

Name _____

Observations & Inferences

Purpose: To practice making observations & Inferences

Background Information: One of the most important skills in science is that of OBSERVATION. Most of the time we think of observation as something we do with our eyes; when we see something, we observe it. However, all five of our senses can be used to make observations: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. A good scientist is observant and notices things in the world. She or he notices what's going on in the world and becomes curious about what's happening. Observing can include reading and studying what others have done in the past because scientific knowledge is collective.

Observations in science are called DATA. We can make two kinds of observations: those that are FACTS, and those that are OPINIONS. Facts are those things that are true for everybody. A scientist looks seriously at information and attempts to avoid all sources of bias in making observations. Opinions are beliefs based on personal preference.

An INFERENCE is an assumption or conclusion based on an observation. It is a logical interpretation based on observations and prior knowledge.

Data may also be QUALITATIVE or QUANTITATIVE. Qualitative data is information that is hard to measure, count, or describe in numbers. It describes the qualities or characteristics of something. Examples are colors, tastes, and sounds. Qualitative data is recorded in DATA CHARTS. Charts may have numbers, pictures, or sentences.

Quantitative data is information that can be expressed in numbers. If information can be counted or measured, then it is quantitative data. Tools are often used to collect qualitative data. Examples include amounts, temperature, mass, and length. Quantitative data is recorded in DATA TABLES: Tables contain numerical data.

Materials: Set of pictures (PowerPoint)

Procedure:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with your partner. 2. Read the directions. 3. Observe the first picture. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What do you observe? b. What can you infer? c. Record your observations & inferences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Observe the second picture. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Now what do you think? b. Record your observations & inferences. 5. Observe the last picture. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Record your inferences based on your observations.
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Data:

Observations	
First Picture	
Second Picture	
Third Picture	

Look at the observations you made about the pictures. Classify each observation as a fact, an opinion, or an inference. Be prepared to provide evidence for your argument.

FACTUAL OBSERVATION	INFERENCE