

THE AUSTRALIAN SCALE FOR ASPERGER'S SYNDROME¹

The following questionnaire is designed to identify behaviours and abilities indicative of Asperger's Syndrome in children during their primary school years. This is the age at which the unusual pattern of behaviour and abilities is most conspicuous. Each question or statement has a rating scale with 0 as the ordinary level expected of a child of that age.

A. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ABILITIES

1. Does the child lack an understanding of how to play with other children? For example, is your child unaware of the unwritten rules of social play?

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

2. When free to play with other children, such as school lunchtime, does the child avoid social contact with them? For example, finds a secluded place or goes to the library.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

3. Does the child appear unaware of social conventions or codes of conduct and make inappropriate actions and comments? For example, making a personal comment to someone but the child seems unaware of how the comment could offend.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

4. Does the child lack empathy, ie. the intuitive understanding of another person's feelings? For example, not realising an apology would help the other person feel better.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

5. Does the child seem to expect other people to know their thoughts, experiences and opinions? For example, not realising you could not know about something because you were not with the child at the time.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

6. Does the child need an excessive amount of reassurance, especially if things are changed or go wrong?

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

7. Does the child lack subtlety in their expression of emotion? For example, the child shows distress or affection out of proportion to the situation.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

8. Does the child lack precision in their expression of emotion? For example, not understanding the levels of emotional expression appropriate for different people.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

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9. Is the child not interested in participating in competitive sports, games and activities. 0 means the child enjoys competitive sports.
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

10. Is the child indifferent to peer pressure? 0 means the child follows crazes. For example, does not follow the latest craze in toys or clothes.
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

B. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

11. Does the child take a literal interpretation of comments? For example, is confused by phrases such as "pull your socks up," "looks can kill" or "hop on the scales."
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

12. Does the child have an unusual tone of voice? For example, the child seems to have a "foreign" accent or monotone that lacks emphasis on key words.
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

13. When talking to the child does he or she appear uninterested in your side of the conversation? For example, not asking about or commenting on your thoughts or opinions on the topic.
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

14. When in a conversation, does the child tend to use less eye contact than you would expect?
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

15. Is the child's speech over-precise or pedantic? For example, talks in a formal way or like a walking dictionary.
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

16. Does the child have problems repairing a conversation? For example, when the child is confused, he or she does not ask for clarification but simply switches to a familiar topic, or takes ages to think of a reply.
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

C. COGNITIVE SKILLS

17. Does the child read books primarily for information, not seeming to be interested in fictional works? For example, being an avid reader of encyclopaedias and science books but not keen on adventure stories.
Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

18. Does the child have an exceptional long-term memory for events and facts? For example, remembering the neighbour's car registration of several years ago, or clearly recalling scenes that happened many years ago.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

19. Does the child lack social imaginative play? For example, other children are not included in the child's imaginary games or the child is confused by the pretend games of other children.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

D. SPECIFIC INTERESTS

20. Is the child fascinated by a particular topic and avidly collects information or statistics on that interest? For example, the child becomes a walking encyclopaedia of knowledge on vehicles, maps or league tables.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

21. Does the child become unduly upset by changes in routine or expectation? For example, is distressed by going to school by a different route.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

22. Does the child develop elaborate routines or rituals that must be completed? For example, lining up toys before going to bed.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

E. MOVEMENT SKILLS

23. Does the child have poor motor coordination? For example, is not skilled at catching a ball.

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

24. Does the child have an odd gait when running?

Rarely 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Frequently

F. OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

For this section, tick whether the child has shown any of the following characteristics:

- (a) Unusual fear or distress due to:
- ordinary sound, e.g. electrical appliances _____
 - light touch on skin or scalp _____
 - wearing particular items of clothing _____
 - unexpected noises _____
 - seeing certain objects _____
 - noisy, crowded places, e.g. supermarkets _____
- (b) A tendency to flap or rock when excited or distressed _____
- (c) A lack of sensitivity to low levels of pain _____
- (d) Late in acquiring speech _____
- (e) Unusual facial grimaces or tics _____
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If the answer is yes to the majority of the questions in the scale, and the rating was between two and six (i.e. conspicuously above the normal range), it does not automatically imply the child has Asperger's Syndrome. However, it is a possibility and a referral for a diagnostic assessment is warranted.

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