

PSYC 310: Child Psychology (Spring 2013) Guidelines for Service Learning

Your work with children this semester will be service learning – not merely community service – because it will provide an opportunity for you to deepen your understanding of course content. The written logs are therefore a crucial tool to help you a) focus your time in service, b) interpret your experience, and c) demonstrate your learning. Each week, you will complete a log entry of approximately 500 words. These entries should not merely be a record of what happened that week; rather, they should explain how you were able to further your learning through specific observations or interactions. To make the most of this experience, follow these steps:

Plan ahead. Before your scheduled service time, complete the week's assigned reading, so you will have the necessary background knowledge. As you read, think about how you might apply this content at your particular service site, and jot down your ideas. Next, read the prompts available on Moodle. Prompts have been written to accommodate multiple age groups and settings, but you may always design your own prompt if you prefer (you can also use prompts from a different week). Choose **one** prompt, and plan out how you will conduct that observation or interaction at your site.

Go out and do it! During your time at service that week, try implementing your plan. This may require some adjustments: be flexible. If something fascinating happens outside of what you planned to do, by all means go with that. (You may need to do some more reading when you come home!)

Write up your findings. Return to Moodle and write your log: an account of your experience trying out the prompt. You should clearly describe relevant details, and you may include your reactions (What made you feel comfortable/uncomfortable? What surprised/challenged you? What would you do differently next time?). However, it is critical to move beyond basic description and personal reaction, to display how you have come to better understand the course content. It is fine for you still to have questions about the topic (even to have raised new questions), but I need to see evidence that you have grappled with the content and reached a new level of understanding. You will be able to demonstrate this through your discussion of relevant background material (properly cited), your accurate use of new terms, your correct identification of observed behaviors and/or clear description of how you applied interventions, and your reflection upon your own learning.

NOTES:

1. **Ethics.** Children's safety and well-being always come first. Change names in your log to protect children's identity. Use good judgment about whether a given interaction will be appropriate for your setting. (Check with your supervisor if you are unsure.)
2. **Deadlines.** Each weekly log has a firm due date: after midnight on the date listed, the log will no longer be available to submit. There are no exceptions. However, you only need to submit 10 total logs, out of 15 weeks. Therefore, you should be fine if you have a scheduling problem with your site, do not volunteer over spring break, are sick, etc. Save your passes and use them wisely!
3. **Style/Citation.** It is fine to use a more informal tone for these logs, including first person voice. Background information from your readings should be cited in APA style. Remember: if you quote directly, you **must use quotation marks** to avoid plagiarism!
4. **Technicalities.** I suggest writing (and saving!) your prompt in a word processor (like Microsoft Word), and then pasting into Moodle. This will help you avoid technical glitches.

Grading Rubric

Your goal in the logs is to demonstrate to me that you have mastered course concepts. Logs should provide strong evidence of learning by (1) incorporating multiple specific, cited connections to relevant course material, and (2) correctly explaining and applying these to interpret & contextualize your service experience. Note another requirement which follows from these: (3) Your observations and/or interactions with the children should be described in enough detail for me to judge whether you have correctly applied course content to your setting.

The following rubric shows how logs earn points based on these 3 criteria:

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| 10 | <i>Outstanding</i> (rare): Exceeds expectations, demonstrating unusual insight and creativity (may also be unusually detailed, though extra detail alone insufficient to warrant a 10). |
| 9 | <i>Excellent</i> : Meets expectations, and provides especially rich detail from observations/interactions, along with well-chosen, skillfully applied course connections. |
| 8 | <i>Very good</i> : Meets basic standards of detail from both service experience and course connections, but runs short on specifics. (For example, establishes a thematic link by providing course material as "background" to introduce the observation, but doesn't match specific behaviors observed back to specific details from the reading.) |
| 7 | <i>Fair</i> : Good observational detail, but lacks specific, cited course content (or vice versa!); might only include vague, generic statements about the course topic. Alternatively, includes both a few observational details and course connections, but is too short to fully demonstrate understanding of the topic. |
| 6 | <i>Poor</i> : Generally addresses a course topic, but lacks both observational detail and cited course connections. |
| 0-5 | <i>Failing</i> : Note that logs with plagiarism -- including passages copied word-for-word from the readings without full attribution (<i>both parenthetical cite and quotation marks!</i>) -- will earn a grade of 0. |

NOTE: One instance of misunderstanding or misapplication of course content can lower the grade 1 point. (Fully misrepresenting the topic would lower it further.) Logs marred by multiple writing errors (e.g., spelling, grammar, or organization) that distract the reader will also lose a point.