

Inter-rater reliability check

This form of checking the reliability of a piece of work is used when observations have been made and analysed. A single person making an observation may miss something or interpret what they see in a particular way. By having a second observer or rater and comparing results you are more likely to get a truer picture.

As a simple example, you might want to find out how well a child chews food before swallowing it. You video the child eating and on play back, count the number of jaw movements for each mouthful of food before it appears to be swallowed. You may also need to take account of the times the child opens their mouth and you can see that they still have food in it. You might draw up a simple grid to record these observations on.

You then get a colleague to do exactly the same exercise looking at the video - number of chews before a swallow. Then compare what data you came up with and that of your colleague. If it is very different you may need a third rater.

The example given would probably be relatively simple to be accurate about, but in real life observations are often more complex. It is important that you set out exactly what you are looking for, what counts as a '*yes, this happened*' or a '*no, that was not it*'. When the inter-rater comes to look at the video they must use the same criteria, not make up their own.