

# Observations

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## *What do observations tell us about the stream?*

Looking at the stream and the area around it helps us to build up a picture of the stream environment and can identify some of the factors influencing its health.

*Spend 5 minutes observing the Stream.*

What do you notice about each of these:

### *Stream banks*

- Are there any plants growing by the stream? Are they trees, shrubs or grasses or a mix of all?
- Is the stream shaded?
- Are the stream banks stable or unstable?
- Is there any evidence of old or recent erosion?
- Is the erosion the same on both sides? If it is different, why do you think this is? ([clue - look at the tree roots](#))

### *Smell*

- Does the water smell good and fresh?
- Can you smell any bad, sewage, rotten, chemical, petrol, detergent smells?

### *Surface of the Water*

- What is the surface of the water like? clean and natural looking?
- Or can you see an oily sheen, globs, slime, scum, foam, or algal bloom
- Some bushy streams have bubbly foam after rain, because of the tannins and humic acid that washes out of leaves, and into the stream

### *Water colour*

- Does the water look clear?
- Is there any discolouration? What colour?
- Does it look muddy? Has it just been raining?

### *Algae (green or brown “slime” or filaments)*

- Look at the rocks in the stream. Do they look “clean”, or do they have brownish green deposits?
- Algae can be thin slime, thick mats or long filaments
- Algae is more likely to be present in summer low flows, when the streams are not flushing it out. After a few rainfalls, it usually washes away

### *Obstructions or litter*

- Woody debris and leaves in the stream are important habitat and a food source for many freshwater creatures.
- Is there so much woody debris in the stream that it is blocking the flow of the water?
- Is there any litter in the stream?



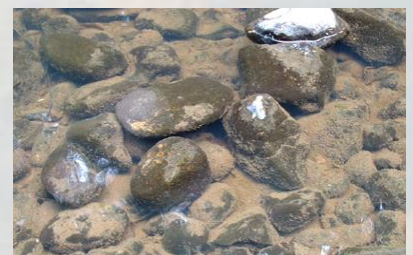
Stream Banks



Water surface



Water colour



Algae



Obstructions