

What is the Purpose of a Neuropsychological Evaluation?

A neuropsychological evaluation is used to obtain several types of information.

Reasons people are referred for a neuropsychological evaluation include but are not limited to the following:

- To find possible problems with brain functioning
- To help lead to a diagnosis
- To form a plan for intervention
- To define brain-related strengths and weaknesses
- To guide treatment for personal, educational or vocational needs
- To make relevant recommendations to other health care providers
- To document possible changes in functioning over time.

- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Asperger's Syndrome/Autism-Spectrum
- Dyslexia
- Dysgraphia
- Tourette Syndrome
- Specific Learning Disability
- Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities (NLD)
- Reading Disability
- Disorders of Written Language




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NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION FACT SHEET

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recognition & understanding
of individual differences...*

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What is a Neuropsychological Evaluation?

A neuropsychological evaluation typically involves assessment (testing) with a group of standardized tests that are sensitive to the effects of brain dysfunction. Unlike CT or MRI scans, which show abnormalities in the structure of the brain, or an EEG, which shows electrical abnormalities in the brain, neuropsychological assessment is used to show the ways in which a person can or cannot perform certain functions or tasks that are dependent upon brain activity.

These functions or tasks (for example, memory and learning) form the necessary building blocks of successful living in the individual's daily life. Impairment in many of these functions may exist because of brain abnormalities that cannot be detected on CT or MRI scans. Therefore, neuropsychological assessment is a procedure with a unique purpose; it can be used to reveal or diagnose brain dysfunction when no structural brain abnormalities can be seen. Furthermore, when structural abnormalities have been found, neuropsychological

assessment provides a way to determine what functions may be impaired because of the structural defects, and to determine the degree to which they may be impaired.

What tests are used?

The standardized tests used in a neuropsychological evaluation typically assess functioning in the following areas: attention and memory, problem-solving and other complex abilities, visual-spatial functions, language functions, sensory-perceptual functions, and motor functions. Assessment of academic skill development and emotional functioning, while not exclusive to neuropsychological evaluation, is typically performed, as well.

The perspective of the neuropsychologist is frequently requested to understand subtle brain-related factors involved in academic failure or impaired emotional functioning, even when no biological causes are suspected. However, the specific areas assessed depend upon the referral questions presented. An interview with the individual and/or family members is typically included. Observations in other settings, such as school or hospital, and review of school/medical records also may be included in the evaluation process.

What is the Outcome?

The outcome of a neuropsychological evaluation is a set of conclusions made about the individual's functioning. The neuropsychological report includes specific recommendations to guide treatment or otherwise enhance the individual's functioning. Conclusions and recommendations are developed by integrating information obtained from standardized testing, interviews, records and other observations. Interpretation of test results and information obtained from other sources is performed by the neuropsychologist, who is a licensed professional within the field of psychology with a specialty in the applied science of brain-behavior relationships. A neuropsychologist has a doctoral degree in psychology and additional training in the specialty field of clinical neuropsychology.

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