

Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES-II)

The Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES) is a self-report tool used to identify symptoms of dissociation. It is often used in clinical settings to screen for dissociative disorders such as dissociative identity disorder. The test covers various aspects of dissociation, including derealization, dissociative amnesia and depersonalization experiences.

Number of questions	28 questions
Estimated duration	7 minutes
Language	English
Original name	Dissociative Experience Scale
Target audience	Adults
Authors	Eve Bernstein Carlson, Frank W. Putnam (1993)
Category	PTSD, Dissociative disorders

Preview of the 28 questions

Some people experience driving, or being on a bus or subway, and suddenly realizing that they can't recall what happened during all or part of the journey.

0% of the time | 10% of the time | 20% of the time | 30% of the time | 40% of the time | 50% of the time | 60% of the time | 70% of the time | 80% of the time | 90% of the time | 100% of the time

Some people notice that, at times, they are listening to someone speak and suddenly become aware that they missed all or part of what was said.

0% of the time | 10% of the time | 20% of the time | 30% of the time | 40% of the time | 50% of the time | 60% of the time | 70% of the time | 80% of the time | 90% of the time | 100% of the time

Some people experience finding themselves somewhere with no idea of how they got there.

0% of the time | 10% of the time | 20% of the time | 30% of the time | 40% of the time | 50% of the time | 60% of the time | 70% of the time | 80% of the time | 90% of the time | 100% of the time

Some people find that when they watch TV or a movie, they get so absorbed in the story that they are not aware of other things going on around them.

0% of the time | 10% of the time | 20% of the time | 30% of the time | 40% of the time | 50% of the time | 60% of the time | 70% of the time | 80% of the time | 90% of the time | 100% of the time

Some people find that they have no recollection of certain important events in their lives.

0% of the time | 10% of the time | 20% of the time | 30% of the time | 40% of the time | 50% of the time | 60% of the time | 70% of the time | 80% of the time | 90% of the time | 100% of the time

Scoring & interpretation

The total score is the mean of the 28 items (each rated from 0 to 100%), and therefore ranges from 0 to 100. A score below 10 indicates low dissociation, between 10 and 19 mild dissociation, and between 20 and 29 moderate dissociation. From 30 upward, dissociation is considered high and an in-depth diagnostic assessment is indicated (cutoff recommended by Carlson & Putnam, 1993; sensitivity 76%, specificity 76—85%).

For reference, the mean is 5.4 in the general population, 7.0 in anxiety disorders, 19.2 in borderline personality disorder, 31 in posttraumatic stress disorder and 48 in dissociative identity disorder.

The DES-T (dissociative taxon) is a subscore made up of 8 items (3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 22, 27) that specifically targets pathological dissociation. A DES-T score greater than or equal to 20 suggests membership in the pathological dissociative taxon (Waller, Putnam & Carlson, 1996).

Three subscales are also reported: dissociative amnesia (items 3, 4, 5, 8, 25, 26), depersonalization/derealization (items 7, 11, 12, 13, 27, 28) and absorption (items 2, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20). These subscales have no validated clinical cutoff and are interpreted as a relative profile.