



SOCIAL

Early Social Indicator (ESI)

Administration Guidelines

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Introduction

The Early Social Indicator (ESI) assessment is designed to measure infants' and toddlers' social interaction with other children and adults. The specific elements of social interaction are Verbal and Nonverbal exchanges with the adult and peer play partners, non-directed verbal and nonverbal exchanges, and Negative Behaviors. Each social element is counted, and the scores are added together to get a total social interaction score. The ESI has two toy sets: **Form A:** School House with Blocks and Balls; and **Form B:** The Tub of Toys. Both of these toy sets involve the child playing with the toys along with a peer and a familiar adult.

Setting up the ESI Testing Situation

The adult and children should be in an area that is comfortable for them where they can play with the materials. They can start out sitting or standing.

If one or both children **are not independent** in sitting, the following options can be used for positioning:

1. Seated position in a boppy or bolster
 - make sure toys are in front of and within reach of the child
 - support feet with block or bolster
 - use a blanket or towel to support child's back if needed
2. Seated position and held by adult play partner (or other adult if needed)
 - make sure toys are in front of and within reach of the child
 - play partner should be able to have eye contact with children
3. Sitting position on the floor -- propped by adult play partner to sit up (child may be held on play partner's lap, or child's back may be resting against adults leg)
 - make sure toys are in front of and within reach of the child
 - play partner should be able to have eye contact with children
 - place a blanket/towel under child if needed for cleanliness or warmth
4. Sitting position on the floor -- propped by adult play partner to rest on tummy (child is placed on a bolster or floor)
 - make sure toys are in front of and within reach of the child
 - play partner should be able to have eye contact with children
 - place a blanket/towel under child if needed for cleanliness or warmth

If a one or both children **are independent** in sitting, the following options can be used for positioning:

1. Sitting position on the floor
 - make sure toys are in front of and within reach of the child
 - play partner should be able to have eye contact with children
 - place a blanket/towel under child if needed for cleanliness or warmth

Materials

Set the toys up in the area selected. For **Form A**, the School House with Balls (SHB), make sure that you can see the openings and can see the children climbing through it. For **Form B**, the Tub of Toys, take one or two toys out at a time and rotate through some of the toys in the tub during the testing session.

Video Camera

Stay as still as possible as to not distract the children or assessor. If a child leaves the area to play somewhere else, keep the child in the viewfinder. As the children move and play with the toys, the camera will need to be able to swivel to keep them in the picture at all times. Follow these steps to ensure a quality recording without intruding on the assessment:

- Set the camera up on a tripod and aim it appropriately using the view finder. Frame the video so that the entire play situation is in view. Using the tripod and setting the zoom/focus insures a steady view later when recording. Check these settings for best positioning for later viewing and sound quality. Remember – camera view, sound quality, and loudness dramatically affect later recording accuracy.
- If your resources allow it, we recommend using some type of microphone that is separate from the camera. This will improve the sound quality of the recording, which is critical to accurate scoring. Ideally, a wireless microphone would be used that attaches to one of the children. In lieu of a remote microphone, try to get the camera's microphone as close to the 'action' as possible without risking a child knocking over the camera
- If you have a camera operator, he/she must stay still, interacting little if at all with you or the child. A camera person should be nonintrusive with respect to the assessment. The camera operator also may time the six-minute session for you.
- If you are video taping on your own, set up the camera, start recording, join the child, and say "Start" to record a voice marker for the beginning of the timing and say "Stop" to mark the ending on the recorded tape.
- If the child moves out of camera view, say "Pause" to voice mark on the tape, then redirect the child back to location and/or update the camera view using its view finder as needed. Then state "Resume" so that later, when you are recording of the child's behavior from the tape, you can start, stop, and resume as needed to account for the interruption.
- If your resources allow it, we recommend using some type of microphone that is separate from the camera. This will improve the sound quality of the recording, which is critical to accurate scoring. Ideally, a wireless microphone would be used that attaches to one of the children. In lieu of a remote microphone, try to get the camera's microphone as close to the 'action' as possible without risking a child knocking over the camera.

