

Developmental Assessment of Young Children
(DAYC)
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does the test measure?
The DAYC measures the five developmental areas included in Federal legislation (IDEA) for children birth through 5 years of age. These areas are cognition, communication, adaptive behavior, social-emotional behavior, and physical development. Each area may be measured and scored independently yielding a standard score with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.
2. What materials are included?
No toys or materials are included with the DAYC testing kit and none were used during the norming process. The test is designed for the examiner to use the materials that are available in the child's environment so that the assessment process is more natural for the child.
3. How can assessment be accomplished? *
The DAYC is designed so that the information needed to complete the assessment may be obtained through interview, observation, or direct assessment. The examiner may interview the parent or caregiver (i.e., daycare or preschool teacher), observe the child in the home or school, or structure the environment to obtain the information needed. The DAYC may be used in an arena assessment so that each discipline (Speech Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Diagnostician, Teacher) may score the appropriate area.
****(For purposes of evaluation and assessment in MO First Steps, only one discipline will be utilized to score all five subsets)***
4. Does the DAYC make provisions for adjusting for prematurity?
With the DAYC, the examiner does not make adjustment for the prematurity of the child. Premature children were included in the norming sample so the scores obtained for the child who was born premature will be valid and reflect the development of premature children.
5. Do all of the subtests have to be administered? *
No, each subtest can stand alone. However, if you wish to get an overall developmental quotient, then all five subtests must be administered.
****(For purposes of evaluation and assessment in MO First Steps, all five subtests must be administered)***
6. How long should an examiner wait before testing with the DAYC again?
Since this is a developmental scale, growth is expected so the time between assessments can be shorter. If intervention is occurring, then 3 to 4 months would be appropriate.
7. If a child does not get credit on an item during direct assessment, but does do that skill when interacting with the parent, can the child receive credit?
Yes, the goal of this assessment is to get the best estimate of the child's skill in order to either qualify for services or identify areas of further assessment for programming.

8. Some of the items seem to be worded in a very broad manner that might impede standardized assessment. What can be done to insure uniform results?
The items are worded in a general manner to allow examiners the discretion to use the interview/observation/direct assessment model. For example, in the Communication subtest, item 31 (identifies familiar characters or items seen on TV) provides the example of Big Bird of Sesame Street, but any familiar character would be an acceptable response.
9. Some of the items are unclear about exactly what is being measured. For example, on the Cognitive subtest how are item 20 (demonstrates use of everyday items) and item 18 (demonstrates understanding of functional relationships) different?
Item 20 is addressing items that are in a child's environment and their normal use, while item 18 is addressing the relationship between items (i.e., teapot and a teacup).
10. Can age equivalents be compared across tests?
No, age equivalent scores are estimates only and are applicable for a specific instrument only. They are derived by estimation and smoothing of the normative data.
11. Why are there not separate forms for fine and gross motor within the physical area and receptive and expressive language within the communication area?
The DAYC is designed to identify general areas that are below expectation. If a child is below on the Physical or Communication subtest, additional assessment is necessary to identify specific problem areas.
12. Why does it seem that some items are out of order developmentally?
The items were selected and placed based upon many developmental scales. Then the items were arranged based upon the norming sample.

Miscellaneous Comments

We consulted many developmental scales and curriculums to develop the items for the test. The DAYC was then normed on a national sample stratified to match the population as reported by the US Census, with the majority of children being nondisabled. The items were ranked in difficulty and standard scores determined based upon that sample.

Adaptive Behavior:

You raise the question about evaluating skills for which the child may have had limited exposure, for example brushing their teeth or washing their hands. At this level of normal development, it is not expected that children perform the behaviors independently, but that they are beginning to cooperate with caregivers on starting to exhibit independence and wanting to do these things by themselves. If parents were not helping children brush their teeth or wash their hands, you would want to encourage them to do so. In regard to testing, you may need to assess these skills yourself, keeping in mind that they are performed with assistance. Tooth brushing may involve just putting the brush in their mouth and moving it around. We are not looking at behavior expected of older children, which is more the quality of adults.

Communication:

The goal is to determine if an ability is sufficiently mastered so that programming is not necessary. This is true for all items in all subtests. For the examples you gave on the

Communication subtest, if a child can respond to 5 or 6 familiar objects, simple commands and so forth, then the child has a basic understanding of that ability and the item would be scored a 1.

In regard to Item 30, there is a broad range of words number of used by nondisabled peers. Based on our norms, a minimum of five words is average for this stage of development.

Response made for “locate” or “responds to”: Because we are evaluating communication here, we do not want to penalize a child if he or she does not have motor skills to point or to crawl or walk to retrieve an object. If the child consistently gazes at the items requested, they could be given credit. You can follow whatever method the child has developed to communicate with caregivers.

Cognitive:

On the DAYC, the placement of items within the various subtests was guided by the definitions of the skills to be measured. On page 4 of the Manual, we say, “Cognitive skills include abilities such as attention, memory, purposive planning, decision making, and memory.” Some of the cognitive skills involve motor but are more loaded on the cognition involved in completing the task. For example, on Items 15 and 23, the focus is on problem solving of how to accommodate additional objects when already holding one or more. The focus is not on the fine motor skill of grasping. Imitation is also a cognitive skill, so Item 17 should be interpreted in that view. It is possible to use materials more easily manipulated; for example, Item 40 can be done with 1-inch cubes or larger blocks if fine motor is a problem, as motor skill is not the objective being measured. If the examiner feels poor fine motor skills adversely affect the underlying skill, then that should be noted.

Physical:

In the directions, the examiner is told to give credit for items the child did when younger. This should address your questions about Physical Items 46 & 53 and Items 47 & 52. If the child were holding a crayon to get credit for Item 53, then credit would be given for Item 46 since Item 53 is the developmentally advanced skill. The same would be true for the stair climbing skills. In regard to other fine-motor skills, grasp is assessed through the various stages as is ability to isolate index finger motion (Item 40), and object manipulation.

You commented that you are giving credit for skills mastered past the ceiling. Please understand that if you do, any standard scores derived from that raw score do not reflect a standardized assessment. Clinical judgment is important but that should be in addition to the norm-referenced standardized score.

Observation:

The skill may be observed in the home, educational setting, or therapeutic setting. The examiner is trying to determine if the child is capable of the skill. If he or she performs the skill in one setting and not another, then generalization or another variable is the issue. The examiner would want to make note of such discrepancies for programming goals.