

BRIGANCE® Early Childhood Screens III

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



The Brigance Screens III are designed to give a quick snapshot of a child's skills and are not an extensive and total diagnostic tool. The BRIGANCE Inventory of Early Development (IED) III is used to provide a more comprehensive assessment. In comparing different instruments with Brigance, it is important to be sure you are comparing similar scores based on similar skills measured. If instruments are not measuring the same skills, it is difficult to address score differences.

This document was written to address certain questions that practitioners may have about administering the BRIGANCE Screens III themselves. Some of these questions are quite general and primarily deal with concerns users might have about how closely to adhere to the script while administering Screens III assessments with children in their care. Others are quite specific and technical and concerned with the standardisation process employed on the BRIGANCE Screens III. They are presented together and will hopefully be a helpful source of clarification in both these instances.

As a general rule, because the items in BRIGANCE Screens III were standardised and scored on US students and their language skills/usage (and not standardised on the Australian population specifically), it is perfectly acceptable in some cases that adherence to scripting is a bit looser. Circumstances in which a practitioner feels a child clearly demonstrates the skill being addressed, even if not to the letter of the script, may be accepted at the discretion of the professional administering the test. For example, the substitution of the word "big" for the word "large" in a situation in which the child clearly understands the concept but is unfamiliar with the word "large" may be admissible in a scenario where the primary concern is merely ensuring that the child knows the concept and not in strictly adhering to the data exactly as it has been standardised.

SCORING – GENERAL POINTS

DATA SHEETS AND SCORING

Technical Manual

The Technical Manual contains detailed answers to most of the questions that can be asked.

Score Given When Child has Not Achieved Any of the Skills of the Assessment

In the Technical Manual section “Composite Score and Age Equivalents for Domain Scores”, starting on page 137, you can see by age and domain that when there is a raw score of 0 there is a composite score that is a baseline – a child cannot dip below this point.

Data Sheets

Each set of data sheets contains the specific instructions to that age and assessments. Please read each data sheet – the instructions on the data sheet coincide with the instructions for scoring in the screen book for each age group.

In the walking heel to toe, (3-, 4-, 5-year-old Screens), is it acceptable to make a line with tape and get them to walk on that?

No, we do not recommend providing a tape line. It is important to remember that the children who were administered these items in the original standardisation study performed (and were scored on) these skills without such a line.

Heel to toe does not mean the heel must touch the toes but rather it is a balanced walk with the foot in front of the other.

REPHRASING AND REPETITION

Some of the items recommend rephrasing or repeating the instructions if the child does not appear to understand, while others do not give this directive. Is it to be assumed that there should be no repetition or is the general rule to ask twice if needed?

Yes, it is intentional that the rephrasing or repeating directions is recommended for assessment where it was felt to be warranted and these are clearly described in the Screen book. However, because the items were standardised and scored on US students and their language skills/usage (and not standardised or scored on an Australian population), it is acceptable that your adherence to the scripting is a little looser in certain instances if you feel that specific wording is a barrier to understanding but not the demonstration of a skill – as mentioned at the start of this document.

STANDARDISATION

Page 88 of the Technical Manual states:

“... such an evaluation was conducted by analysing the scores of all children in the US national standardisation study. Children’s performance on the IED III Standardisation, a broader assessment measure than the Screens III, was categorised according to the presence or absence of developmental delays ...”

Does this mean that all 1924 children had the IED done and then the items from this that comprise the screen were compared to their IED results? Or were the IED and screens done at separate times?

No, there was just one standardisation study, which included all items that make up the IED III and the Screens III. Based on the results from the study, items were selected and weighted for each age specific screen.

ACCURACY WITH REPEATED SCREENING

Is there a minimum or maximum time frame that the Screen can be repeated to ensure a child does not “remember” the items?

