediate instructional group. Actual observations and ratings will thus be based on a much more complete picture of the classroom than can be obtained through the eye of the camera. In spite of these limitations, the

training films do provide opportunities for making inferences from observations and translating these inferences into ratings.

### Gaining Additional Practice

Further training may be obtained by using video tapes of teachers in settings similar to those in which the actual research data will be collected. Supervised practice in actual classrooms will generally be the final step in the development of fully trained observers.

Experience has suggested that classroom observations will go smoothly if a few simple courtesies are observed. Permission and scheduling should be arranged through school administrators and teachers should know in advance each time an observer is coming. The observer should take time to establish rapport with the teacher. Honest responses should be provided for any questions regarding the purpose of the observation or the nature of the scales. It is generally not necessary to elaborate on the dimensions being rated, but the observer should answer questions to the teacher's satisfaction. An effort should be made to develop a friendly, cooperative relationship between teacher and observer. The observer should select a position that allows maximum opportunity for observation of instructional activities. If possible he should be settled in the classroom before the children arrive. He should be as unobtrusive as possible and should not promote interaction with students. The observer should leave at a natural break or pre-arranged time. He should be aware of what plans have been made for reporting results to teachers.

Parting comments to the teacher should of course include an expression of appreciation for the teacher's cooperation and should avoid evaluative comments.



























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