Assessment & Testing

Assessment questions mix vocabulary (reliability, validity, scores) with choosing the right instrument. Learn the score conversions on the normal curve; they are fast points on exam day.

> **Where it shows up on the NCE:** Intake, Assessment & Diagnosis; Treatment Planning; Professional Practice & Ethics (test use).

Reliability: is it consistent?

Type	How it is measured
Test–retest	Same test given twice; correlate the scores
Alternate (parallel) forms	Two equivalent versions of a test
Split-half	Correlate two halves; corrected with Spearman-Brown
Internal consistency	KR-20 (dichotomous items) or Cronbach's alpha
Inter-rater	Agreement between scorers

Validity: does it measure what it claims?

Type	Meaning
Content	Items represent the full domain
Criterion: concurrent	Agrees with a current criterion
Criterion: predictive	Predicts a future criterion
Construct	Measures the theoretical trait; convergent (agrees with related measures) and discriminant (differs from unrelated ones)
Face	Looks valid to test takers; not a true form of validity

Standard scores

Score	Mean	Standard deviation
z-score	0	1
T-score	50	10
Deviation IQ (Wechsler)	100	15
Stanine	5	about 2 (scale of 1–9)

Key concepts

Normal curve	About 68% of scores fall within ±1 SD, 95% within ±2 SD and 99.7% within ±3 SD.
Reliability and validity	A test can be reliable without being valid, but cannot be valid without being reliable.
Standard error of measurement (SEM)	Range around an observed score in which the true score likely falls. Higher reliability = smaller SEM.
Norm- vs. criterion-referenced	Norm-referenced compares to other people; criterion-referenced compares to a set standard. Ipsative compares a person with themselves.
Skew	Positive skew: tail to the right (most scores low). Negative skew: tail to the left (most scores high).
Intelligence theorists	Binet, Wechsler, Spearman (g factor), Thurstone (primary mental abilities), Cattell (fluid and crystallized), Gardner (multiple intelligences), Sternberg (triarchic).

Instruments to recognize

Category	Examples
Intelligence	WAIS-5 (adults, 2024), WISC-V (children), Stanford-Binet 5
Achievement	WRAT, WIAT
Personality (objective)	MMPI-3, NEO (Big Five), 16PF, MBTI
Projective	Rorschach, TAT, sentence completion, House-Tree-Person
Screening	PHQ-9, GAD-7, BDI-II, BAI, AUDIT, CAGE, C-SSRS (suicide risk)
Mental status exam	Appearance, behavior, speech, mood and affect, thought process and content, perception, cognition, insight and judgment

Exam traps

- Face validity is not a real type of validity.
- A T-score of 70 is two standard deviations above the mean.
- Choose the assessment that matches the referral question and the client's age.
- Interpret results with the client in plain language (ACA Section E).

Quick self-check

1. What are the mean and SD of a T-score?
2. Which reliability method is corrected with Spearman-Brown?
3. About what percent of scores fall within ±1 SD?
4. Can a test be valid but unreliable?
5. Name a suicide-risk screening tool.

Answers: 1. Mean 50, SD 10. · 2. Split-half. · 3. About 68%. · 4. No. · 5. Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS).

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