

# HOME Inventory (0-3)

## Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment

### Quick Facts about the Tool

**Author(s):** Developed by Bettye M. Caldwell and Robert H. Bradley in 1978.

**Authors' Intent:** The Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) Inventory (Caldwell, & Bradley, 1978, 1984, 2003) is designed to measure the quality and quantity of stimulation and support available to a child in the home environment. The focus is on the child in the environment rather than socio-economic status which is often used as an oversimplified indicator of infant and toddler home environments.

**About the Tool:** HOME for children 0-3 is designed to observe parental responsiveness, acceptance of the child, organization of the environment, learning materials, parental involvement, and variety within the home environment through 45 items.

### Purpose

This tool can provide home visitors insight about where to focus supports to parents to boost parental confidence and competence. It does NOT judge parents or classify homes as 'good' or 'bad'. "The intent is to understand the child's opportunities and experiences; in essence, to understand what life is like for the particular child in the child's most intimate surroundings." ([T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics](#))

### Protocol

- For WI DCF Home Visiting programs this is completed in the home when a child is 6 months and 12 months old and the child is present and awake
- If a child has an IFSP or there is a suspected disability, refer to chapters 8-11 in User's Manual
- The inventory takes 45 – 90 minutes and is focused on routine parent and child interactions
- The best result comes from families acting as naturally as possible – no structured activity or intervention, just conversation and observation
- The author's anticipate that not all items will be observed within 45-90 minutes
- As a general guideline, about 1/3 of the items will need to be scored based on open-ended interview questions
- Scoring is yes (+) or no (-)
- Enter data into SPHERE.

### Pitfalls

- This is not a tool to measure parental effectiveness
- Don't score with a (+) or (-) in front of the parent
- Don't interview/ask all or most of the items
- Don't analyze the results in a vacuum...consider other completed assessment data
- Don't administer it when the child is ill or tired
- Don't administer it if the child and parent have been apart
- Don't forget to adapt if a child has special needs

### Value to Families

- Using the HOME can support meaningful conversations with families about their child's experiences in their home and strengthen parent empathy
- Using the HOME can help home visitors better plan for and incorporate family strengthening activities that are specific to the needs of the family. For example, if the availability of learning materials subscale is low, making books and toys and discussing and modeling how to use them with infants and toddlers would benefit the child's environment and the parent's feelings of confidence to create a stimulating environment
- The HOME is a predictor of success for young children. If intentional partnerships between families and home visitors can result in higher HOME scores, that is predictive of school success

### Framing it for Families

- **No Surprises- be transparent:**  
*"Today I'd like to make time to better understand what a typical day is like for you and your child. One of the tools that helps me to accomplish this is the HOME. What I'd like to do is just hang out and learn about your family by paying attention and asking some questions. I may be taking some notes just to help me remember things that are specific to your family."*
- **Be Open/Explain Why:**  
*"We use the HOME with all families at 6 months and 12 months because routines with children and parents can change a lot during that time. The HOME helps me to think about ways I can be most supportive and helpful to you and your child during home visits."*
- **Emphasize Parent Control:**  
*"When I need to ask a question as I'm hanging out and enjoying you two hanging out together, I'll try to explain why I'm asking a question. If you have any questions, let me know."*

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### Usefulness to Practitioners

- Provides a snapshot of a parent/primary caregiver's and infant's time together.
- Consider how the information might inform home visits to improve the home environment
- Be even more intentional about building on family strengths to bolster areas where greater parental knowledge or capacity would improve the child's environment
- Requires the home visitor to keep the developmental and environmental needs of the baby front and center in the home visit as the baby's home environment is considered through the baby's point of view
- Systematically building insight into the baby's experiences can strengthen home visitor insights about ways to build empathy and bonding between the parent and infant
  - *For example, if the mother spontaneously hugs, kisses, or snuggles the child at least once during the visit, this insight about how the Mom creates a warm emotional environment may provide a future foundation for conversations about child development.*

### Follow-up Resources

**United Nations University website-**  
*Learn more about the HOME and cultural norms.*  
<http://archive.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu13se/uu13se06.htm>

