



Social (ESI) Scoring Definitions

Social Behaviors

Social behaviors occur when a child attempts to convey a message to a partner. Social behaviors may last as long as a single behavior (an initiation to play), or as long as an episode/exchange of social behaviors involving several turns (an initiation that is responded to by a peer, that is responded to by the target child). Social responding is considered ended after 3 seconds of no responding. For example, an episode begins when a child initiates or responds to an initiation presented by another. The episode ends after a pause of at least three seconds (count to yourself, "one thousand one..."). Thus, each social behavior or each episode separated by a 3-second pause is counted as one event.

Often children will engage in social behavior with a play partner, the adult, peer, or both in the testing situation. For example, a child may invite the adult to play with a specific toy. Children also may interact with a play partner about events or persons outside the testing situation. For example, when another person happens to come into the testing room, the child may comment about the person while also pointing at him/her.

Children also may not engage in any direct social behavior and instead maintain a high level of engagement with the materials and toys. Termed parallel play, these play behaviors are not counted as social behavior (e.g., the child reaches into the house to move a figure from one room to another, the child puts an animal figure on top of the blocks).

Positive versus Negative Social Behaviors

Social behaviors are recorded as either positive or negative. Social behaviors are *positive* when they are greetings, offers to play, requests, etc. Social behaviors are recorded as *negative* when they involve aggression, hitting, kicking, threatening, grabbing away another's toy, or other negative behavior. *Crying* for children this age is considered to be an acceptable form of social-communication. However, it is not recorded as either a positive or negative social behavior.

Nonverbal Social Behavior (with/to Adult, Peer, or Non-directed)

- A. *Nonverbal social behaviors* are gesture-based **attempts** to communicate. Examples include smiling at, giving or showing object, rejecting an object by pushing it away, reaching toward, or touching a partner or object the partner is holding, pointing toward an object or person (may or may not be used to establish joint attention), nodding or shaking head to indicate "yes" or "no", shrugging shoulders.
- B. *Nonverbal social behaviors* are recorded according to the person they are *directed to*: *the adult play partner; the peer play partner; or as non-directed* in cases in which it is not clear exactly to whom they are directed, or if they are directed to both partners.

Nonverbal social behaviors *do not* include play behaviors such as reaching for a toy that the peer or adult play partner does not have, physical movements independent from social communication, physical movements showing excitement or pleasure that are not in direct communication with the partner (e.g., waving arms when watching a ball roll away or ignoring directions).

Verbal Social Behavior (with/to Adult, Peer, or Nondirected)

- A. *Verbal social behaviors* are vocal (or sign language) attempts to communicate using non-words, single word, or multiple word utterances. False starts or stutters are counted as one verbal social behavior. For example, "I think this is...this looks like a dog" counts as one episode. An episode is ended when there is a pause of at least three seconds without vocalizations (count to yourself, "one thousand one..."). Again, crying is not recorded.
- B. Verbal social behaviors are recorded as *directed* either to the *adult* or *peer*, or as *nondirected* when it is impossible to tell to whom the social behavior is directed. Non-directed verbal social behaviors can also occur when children make animal sounds while looking at the animal (rather than one of the play partners), transportation/motor sounds like "vroom," when pushing a tractor, sequentially naming objects, such as "block, red, phone, girl" (tally for each word), etc.

Verbal behavior that should *not* be scored as social behavior include involuntary noises such as hiccups, coughing, sneezing, or crying.

ESI Key Skill Elements				
Key Skill	Target	Positive/Negative	Verbal/NonVerbal	
1	Adult	Positive	Verbal	
2	Adult	Positive	NonVerbal	
3	Peer	Positive	Verbal	
4	Peer	Positive	NonVerbal	
5	NonDirected	Positive	Verbal	
6	NonDirected	Positive	NonVerbal	
7	Any Target	Negative	Verbal/Nonverbal	