

O-G Reading Clinic

A Parent Guide to Interpreting Assessment Results
Understanding scores, patterns and recommendations

The most important starting point

An assessment report is not just a list of scores. Its purpose is to explain how your child learns, identify strengths and areas of difficulty, and guide practical teaching and support. No single score should be interpreted in isolation.

What an assessment is trying to answer

- Which skills are developing as expected?
- Where does performance begin to break down?
- Are difficulties mild, moderate or significant?
- Is there a consistent pattern across different tasks?
- How do the results compare with classroom performance and developmental history?
- What teaching, intervention or adjustments are likely to help?

Before looking at the numbers

Scores are influenced by the specific skill being tested, the child's attention, fatigue, confidence, language, processing speed, familiarity with the task and willingness to persist. The assessor should combine test results with observations, background information and work samples.

Scores can tell us	Scores cannot tell us by themselves
How performance compares with same-age peers	Why a difficulty developed
Whether a skill is relatively strong or weak	How much effort the child used
Whether results form a meaningful pattern	Everything the child knows or can do
Whether intervention may be required	Whether one low result confirms a diagnosis
Which areas need closer support	How the child will respond to teaching

A useful way to read the report

Start with the summary and recommendations. Then look back at the individual scores to understand the evidence supporting those conclusions.

Understanding the most common score types

Standard score

A score converted to a common scale so performance can be compared with same-age peers. Many tests use an average of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.

Scaled score

A converted score used for individual subtests. The average is often 10, but the exact scale depends on the test.

Raw score

The number of items answered correctly or points earned before conversion. Raw scores cannot usually be compared across ages.

Percentile rank

The percentage of same-age students who scored at or below that level. A percentile is a ranking, not the percentage of questions answered correctly.

Composite or index score

A score created by combining several related subtests. It is often more reliable than one individual subtest.

Confidence interval

A range showing where the child's true score is likely to fall, allowing for normal measurement error.

A general guide to standard scores and percentiles

Different tests use slightly different labels. Always check the descriptive ranges used in your child's report.

Standard score	Approximate percentile	Common description
130 and above	98th percentile and above	Very High
120-129	91st-97th percentile	High
110-119	75th-90th percentile	High Average
90-109	25th-74th percentile	Average
80-89	9th-24th percentile	Low Average
70-79	2nd-8th percentile	Very Low
69 and below	1st percentile and below	Extremely Low

What does the 25th percentile mean?

It means the child performed as well as or better than about 25 out of 100 same-age peers. It does not mean the child answered 25% of the test correctly.

Why age and grade equivalents can be misleading

- They are not precise estimates of a child's true reading or spelling age.
- They do not mean the child should be placed in a younger class or given only younger work.
- Small changes in raw score can sometimes produce large-looking changes in an age equivalent.
- Standard scores and percentiles are usually more suitable for interpreting relative performance.

Looking for patterns, not isolated numbers

Assessment interpretation focuses on the relationship between scores. A profile may show average overall ability but a clear weakness in a specific area such as decoding, spelling, phonological memory, fluency or handwriting.

Strengths

Skills that are clearly established or stronger than other areas. These can be used to support learning.

Significant weaknesses

Results that are well below age expectations and are consistent with observed difficulty.

Consistency across measures

Similar weaknesses on several tests usually provide stronger evidence than one isolated low score.

Relative weaknesses

Scores that may still fall in the average range but are notably lower than the child's stronger skills.

Unexpected difficulty

A skill that is much weaker than would be expected from the child's oral language, reasoning, education or other abilities.

Functional impact

The most important question is how the difficulty affects classroom learning, independence, confidence and access to the curriculum.

Common examples in literacy assessment

Area assessed	What the result helps explain
Word reading	Can the child accurately recognise or decode real words?
Phonemic decoding	Can the child use sound-letter knowledge to read unfamiliar or made-up words?
Reading fluency	Can the child read accurately and efficiently under time demands?
Reading comprehension	Can the child understand text once decoding demands are considered?
Spelling	Can the child represent sounds, patterns and word structure accurately in writing?

Phonological awareness	Can the child identify and manipulate speech sounds?
Phonological memory	Can the child hold sound-based information in mind long enough to use it?
Rapid naming	How efficiently can familiar visual symbols be retrieved and named?
Handwriting and written output	How quickly, legibly and automatically can the child produce written work?

Average does not always mean no difficulty

A child may obtain an average score by working very slowly, using compensatory strategies or relying on strong oral language. Observations about effort, accuracy and strategy use are therefore important.

Understanding diagnoses and conclusions

A diagnosis is based on a body of evidence. It should consider test results, developmental and family history, educational opportunity, classroom impact, response to instruction and whether other explanations better account for the difficulty.

- A low score alone does not confirm dyslexia, dysgraphia or another learning disorder.
- A child does not need every possible characteristic to be present.
- Some children have more than one area of difficulty.
- Strong intelligence, vocabulary or comprehension does not rule out a specific learning difficulty.
- A diagnosis should lead to practical recommendations, not simply a label.

How to read recommendations

Intervention recommendations

What skills should be taught, where teaching should begin, and how explicit or intensive support should be.

Home support

Brief, manageable practice and ways to protect confidence and motivation.

Monitoring

What progress should be reviewed, how often and what would indicate that support needs to change.

School adjustments

Changes that provide fair access while skills are developing, such as extra time, reduced copying or assistive technology.

Further referral

Whether additional assessment by a psychologist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, paediatrician or other professional may be useful.

Strength-based support

Ways to use the child's oral language, reasoning, interests or other strengths to support learning.

Questions parents may wish to ask

- What are my child's clearest strengths?
- Which results are most important, and why?
- Are any scores unexpectedly low compared with the rest of the profile?
- Were there factors such as fatigue, anxiety or attention that may have affected performance?
- What does this pattern mean for everyday classroom learning?
- What should intervention target first?
- Which school adjustments are recommended now?
- How and when should progress be reviewed?

What to focus on after receiving the report

1. Understand

Identify the main pattern of strengths and difficulties.

2. Prioritise

Choose the most important teaching and access needs.

3. Act and review

Put supports in place and monitor whether they are helping.

Final message

Assessment results are most useful when they lead to clearer understanding and practical action. Focus on the overall pattern, the effect on everyday learning and the recommendations that will help your child make progress.