

Early Social Communication Scale (ESCS)

Scoring Manual

The ESCS is coded for the number of Intentional Communicative Acts (ICA), Initiating Behavior Requests (IBR), and Responding to Joint Attention (RJA) behaviors

First, determine whether or not the child's observed behavior is an Intentional Communicative Act (ICA)

I. Intentional Communicative Acts (ICA)

An ICA must meet 3 criteria:

1. It must be a gesture, vocalization, verbalization or alternating gaze
2. It must be directed toward the examiner or parent
3. It must be used as communicative signal to serve a communicative function

An ICA may be any of the following:

- Giving an object to an adult
- Touching the adult's hand, arm, body or face
- Waving
- Clapping
- Moving an adult's hand or face
- Showing off with object near child's face
- Making indicative gesture
- Pointing with finger/fingers
- Tapping with finger/fingers
- Raising arms
- Open-hand reaching with minimal body movement
- Showing an object
- Making a depictive gesture
- Non-transcribable vocalizations
- Transcribable vocalizations
- Verbalizations of any kind (single or multiple words)
- Moving an object toward or away from an adult
- Head shaking or nodding
- Hitting, biting or pinching self or adult
- Throwing or dropping objects

- Showing off without an object
- Alternating gaze alone
- Any of the above paired with eye contact

An ICA must serve one of the following communicative functions:

- Behavior Regulation*: regulating the adult's behavior to do something or to stop doing something
- Social Interaction: attracting the adult's attention to look at or notice self
- Joint Attention: directing the adult's attention to look at or notice an object or event for the sake of sharing the event/object
- Any unclear communicative function

After crediting the child for an ICA (on the score sheet), determine whether or not the child was using that communicative act to serve the function of Behavioral Regulation (IBR)*, and if so, credit the child for an IBR on the score sheet

II. Initiating Behavioral Requests (IBR)

An IBR is an intentional communicative act (ICA) that serves a function of obtaining access to an object, getting assistance manipulating an object, or stopping an object or behavior from occurring.

An act can be scored as an IBR if the child demonstrates any of the following behaviors, either singly or in combination:

- **Alternating Gaze:** If the child makes eye contact with the examiner when a toy is removed, or if the toy is proximal but inactive. There must be a time lapse (2 seconds) between when the toy stops and when the child makes eye contact to credit eye gaze as an IBR. This behavior is credited as an IBR if the gaze is a 3-point gaze shift, either from person-object-person or from object-person-object
- **Give:** If the child pushes, throws, or hands the object to the examiner or moves it in the general direction of the examiner in order to get rid of the object, or to request reactivation of the toy
- **Reach:** If the child extends the arm to an out-of-reach toy. The "reach bid" ends when the child's arm retracts back from the object for *more than 2 seconds*. If 2 seconds has not passed and the child reaches further/again for the same object, that is coded as one reach; however if the time passes and the child initiates another reach, they are counted as separate attempts/bids. Do not score a reach if the child reaches for a toy and picks it up on his/her own. If the child happens to be waving arms/hands in the air, in the general direction of an object, do not code as IBR. The child must clearly indicate what s/he is requesting

- **Point:** If the object has deactivated and is out of the child's reach, and the child uses an isolated finger point to request the desired object/event, code this act as an IBR. If the object is activated and the child points to it, code this act as an ICA (as it would most likely be an act of joint attention). If the object/toy is active and the child is clearly trying to get/request the toy as indicated by impatiently leaning/vocalizing or continuing to point/reach towards the object, code this behavior as an IBR
- **Gesture/Gesture and Eye Contact:** If the child performs a gesture and it is accompanied by eye contact with the examiner, code this behavior as an IBR

Code the Response to Joint Attention (RJA) based upon the child's responses during the Gaze Following Task (administered twice during assessment)

III. Response to Joint Attention (RJA)

These behaviors will be coded during the two poster pointing trials only. The child is given opportunities to follow the examiner's point/gaze to posters on the wall. The RJA score is recorded as a percentage of the child's observed gaze to a poster, given 8 total opportunities (2 opportunities each to gaze at 4 different posters).

- For the left/right posters the child gets credit if they turn their eyes or head sufficiently to indicate that they are looking in the correct direction and beyond the end of the index finger of the examiner (approximately 45-90 degrees off midline).
- For the 'behind' posters, the child must turn their body in addition to their head and look beyond the plane of their shoulders (greater than 90 degrees off the midline in the direction of the poster).
- If the child's eyes were not at midline before the trial began, code the child's response as long as the child was not looking in the direction of the poster.
- If you cannot see the examiner's index finger, score conservatively keeping in mind that the child needs to produce a marked head-turn or shift of eye gaze (such that you can be certain that the child's gaze has come off the examiner's index finger) in order to score the item.
- Do not code the trial if any of the following occur:
 - a. the examiner labels the poster while pointing at it
 - b. the child is off midline and looking in the direction of the poster at the beginning of the trial
 - c. the child is out of the camera's view/not visible on the video recording
 - d. the direction of the examiner's point cannot be determined because the examiner's point is off-camera/not visible on the video recording

General Scoring Guidelines

- Score behaviors during the pointing trials under the item that was presented prior to that pointing trial
- For each task involving a toy/object, only score the first three presentations of the toy (or two presentations of the jar).
- Do NOT code behaviors as ICA's if:
 - the child perseverates/stims on toy/object/self
 - the child reaches for a toy with no interaction/reference to examiner
 - the child responds to a direct order; e.g., "Give it to me"
 - the child orients towards an object that is not part of the administration
 - the child protests without clear direction to the examiner (covering ears/swiping a toy off the table may just be reactions rather than clear protests/communicative acts
 - the child looks at the examiner due to the examiner moving/talking excessively, causing the child to look in his/her direction
- Child is given credit if:
 - communicative behaviors are directed at his/her parent
 - communicative behaviors involve another assessment-related object; e.g. poster on the wall, toy from another task
- For the "Give it to me" prompts during the *Object Spectacle* and *Jar Wind-up* tasks:
 - score the child's behavior after 15 seconds of the first request, regardless of whether or not the examiner asks more than once in that 15 second time period
 - for each item, only score the first three "Give it to me" prompts
 - if the examiner requests "give it to me" and the child gives the examiner another object (other than the intended object), give the child credit for a response to the request
- Credit the child with an ICA if s/he turns/reaches to parent for comfort
- Credit the child with an ICA and IBR if examiner prompts child (e.g., with an outstretched hand) and the child gives examiner toy/object