

Autism Spectrum Screening Questionnaire (ASSQ)

The ASSQ is a screening tool designed to identify the characteristics of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in children and adolescents. It is usually completed by parents or teachers who know the child well. It helps detect early signs suggestive of ASD in order to guide referral for a comprehensive assessment.

Number of questions	27 questions
Estimated duration	6 minutes
Language	English
Original name	Autism Spectrum Screening Questionnaire
Target audience	Children, adolescents
Authors	Ehlers, S., Gillberg, C., & Wing, L (1999)
Category	Autism spectrum, Childhood

Preview of the 27 questions

The child differs from other children of the same age in the following way:

Is "old-fashioned" or precocious

No | A little | Yes

The child differs from other children of the same age in the following way:

Is viewed by the other children as an "eccentric professor"

No | A little | Yes

The child differs from other children of the same age in the following way:

Lives somewhat in their own world, with narrow and unusual intellectual interests

No | A little | Yes

The child differs from other children of the same age in the following way:

Builds up knowledge on certain topics (good memory) but does not really understand what it means

No | A little | Yes

The child differs from other children of the same age in the following way:

Understands ambiguous and figurative language literally

For example, the child takes things at face value and has trouble understanding figures of speech or metaphors

No | A little | Yes

Administer your questionnaires online

Send your patient a link: they answer from their phone or computer, and you receive the scored results by email.

View the questionnaire on mentaal.org ›

Scoring & interpretation

Each item is rated on a scale of 0 (does not apply), 1 (applies to some extent), or 2 (definitely applies). The total score (0-54) is obtained by adding up the responses.

Interpretation of the total score:

- **0-10**: Not significant
- **11-18**: Moderately consistent with ASD; developmental differences are present, which may reflect ASD or other conditions (ADHD, behavioral disorders)
- **19-54**: Strongly consistent with ASD; significant differences in social and behavioral functioning

Subscales (Junttila et al., 2023):

Four subscales help identify the most prominent areas:

- **Formal style** (items 1, 2, 6): formal/old-fashioned style of thinking, appearance, or communication
- **Contextual understanding and routines** (items 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 23, 24): difficulty understanding context and preference for routines
- **Socio-emotional reciprocity** (items 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 25): engagement in social interactions and emotional exchanges
- **Vocalization, movement, and appearance** (items 3, 8, 9, 14, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27): atypical vocalizations, motor behaviors, and physical characteristics

The subscale cutoffs are derived from the total score cutoffs divided by 27 items:

- **Mean score ≥ 0.41** (11/27): Moderate
- **Mean score ≥ 0.70** (19/27): High

A high score suggests an increased likelihood of ASD, but the score alone is not sufficient for a formal diagnosis.

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