**The Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment Revisited-**  
*Learn more about how the HOME works in at risk populations.*  
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Volume 9, No. 1, 2004, pp. 25-35. Vasiliki Totsika & Kathy Sylva

### Quick Facts about the Sub Scales:

#### Responsivity

- Degree to which the caregiver and the environment is responsive in an emotional, physical or communicative sense to the infant
- Paying attention, talking, responding to the baby's cues
- INTENT is to identify an environment that the child understands to be trustworthy

#### Acceptance

- Avoidance of restrictions and punishment.
- INTENT is to identify permission for the child to learn through trial and error

#### Organization

- The caregiver provides structure to the infant's life
- INTENT is to identify positive, predictable structure in a child's environment

#### Learning Materials

- Items that allow the infant to develop competence and for enjoyment and exploration.
- Using household items as "toys" counts
- INTENT is to identify opportunities for the child to learn through play

#### Involvement

- Parents clearly demonstrate or tell you spontaneously how they do things with their child
- INTENT is to identify a "learning facilitator" in the child's environment

#### Variety

- Something may be missing, like siblings, or a parent
- INTENT is to balance and provide complete experiences for a child

*Website to find Comprehensive Manual*  
<http://fhdri.clas.asu.edu/home/>

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### Tips for Supervisors

#### Preparation

##### Recruiting Home Visiting Staff:

- The boundary between observing to find opportunities for family support versus evaluating to find fault can be a fuzzy one for new home visitors. Ask questions during the interviewing process that get at skills and experiences in building partnerships. Notice communication styles that fall into the “expert trap” rather than the informed and supportive collaborator.

##### Orienting Home Visiting Staff:

- Administering the HOME may feel like a place of evaluation and judgment for some home visitors and this feeling is uncomfortable. While that is not the intention of the tool, having a checklist of yes or no activities may trigger this discomfort. If we remember that this data is a quality benchmark for the project which measures the effectiveness of home visiting to support families in improving the home environment, home visitors may be more open to understanding that this is a tool to help prioritize ways to improve child experiences in the home life.
- Each home visitor will need to find her/his own style of completing the inventory. Both formal and informal approaches can work so long as they are done with acceptance, non-judgment, and comfort.
- Recognize that administering the HOME Inventory may feel different than using other tools as it requires both observation and interviewing. So, build time into orientation to provide ample opportunity for training, reading the HOME Inventory Administration Manual, role-playing/practicing, and observing someone on the team who is comfortable and skillful with the inventory.

#### Reflection

- Discuss feelings and reactions to administering the HOME Inventory.
- Provide prompts to explore with the home visitor what information from the inventory was unclear and what information was useful.
- Ask the home visitor to consider how they will be using the information they gathered to partner with the families to make the home environment and parent/child interactions even stronger.
- Explore how this tool has helped them understand the child's point of view.

#### Administration

- Monitor completion of the HOME using the Home Visiting Data Collection Table.
- Monitor documentation of screening results in Sphere at least quarterly for newly enrolled families.
- Analyze data to see if there are any trends in completion rate, documentation of follow-up and family outcomes.

### Reflective Exercises for Home Visitors

#### 15-30 Minute Journal Prompts

##### Understanding Someone Else's Home Can Be Hard-

- What about the homes I visit is similar and different than my own childhood home?
- How do I feel about the similarities and differences from my own home?
- How do families see a baby friendly environment?
- How can I partner with families to support creation of a baby-friendly environment that also works for the whole family?

##### For Home Visitors Who Are Also Parents-

- Are there some items on the Home Inventory that get you thinking about raising your own children?
- Are you having a positive or negative response to the item?
- What does the item on the inventory have to do with raising happy healthy kids?
- Are there other things that you would consider from your own life and the lives of the families you work with that are also indicators of a happy healthy life?

##### The HOME is One Tool among Many to Understand How to Support Families-

- What other information might you consider to contextualize or balance the information gathered from the HOME Inventory?
- How can home visitors meet each family who they complete the HOME Inventory with where they're at and provide them support that is meaningful?
- What did the family tell me explicitly that might change how I will provide coaching?
- What did I see that I can reinforce that was positive?