Warm Up

With a new child (first test setting), spend a few minutes getting to know him/her. Join in the child's play with the familiar caregiver to help the child become comfortable with you. Be positive and enthusiastic with the child.

After the child is comfortable with you, let the child know that you have interesting toys and games to play with the child. The familiar adult can come with you to the assessment area if necessary to comfort the child.

Administration (Play) Instructions

The adult should play with the children in a way that encourages interaction with the toy, the peer, and the adult. If a child becomes distressed, testing should be terminated.

Directions to adult play partner: "We are interested in (child's name) social interactions. (child's name) and (peer's name) will play with these toys. Play and talk with them as you usually would. The session will last for 6 minutes."

Ideally, the adult play partner will be a certified assessor who understands how to interact appropriately with the child during an IGDI assessment. However, it may be necessary for a child's parent or another primary caregiver to act as the play partner during an IGDI assessment. This may be because the child is not comfortable playing with you, or you do not have an extra person who can code the assessment while you're the play partner, and you do not have a video camera to record the session.

As a certified assessor, you have been trained to interact appropriately with the child during an assessment. In order to ensure a valid IGDI assessment, ensure that caregiver follows a few simple rules, just as you do when you are the play partner.

Before the assessment:

1. Review the play partner checklist with them
2. Model appropriate play partner interaction
3. Have them practice with their child while you provide feedback (does not have to be a full 6 minutes, but at least 2-3 minutes)

During the assessment:

1. Caregiver and children are positioned so they can have eye contact
2. Caregiver and children can see toys and the opening for the bus or house
3. Some children like to make the house collapse by pushing or pulling it down. This structure is designed to pop back up, so this is usually okay. However, ensure that the children do not get wrapped up in the material or fall on each other.
4. Caregiver follows children's lead (is not too directive)
5. Caregiver comments about what the children are doing
6. Caregiver interacts in a non-directive, friendly manner
7. Caregiver uses questions sparingly
8. At the end of the session, caregiver lets the children know that the session is over
9. At the end of the session, caregiver thanks the children for playing

Winding Down the Play Assessment

Tell the play partner that the session has ended. The adult can help the children end their play with the toys. Thank the children (and adult) for playing today. If a child becomes upset having to leave the toys, mention that he/she will be able to play with the toys another day, but now he/she is going to return to what he/she was doing before.

Clean Toys

Wipe down all toys after each session and table area using some form of disposable towelettes.

Modifications for Children with Sensory Impairments

Some modifications may be needed for children with physical limitations, visual impairments, or hearing impairments. The suggestions listed here are suggestions, and should not be considered the only modifications that can be made. The key here is to arrange the toys to encourage social interactions.

- For children with physical limitations, you may want to modify how the toy is placed before the child: the toy can be moved closer or the child propped up in a way that allows best access to the pieces. You can also provide physical support for children to get into and out of the house/bus (e.g., allowing them to hold your hand/finger). You may also physically place them in the house/bus and stay in the structure with them if they need help sitting/standing upright.
- For children with visual impairments, you may want to orient the children to the toy each session, or provide several weeks of introduction to the different toys and then start assessments. You may also want to introduce children to each of the toy pieces (allow him/her to touch each one), and then show them the different parts of the play set. Tell them where you have placed each of the toys for him/her to pick up or touch, and be more active in bringing toys within the child's reach.
- For children with hearing impairments, you may want to position yourself so you do not sit beside the child, but across the toy to allow each of you to see each other easily for using sign language or lip reading to communicate. If the child uses a hearing aide or audio trainer, position yourself so the child can best hear what you are saying.
- All children with sensory impairments should be monitored closely while in the bus/house. In many cases the adult play partner may need to get in the structure with the child.

Use of this Manual requires permission of the developers. Please contact: Dr. Dale Walker (Walkerd@ku.edu) or Dr. Judith Carta (Carta@ku.edu) or voice: 913.321.3143.