



# Preparing Your Child for the Assessment

How to talk to your child about our work together

(Adapted from <https://brainbuildingbook.com/handouts/>)

We are looking forward to working with your family! Here are some ways to introduce the assessment process to your child.

## Starting the Conversation

In a nutshell, the purpose of an assessment is to “learn about how you learn and how your brain works. The things you are very good at and others that might be more challenging for you” so that:

- Teachers know how to teach you
- Parents learn how to support you
- You know how to advocate for yourself

*Hint: **don't** use the word “test.” Instead, talk about “activities or tasks.”*

Introducing the idea of an assessment to your child may sound something like:

- *We have noticed you're working really hard at school this year, but it still seems pretty tough, and we are not sure why. If we knew more about how you learn best, your teachers and us could do a better job helping you. So, last week, we met with (clinician's name), who can help us find a way to make school easier for you and figure out what we can do differently at home.*

## Describe the Process

When your child comes in, we will do different activities to help us understand how they work with different types of information. For example, we will do puzzles, play word games, chat about what they like to do, and try to figure out what comes easy and why some things can be tricky.

For *young children*, it may be important to let them know that our clinician helps children, parents, and teachers learn about the child's brain. Make sure they know there is nothing wrong with them!

*Older children* may feel assured that this is a confidential process, focused on being curious, learning about strengths and weaknesses, and finding solutions. Their input is extremely

important to figure out what will be most helpful for them.

Explaining the process may sound something like:

- *The psychologist or clinician will do different activities with you to figure out how you learn best, where your strengths are, and why some things are more challenging right now. Some will be fun, some will be easy, and some will challenge you. Your job is just to do your best, and if something is tricky, let the clinician know so you can work together to figure out why!*

## Getting their input

Your child is encouraged to ask their own assessment questions. This helps me know what is important to them and gets them more invested in the process. Kids may need a little time to mull it over and get their thoughts together, so don't be afraid to ask a few times. This may sound something like:

- *There are things we would like to know to help us support you better, but we are wondering what you'd like to know about your brain. If you can't think of anything right now, that's ok. We will ask you again later, and we can try to write a list together. That will make sure that the work you do with the psychologist/clinician is as helpful to you as possible.*

## What if my child does not want to be assessed!?

If you are worried your child will resist coming in for an assessment, you are not alone! Here are some tips for setting it up for success.

### Tip #1: Use your child's words to describe the problem

Many children resist testing because it feels like adults don't get it. For this reason, it can be helpful to think about how your child describes the problem.

For example, instead of "writing is hard," they may say, "writing is boring," or "my teacher is unfair." By using their language, you are assuring them that we will help them solve their problem, not just ours. This might sound like:

- *I've noticed that you really don't like your math teacher this year. So I'm wondering if there's a way we could make that class better for you.*
- *I've noticed that we are in a bad nagging cycle around homework. I know you don't like it, and I don't like it either. So I wonder if there's a way we can break out of it.*

- *I've noticed you're getting in trouble a lot this year, and it doesn't seem to make sense. I wonder if there's a way we can figure it out together.*
- *I heard you say that you hate school, and I can totally see why! So let's see if there's a way to change that.*

## Tip #2: Talk over something fun 😊

Some children may be worried they've done something wrong or that there is something wrong with them. For this reason, we recommend talking to your child in a place where it is obvious that there is nothing wrong and they are not in trouble (and that the assessment results won't go on their report card!). For example, having a bowl of ice cream, taking the dog for a walk, or playing catch are all good ways to have a conversation without feeling it is too "serious."

## Tip #3: Let them know it is not mandatory!

If your child is having a really hard time, we will work together to figure it out. The first step is to let them know it's not mandatory. Keep in mind that we can get a lot of information about what might help your child in other ways, and if your child is resisting the actual activities, the results are likely to be invalid.

Besides, giving a child the choice often makes them more likely to participate because it:

- Shows them **respect** and establishes **trust**
- Gives them **choice and control** over situations
- Allows them to **express** their concerns
- Gives adults a chance to address those concerns before testing begins

Your child is welcome to come in for a "non-committal" first session just to meet us and get comfortable. While 99% of the time, we end up moving forward, if for some reason we are not able to at this time, we have established a relationship so that your child can come back when they are ready.

This may sound like:

- *It makes sense that you do not want to do the activities. I imagine I would be skeptical as well! I will respect your decision if you decide you really do not want to do it, but I want to make sure you have all the information before you make your final decision. Would you be willing to meet with (clinician's name) once just to see what it's all about?*

While your child may disagree on the problem that brought you in as a parent, we can often find something the child wants to work on, which gives us a way to move forward.

See you soon!

Please let us know if you have any additional questions or concerns. We are excited to start our work together and learn more about your child's amazing brain!