

Write down what you saw rather than what you concluded from it. Observations can be checked against what happens next. Conclusions cannot, which is what makes an observation useful to a doctor, to a new aide, or to you in three months trying to remember when this started.

INSTEAD OF THIS, WRITE THIS

Instead of "Mom is getting worse," write: Asked the same question three times between breakfast and lunch.

Instead of "He had a bad night," write: Awake and asking to go home four times between 1 and 4 a.m. Settled once the hallway light was left on.

Instead of "She seemed off today," write: Left half her lunch, which is new. Usually finishes the plate. No fever, no complaints when asked directly.

Date and time	What happened	Different from usual	Who else saw it