

How to: Completing and using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

What is it?

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is an emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire that aids professionals in measuring social, emotional and mental health needs in children and young people.

The questionnaire can be used for children aged 2–18 years and there is a specific, separate questionnaire for children aged 2-4 years.

The SDQ is available for anyone to access and use at:
[https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz\(UK\)](https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz(UK))

For children aged 2-4 years, the SDQ should be completed by educators and parents, (there are slightly different versions of the questionnaire for parents and professionals) SDQs can be completed either online via the website, or a paper version can be downloaded and printed.

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English (UK)

Single-sided version without impact supplement

- One-sided SDQ for parents or educators of 2-4 year olds
- One-sided SDQ for parents or teachers of 4-17 year olds
- One-sided self-rated SDQ for 11-17 year olds
- s18+ One-sided SDQ for **self-report** by those aged 18 and over
- i18+ One-sided SDQ for **informant** report on those aged 18 and over

Double-sided version with impact supplement

- P2-4 - SDQ and impact supplement for the parents of 2-4 year olds
- P4-17 - SDQ and impact supplement for the parents of 4-17 year olds
- T2-4 - SDQ and impact supplement for the educators of 2-4 year olds
- T4-17 - SDQ and impact supplement for the teachers of 4-17 year olds
- S11-17 - SDQ and impact supplement for self-completion by 11-17 year olds
- i18+ SDQ and impact supplement for **informant** report on those aged 18 and over
- s18+ SDQ and impact supplement for **self-report** by those aged 18 and over

Click on the yellow dot to access the questionnaire for parents

Click on the yellow dot to access the questionnaire for professionals

Answer the questions honestly to give the best picture of the child's strengths and needs. The Answers are tick boxes, read the statements and decide whether they are 'Not True', 'Somewhat True' or 'Certainly True' for the child in question. There are 25 questions in total along with 5 additional impact statements.

Scoring

The website suggests using the only tool to generate the scores to any SDQ you fill in, this requires a small cost and creating log in information, or the website does provide a scoring scale, click this link for quick access:

<https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/c0.py>

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Scoring the SDQ

We now actively discourage people from hand scoring the paper versions of the SDQ: it is prone to human error and generates an inferior report. Scoring the SDQ accurately and generating useful reports should be done by computer. Our own computer scoring website is at SDQscore.org; this site is operated by the original SDQ team.

- [The fast SDQ scoring site](#) for online scoring and report generation.
- Explanation of how scoring is done for **SDQs for 4-18 year olds**, as completed by parents, teachers or youths. This also covers scoring the SDQ for those aged **18+** and gives standard cut-points. This document is in English - equivalent versions in many other languages are also available, accessed through the page for that [language](#).
- Explanation of how scoring is done for **SDQs for 2-4 year olds**, as completed by parents or teachers; plus provisional cut-points (English language).
- **Scoring syntax using SPSS** (license required for scoring SDQs).
- **Scoring syntax using SAS** (license required for scoring SDQs).
- **Scoring syntax using Stata** (license required for scoring SDQs).
- **Scoring syntax using R** (license required for scoring SDQs).
- **Computerised algorithm** for predicting disorders from multi-informant SDQ scores (license required for scoring SDQs).
- An "added value" score for specialist services

Click on the yellow dot to access scoring scales and information.

The scoring system uses numbers and you'll score each statement a 0, 1 or 2. The statements are in a different order on the questionnaire to the scoring sheet, this is done on purpose and is labelled as; item then number – for example; 'ITEM 2', this is the second question on the questionnaire, but is the first item under the Hyperactivity scale on the scoring sheet. The questions are grouped into different sections on the scoring sheet, these are: 'Emotional problems scale', 'Conduct problems scale', 'Hyperactivity scale', 'Peer Problems scale' and 'Prosocial scale.'

Table 1: Scoring the SDQ for 2-4 year olds

| | Not True | Somewhat True | Certainly True |
|---|----------|---------------|----------------|
| Emotional problems scale | | | |
| ITEM 3: Often complains of headaches... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 8: Many worries... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 13: Often unhappy, downhearted... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 16: Nervous or clingy in new situations... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 24: Many fears, easily scared | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Conduct problems Scale | | | |
| ITEM 5: Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 7: Generally obedient... | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| ITEM 12: Often fights with other children... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 18: Often argumentative with adults [REPLACES: Often lies or cheats] | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 22: Can be spiteful to others [REPLACES: Steals from home, school or elsewhere] | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Hyperactivity scale | | | |
| ITEM 2: Restless, overactive... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 10: Constantly fidgeting or squirming | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 15: Easily distracted, concentration wanders | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 21: Can stop and think things out before acting [SOFTENED VERSION OF: Thinks things out before acting] | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| ITEM 25: Sees tasks through to the end... | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Peer problems scale | | | |
| ITEM 6: Rather solitary, tends to play alone | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 11: Has at least one good friend | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| ITEM 14: Generally liked by other children | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| ITEM 19: Picked on or bullied... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 23: Gets on better with adults than with other children | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Prosocial scale | | | |
| ITEM 1: Considerate of other people's feelings | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 4: Shares readily with other children... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 9: Helpful if someone is hurt... | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 17: Kind to younger children | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| ITEM 20: Often volunteers to help others... | 0 | 1 | 2 |

Score from 0-2, take note that on some questions 'Not true' generates a score of 0, but on others it generates a score of 2.

ITEM 1, Indicates this is the first question on the questionnaire.
ITEM 4, Indicates this is the forth question on the questionnaire, and so on.

The total difficulties score is all sections added together apart from the Prosocial scale. The score will range between 0-40.

The impact statements are scored separately, and will generate a score between 0-6 for the professionals report and 0-10 for the parent report.

The SDQ can be used to highlight SEMH areas of concern for children in setting. Once you've highlighted areas of concern you can use these to implement strategies of support alongside regular reviewing to assess whether the strategies implemented are having the desired effect. Repeating the SDQ around 6 months following implementation of strategies will give a good indication as to whether SEMH development has improved or if further support is needed. With parents permission, share the assessment scores of the SDQ with other professionals, this will support to inform them of the level of need of the child.

Useful Links:

Accessing the questionnaire:

[https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz\(UK\)](https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/b3.py?language=Englishqz(UK))

Accessing the scoring sheet:

<https://www.sdqinfo.org/py/sdqinfo/c0.py>

Additional information on the SDQ can be found on the website here:

<https://www.sdqinfo.org/a0.html>

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