



Standardised and Non-Standardised Assessments

Standardised Assessments

What are standardised assessments?

Standardised assessments are formal assessments that have been designed to measure a child's abilities compared to other children his or her age. These tests have been normed on thousands of children, which means that they have been administered to thousands of children of varying abilities to determine the average level of ability. Your child's score can then be matched to the average score for other children his or her age.

Like their name suggests, standardised assessments need to be administered in a standard way, this means that the therapist must administer the test exactly as it is written in the test manual. This ensures that they provide the same instructions to each child that they assess, so that the result is a true reflection of that child's score relative to their age peers.

How are standardised assessments scored?

For each standardised test your child completes, they will receive at least one standard score. Some tests might have more than one score if they are looking at different areas. For example, a test might give a score for how well your child understands language, and another score for how well they use language to communicate.

In addition to the standard score, your child's results might be reported in terms of their *percentile rank*. This is just another way of explaining where their score sits in comparison to other children their age. For example, if your child receives a standard score of 85 which is at the 16th percentile, this means that your child's score was better than or equal to the score of 16% of other children his or her age. Another way of looking at it is that if 100 children completed this test and you lined them up from the person with the lowest score to the person with the highest score, your child would be standing in position 16.

What are standardised assessments used for?

Standardised assessments give a clear score that can be used to give a picture of where your child sits in comparison to other children of the same age. This can be helpful information to formulate a therapy plan, or to pass onto the school or other therapists working with your child. Your child's formal results on standardised assessments are often necessary when applying for funding or services. These scores can also be used as a baseline for therapy, and tests can be readministered after therapy to show progress.

Standardised assessment can be difficult to administer to children with ASD as the therapist is unable to adapt the conditions of the assessment to suit the child's needs. In many cases, children with ASD are not able to fully complete a standardised assessment.

An example of a standardised assessment is a cognitive assessment, or IQ test, which gives a standard score and percentile rank in a number of areas (such as verbal comprehension, visual spatial ability, and working memory)



Non-Standardised Assessments

A non-standardised assessment is an informal assessment that therapists might conduct to see where a child's strengths and abilities are as well as highlight difficulties to target during therapy. Non-standardised assessments can still measure a child's skills or progress, but they do not compare them to a group of age peers.

Although non-standardised, these assessments can still be structured and provide specific information about your child's abilities. The therapist will often complete specific tasks with the child; however, these tasks can be modified according to the child's level of skill, comprehension and confidence. This flexibility allows the therapist to gather information that may be missed in a standardised assessment as the child is more likely to be able to participate in all activities.

Each therapist will have their own set of non-standardised assessment which will provide them with information that is useful for the development and evaluation of goals. Watching a therapist deliver their own form of non-standardised assessment can also give a parent good insight into the therapist's style, which can help a parent determine whether the therapist might be a good fit for their child.

An example of a non-standardised assessment could be a therapist showing a child a book of pictures, and counting how many pictures they can name before therapy. They could then show the child the same book three months later, and see if there was an improvement in the number of pictures the child could name.