Assessment should produce roughly the same scores, even if children are tested several days to several weeks apart. For many achievement and developmental tests, the appropriate interval between testing sessions is short to minimise natural development by the examinee; however, a sufficient amount of time still must elapse in order to control for practice or memory effects.

The test-retest data collected for the BRIGANCE Screens III demonstrated that practice effects were minimal as the range of differences across age groups was constrained to fewer than three points. The domain scores and total score across ages appeared stable and not influenced by practice effects. The time interval between assessment sessions ranged from a couple of days for some infants to three weeks for older children (e.g. 6-year-olds), with an average interval of 12 days.

The user may want to consider the age of the group being retested when determining the appropriate interval between testing sessions. For instance, development for infants will be more rapid compared to that of six-year-old children. The user may consider using the intervals used in the study, allowing a couple of days between screens for infants and no more than three weeks between for older children.

Refer to page 72 of the Technical Manual for information about the test-retest data collected in the section “Test-Retest Score Reliability”.

RECOMMENDED SCREENING SCHEDULE

Is there a recommended timeframe for conducting screens?

Screening can be scheduled at any time during the school year and should be offered promptly in response to concerns by parents/caregivers and teachers. Many programs and school systems also establish set times for administration of screening tests – the beginning or end of a school year or both.

Screening both early in the year and near the end provides pre-test and post-test data to inform a child’s progress. Screening at two points within the year also helps identify children who initially appear to have age-appropriate skills but who fail to master critical skills during the preschool or school year.

Age Ranges and Recommended Screening Schedule		
Age at Start of Year (months/years)	Core Assessments at Start of Year	Core Assessments at the End of the Year
0 months–11 months	Infant	Infant; Toddler (if > 11 months old)
12–23 months	Toddler	Toddler; 2-Year-Old Child (if > 1 year, 11 months)
2–0 to 2–11	2-Year-Old Child	2-Year-Old Child; 3-Year-Old Child (if > 2 years, 11 months)
3–0 to 3–11	3-Year-Old Child	3-Year-Old Child; 4-Year-Old Child (if > 3 years, 11 months)
4–0 to 4–11	4-Year-Old Child	4-Year-Old Child; 5-Year-Old Child/Foundation Year (if > 4 years, 11 months)
5–0 to 5–11	5-Year-Old Child/Foundation Year	5-Year-Old Child/Foundation Year; 6-Year-Old Child/Year 1 (if > 5 years, 11 months)
6–0+	6-Year-Old Child/Year 1	6-Year-Old Child/Year 1

As per the Technical Manual section “Planning Screening Sessions” on page 11.

INFANT AND TODDLER SCREEN

Infant and Toddler Data Sheet Instructions

Instructions on the data sheet include the statement “Once the child receives credit for 3 skills in a row, give credit for any lower-level skills”. This is the basal point. Firstly, try to find the basal point from the entry level for the child’s age, but the basal point may be below this. If 3 in a row are not achieved from the entry point, determine skills from the next lower entry point.

In the Infant and Toddler Screen, if 3 in a row are not achieved even when using the lower entry point, does the child get the score for the ones they have achieved, say one or two?

Yes, the child receives credit for any items correct below the basal point even if a basal isn’t established. For example, if the child gets items 1 and 3 correct but isn’t able to demonstrate 3 in a row beyond that to establish a basal (e.g. 3, 4, 5 correct) the child still receives credit for items 1 and 3.

2- AND 3-YEAR-OLD SCREEN

Presence of parent for 2- and 3-year-old screens

Having the parent of a 2- or 3-year-old present and engaging with or prompting their child during screening can certainly be challenging. In terms of the structure of the Screens, all the infant assessments and many of the toddler assessments can be administered by interview, but all 2- and 3-year-old assessments can be administered by child performance.

(10c is the only 2-year-old assessment for which responses could be obtained by interview).

We would suggest that parents be instructed to sit back away from the testing area unless the child is hesitant to perform/respond without the parent right by their side.

