

Collecting Multiple Types of Data for IEPs

Purpose & Overview

High-quality IEPs depend on high-quality data. Too often, teams rely on only one or two types of data (e.g., teacher observation or quiz scores).

This narrow approach limits accuracy, creates compliance risks, and can under- or overestimate student progress. IDEA emphasizes that IEP decisions must be based on *a variety of data sources*.

This worksheet equips educators with a **clear taxonomy of data types, examples across domains, collection tools, and ready-to-use logs** to ensure well-rounded, defensible IEPs.

Why Multiple Data Types Matter

- **Accuracy:** Different data sources confirm or challenge patterns (triangulation).
 - **Legal defensibility:** In hearings/complaints, varied data carry more weight than a single source.
 - **Instructional precision:** Diverse data give teachers better insights into where supports are effective.
 - **Student progress:** More frequent and varied data = timely instructional adjustments.
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Data Categories at a Glance

Category	Definition	Examples
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Direct	Observable demonstration of skill/behavior.	Reading probes, math facts timings, on-task duration counts.
Indirect	Reported data from others (not directly observed).	Rating scales, surveys, interviews.
Formative	Collected during instruction to inform teaching.	Exit tickets, weekly CBMs, running records.
Summative	Collected at the end of a unit/period to evaluate outcomes.	Unit tests, annual state assessments.
Formal	Standardized tools with established validity/reliability.	Woodcock-Johnson, WISC-V, DIBELS.
Informal	Teacher-made, flexible tools.	Curriculum quizzes, work samples, anecdotal notes.
Quantitative	Numeric/measurable data.	% accuracy, frequency counts, duration.
Qualitative	Descriptive/contextual data.	Anecdotal notes, student reflections, parent input.
Product	Tangible student work.	Essays, projects, completed math packets.
Process	How the student completes a task.	Observation notes on strategy use, latency measures.

Examples Across Domains

Reading

- Direct/Quantitative: CWPM on CBMs, comprehension quiz % scores.
- Informal/Qualitative: Notes on decoding strategies used during guided reading.

Writing

- Product: Paragraph samples scored with rubric.
- Process: Teacher logs on planning strategies used (graphic organizer, dictation).

Math

- Quantitative: % accuracy on fact fluency timings.
- Process: Observation notes on multi-step problem-solving strategy use.

Behavior/SEL

- Direct: Frequency of escalations, latency to calm.
- Indirect: Parent/teacher rating scales (SSIS, BASC-3).
- Qualitative: Student self-reflection journal.

Communication/AAC

- Direct: # of AAC initiations per day.
- Qualitative: Notes on communicative intent (requesting vs. commenting).
- Process: Prompt-level logs (independent vs. verbal/visual prompt).

Executive Function

- Quantitative: % of days planner is completed.
- Process: Checklist of materials brought to class daily.

Motor/Sensory

- Product: Handwriting samples scored for legibility.
- Process: OT notes on grip and endurance time.

Transition/ADLs

- Direct: % of steps completed on task analysis.
 - Indirect: Parent survey on independent living skills at home.
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Data Collection Tools & Logs

Simple ABC Data Sheet (Behavior)

| Date | Antecedent | Behavior | Consequence | Duration | Notes |

CBM Tracking Log (Reading/Math)

| Week | Skill Probe | Score | Accuracy | Notes/Strategy |

Prompt Hierarchy Log (AAC/SEL)

| Date | Skill | Independent | Verbal Prompt | Visual Prompt | Physical Prompt | Notes |

Task Analysis Checklist (ADLs/Transition)

| Step | Independent | Prompted | Not Attempted |

Data Triangulation in Action

Example: Writing Goal

- PLAAFP Baseline: Student writes 1–2 sentences with graphic organizer.
- Goal: Write 5-sentence paragraph with topic, 3 details, conclusion.

- **Data Sources:**

- Product: Monthly writing sample scored with rubric.
- Process: Weekly observation on use of graphic organizer.
- Quantitative: % of independent sentences per draft.
- Indirect: Teacher notes on participation during writing workshop.

Common Data Collection Pitfalls & Fixes

Pitfall	Fix
Collecting only grades or test scores	Add direct probes (CBMs, fluency timings).
Over-reliance on teacher opinion	Incorporate parent input, student self-reflections, standardized tools.
Data not linked to goals	Ensure every goal has identified tools + frequency .
Inconsistent collection	Use simple logs/checklists, assign responsibility clearly.

Quick Implementation Checklist

- Each IEP goal has at least **2–3 data sources** identified.
- Data collection tools are **practical** and already available.
- Staff know **who collects what, when, and how**.
- Data are shared with the team (graphs, logs, reports).
- Family receives clear, data-informed updates (not vague “making progress”).

Action Starter: Try Tomorrow

- Pick one goal from a current IEP.
- List **three different types of data** you could collect for that goal (direct, indirect, product/process).
- Create a **one-page data log** and pilot it for the next week.
- Share the data at your next team meeting and evaluate if it gives a fuller picture.