



Answers to Your Testing Questions

Q | How often can a test be administered?

A It depends on why you are retesting. If you believe that the results of your testing are invalid for some reason (e.g., illness, test anxiety), then you can retest at any time. Do not retest just because the subject's initial performance was not what you expected. You should also consider test content when deciding whether or not to retest because the subject may remember the tasks and how he/she needs to respond. Be cautious if you decide to retest.

Check the test manual to determine if a test gives a recommendation about a test-retest waiting period. Use your clinical judgment to decide when to retest and how to interpret the results.

Q | Do I have to give all of the subtests of a test?

A Yes. You want to get as complete a picture as possible of a subject's performance. If you only give one or two subtests, you only measure a portion of what you are trying to assess. For test results to be considered reliable and valid, you need to give all subtests. If you do decide to give only one or two subtests, you can describe the subject's performance on them but you cannot report any normative data.

Q | What is the difference between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests?

A Norm-referenced tests compare one subject to another. They interpret a subject's performance by his relationship to the performances of other subjects in a specific reference group. Norm-referenced tests give you a statistical analysis of the scores (e.g., percentile rank, stanine, standard score).

Criterion-referenced tests measure how well a subject has learned specific behaviors. They interpret a subject's performance by comparing the subject's mastery of the behaviors to the specified behaviors, not by comparing the subject's performance to the performance of another subject.

Q | How do I know whether a particular answer on a test is correct?

A As a test giver, one of your responsibilities is to carefully follow the prescribed administration instructions of a test in order to replicate as closely as possible the standardization conditions that produced the normative data. The more precisely you adhere to the administration procedures, the more you will be able to rely upon the normative information in the manual.

If you choose to vary the administration procedures, report the information descriptively instead of comparing a child's test results to the norms provided.

Q | What standards should I expect a test to meet before I adopt it?

A There are no hard and fast standards for educational tests. As the test giver, you will need to become your own expert on the tests you administer by thoroughly understanding their strengths and limitations.

Well-constructed tests should report means, medians, and standard deviations for each age group in the norming population. Subjects should be randomly selected, demographically representative, and in sufficient numbers in order to make generalizations to the general population. Test items should be selected by means of extensive item analysis studies. The normative information should allow you to report test results by age equivalency, percentile rank, and standard score. Standard errors of measurement, reliability, and validity information should all be clearly and comprehensively reported. Be skeptical of published test documentation that is vague, confusing, or incomplete.



Q What does “age progression” mean?

A A test item is age progressive if a greater percentage of each successive age group passes the item. Age progression of a test indicates that the test is well-constructed and suggests that it assesses skills that are developmental in nature.

Q Why should you be cautious when reporting age-equivalency scores?

A Subjects of different ages may obtain identical raw scores, and hence, identical age equivalents. An age-equivalent score by itself gives no indication of how high or low the score may be in relation to the subject’s group of age peers because it does not reveal a range of performance within the subject’s age interval for a particular task. An age-equivalent score may have dramatically different meanings, depending on the age of the subject. The age-equivalent score alone does not reveal the level of performance.

Q What does “standard error of measurement” mean?

A The standard error of measurement, or SEM, is a measure of the reliability of a test that describes the range of variability of a subject’s true score (i.e., the score a subject would most frequently receive if tested over and over again).

Q How do I report a score of 0?

A If a subject receives a raw score of 0, it is not possible to determine if the subject does not understand the task, if his abilities on the skill are inferior to the particular task items assessing the skill, or if he is not yet demonstrating the skill. Whenever a subject’s task raw score is 0, his performance on that task should be reported descriptively and without reliance upon normative data.

Q What do “test sensitivity” and “test specificity” mean?

A Test sensitivity refers to the percentage of children with impairments who are correctly identified on a test. Test specificity refers to the percentage of children with normal development who are correctly identified on a test.

Q Why are tests revised?

A A test may be revised for a number of reasons. The content may become outdated or new research may suggest a change in the test design. A test may also be revised to increase the number of subjects tested, to increase the number of subjects in a certain demographic area so as to reflect national census data, and/or to address changes in children’s life experiences that affect how they respond to test items. A general rule of thumb is that any test over ten years old should be used with caution. A test of this age may have outdated statistical information and/or test items.

Q When determining a subject’s chronological age, is it acceptable to round up?

A For most tests, you do not round up the child’s age. Check the test manual for specifics.

Q May I photocopy a test form? May I copy just the front page of the test form?

A No. Copyright laws prevent you from making copies of any portion of a test form for any reason.

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