

Introduction to Psychological Assessment

Introduction to Psychological Assessment

Key concepts, purposes, and basic procedures

1. What Is Psychological Assessment?

Aspect	Description
Definition	A systematic process of gathering, integrating, and interpreting data about an individual's psychological functioning.
Goal	To understand strengths, weaknesses, and underlying processes that affect behavior, emotions, and cognition.
Typical Users	Clinical psychologists, school psychologists, neuropsychologists, industrial/organizational (I/O) psychologists, forensic experts, and other mental health professionals.
Formats	- Clinical interview - Standardized tests (objective, projective, neuropsychological) - Behavioral observations - Collateral information (e.g., school/medical records, reports from family).

2. Core Purposes

1. **Diagnostic Clarification** – Identify or rule out mental health disorders.
 2. **Treatment Planning** – Highlight areas to target in therapy, rehabilitation, or education.
 3. **Progress Monitoring** – Measure change over time (pre/post-intervention).
 4. **Legal/Forensic Decisions** – Provide expert opinions for competency, custody, or risk assessments.
 5. **Research & Program Evaluation** – Collect data for scientific studies or evaluate service effectiveness.
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3. The Assessment Process – Step-by-Step

Step	What Happens	Key Considerations
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1. Referral & Referral Question	Who is requesting the assessment and why?	Clarify the specific problem(s) and intended use of results.
2. Informed Consent	Explain purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, confidentiality.	Obtain written consent; discuss limits of confidentiality (e.g., danger to self/others).
3. Record Review	Gather prior medical, educational, psychiatric, and legal records.	Look for patterns, previous diagnoses, medication history.
4. Clinical Interview	Structured or semi-structured interview with client (and sometimes informants).	Use evidence-based interview guides (e.g., SCID-5, K-SADS).
5. Test Selection	Choose instruments that match the referral question, client's age, language, and cultural background.	Consider reliability, validity, standardization sample, and test administration time.
6. Test Administration	Administer selected measures following standardized procedures.	Ensure appropriate testing environment; monitor fatigue, motivation.
7. Scoring & Data Reduction	Compute raw scores, convert to standard scores (e.g., T, Z, percentile).	Verify accuracy; use scoring software when available.
8. Interpretation	Integrate test data with interview, observations, and collateral info.	Apply psychometric principles (e.g., examine validity indicators, consistency across measures).
9. Report Writing	Produce a clear, organized document that answers the referral question.	Include: background, methods, results, interpretation, recommendations, and limitations.
10. Feedback Session	Communicate findings to client and relevant stakeholders.	Use plain language; discuss strengths, concerns, and actionable steps.

4. Types of Psychological Tests

Category	Typical Uses	Example Instruments
Intelligence Tests	Assess general cognitive ability, identify giftedness or intellectual disability.	WAIS-IV, WISC-V, Stanford-Binet

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Category

Typical Uses

Example Instruments

**Achievement &
Academic Tests**

Measure academic skills, guide educational