ITEM 1C IDENTIFIES PARTS OF THE BODY – 2-YEAR-OLD

If administrators are providing an example when not explicitly told to do so in the directions it may be because they are accustomed to using the Screens II, where an example was provided. If administrators need additional support to distinguish the directions like this, providing an example is acceptable.

ITEM 2A IDENTIFIES COLOURS – 3-YEAR-OLD

“Show me the red ones”: If they just show one, is it okay to prompt for the other red one?

The items in this assessment were standardised with the direction, “Look at these blocks and balls. Show me the red ones.”, but it is acceptable for assessment 2A if you rephrase and repeat the direction as “Show me all the ___ ones”.

Why are we asking for both? Is it to ensure they really know and are not just guessing?

Yes, pointing to one item of the correct colour could be random luck but pointing to both correct items demonstrates understanding.

ITEM 10A REPEATS SENTENCES – 3-YEAR-OLD

When we do the screen in MCH, the parent is always present and this often poses some difficulty with willingness of the child to have a go. Parents often want to be involved and the child is sometimes more embarrassed about trying difficult tasks with the parent there. I particularly notice this with this item and have found that if I say, “I want you to tell your mum exactly what I say about the picture”, the child will then turn to their mother and attempt to say the sentence. Is it going against standardisation to do this?

A good way to handle this would be to use your introduction above, followed by the full second part of the instructions for item 10A. For example, “I want you to tell your mum exactly what I say about the picture. Listen carefully and say what I say”.

4-YEAR-OLD SCREEN

ITEM 2B NAMES COLOURS

Why do we only ask the child to name the colour of the block or ball, but in the 3-year-old Screen the child is asked to show both the block and ball in the requested colour? Are we asking to ensure the child knows plurals with 3-year-olds? If so, why in the 4-year-old Screen with the same task, do we separate the questions, seemingly making it easier for them?

The two assessments are assessing different skills. The assessment in the 3-year-old Screen is assessing the child’s receptive understanding and the one in the 4-year-old Screen is assessing the child’s expressive knowledge. “Random luck” may account for pointing to the correct response but probably not for the block and ball and it wouldn’t account for a child being able to name the colour correctly rather than just point. Understanding of plurals is not a consideration in these particular Screens.

ITEM 7B NAME PARTS OF THE BODY

What is the significance of pointing to the different item versus saying the name of it?

Pointing is an earlier skill and what we are looking for in this particular Screen. If after we have asked them to point, they say the name, it is best to let them do that and note that they have this higher skill. You could follow up by saying, “Can you point to that?” but there is no need and it is acceptable to give credit for naming.

5-YEAR-OLD SCREEN

ITEM 10C DETERMINES TOTAL OF TWO SETS

Are children allowed to point to the dots on the dominoes and count?

Yes.

And if they look at the dominoes but use their fingers to count?

Yes.

ITEMS CONCERNED WITH READING LETTERS

The sequencing of letters reflects the performance of children in the standardisation study. The letters are ordered according to the order of difficulty shown by these children. For example, for lower-case letters, “o” was the letter known by the greatest number 5-year-olds and “q” was the least commonly known. All letters in-between were sequenced accordingly. In general, children are familiar with upper-case letters before they are familiar with lower-case letters.

3-5-YEAR-OLD AND F & 1 SCREENS

SECTIONS RELATING TO PERSONAL INFORMATION

While administering items in these sections, examiners should be aware of how children’s different circumstances might alter responses and mark accordingly. For example, children may be unaware of their parent’s phone number due to not usually having to enter it to call them on a mobile phone that saves the number, etc. Additionally, children unaware of their address might only be so because they have recently moved or move a lot.

It is up to the examiner’s discretion as to how strictly they wish to interpret these questions and alter them for personal circumstances. Determining an acceptable response will depend primarily on the judgment of the examiner, and it is acceptable if the child’s given responses clearly show an understanding of the child’s personal information but do not strictly match with the questions asked due to differing circumstances.