

Food Ubiquity Study  
Tulane University Prevention Research Center

**Procedures for Observers**

Observers are to observe 10 stores in each of six “clusters” assigned to them. Each cluster is both numbered and named for an intersection on a commercial corridor. Intersections and cluster numbers will be assigned by researchers at Tulane and provided to observer teams.

***Store sampling procedures and instructions for log sheet:***

1. Go to designated intersection.
2. Enter in the log sheet: observation date, observer numbers, cluster number, time observations are to begin, and name of starting intersection.
3. Travel north, staying on east side of street; if this is not possible or does not keep you on a commercial corridor, travel east, staying on south side of street; if this is not possible or does not keep you on a commercial corridor, travel south, staying on east side of street, if this is not possible or does not keep you on a commercial corridor, travel west, staying on south side of street etc.
4. If you begin traveling in one direction and find that you cannot complete 10 observations in that direction, (10 or more addresses in a row that are not observable retail establishments), return to the intersection. Begin traveling in the next direction as described in the procedure outlined in item 3 above. Only observe the number of stores that will complete 10 for the intersection total.
5. Go into consecutive buildings that are commercial retail establishments and that do not meet exclusion criteria along the street; conduct observations until you have completed 10.
  - If there is more than one retail establishment in a building, observe the one establishment closest to the door through which you entered.
  - If an establishment has another establishment that sells food "nested" within it (e.g. snack bar inside bookstore), record this on the form but do not conduct observations of nested establishment.
  - If there are 10 consecutive addresses on your designated route that do not meet inclusion criteria, stop observations on this street and return to intersection and follow directions in item 4 above.
6. For each establishment (observed or not), enter on the log sheet the establishment name, whether it was observed or not, and if not observed, the reason (e.g. “closed”, “not a retail establishment”).
7. When finished, enter time ended in log sheet and proceed to next designated intersection.

**Exclusion criteria for establishments:**

- Not a retail commercial establishment, e.g. library, post office, doctor’s or lawyer’s office, insurance office
- Store that sells food or beverages as primary business, such as restaurant, bar, grocery store, convenience store, liquor/wine store, snack bar, or coffee shop
- Enclosed shopping mall (5 or more retail establishments sharing one interior space)
- Door locked or no public access
- Establishment closed for day
- Street vendor

Examples of establishments that are to be included:

- Gas stations (including combined convenience and gas)
- Video rental stores
- Dry cleaners
- Hotel
- Barbershop/beauty salon
- Bank

### ***Store observation procedures:***

- Observations must take place between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM.
- Two observers should conduct observations together at all times.
- Observe only first floor of building and only areas clearly accessible to the public.
- If asked by store staff or if staff make you uncomfortable, explain to store staff or manager your position (working on a study for Tulane University) and the purpose of the study, which is to identify the food choices available to people in different stores. A letter on Tulane letterhead explaining this will be available if staff ask for documentation.
- Do not record observations in store. Record observations immediately after leaving.
- Observers should discuss and agree on what was observed before recording on form. Only one form should be completed by the pair for each establishment.
- Record the items on the form:
  - Date of observation
  - Building address
  - Primary function (retail sales, retail services, other)
  - Primary business
  - Presence of “nested” establishment that sells food
  - Availability and location of carbonated soft drinks, other sweetened beverages, coffee, salty snacks, candy, baked sweets, and frozen sweets including those that are for sale those that are offered for free
  - For beverages, whether they are available cold
  - Whether items are within arm’s reach of cash register queue
  - Whether items can be obtained for free
- Write any comments about the observations on the space at the bottom of the form, such as:
  - Stores for which it is unclear if they meet inclusion criteria
  - Food that was available that you are unsure if meets definitions
  - Difficulties in conducting observations leading to uncertainty

### ***Definitions and examples:***

- Carbonated sweetened soft drinks - Coke, diet coke, carbonated "energy" drinks, carbonated sweetened water. **DO NOT INCLUDE CARBONATED PLAIN WATER**
- Other sweetened drinks – Fruit drinks, iced tea, sports drinks, sweetened “vitamin water”, frappuccino
- Salty snacks – Chips, cheetos, salted nuts, pretzels, crackers
- Candy – Hard candy, gum (including sugarless), mints, chocolate
- Baked sweets – Twinkees, other snack cakes, fruit pies, doughnuts, cookies, animal crackers
- Frozen sweets – Ice cream sandwiches, ice cream cones, ice cream by the scoop, Dove bars, sorbet, popsicles, Italian ice, water ice, milkshakes, Icees, slurpees, snow cones, snow balls
- Vending machine – Any machine that provides any food item and accepts money or credit cards in exchange
- Cold – In refrigerated case or on ice; do not include refrigerated vending machines