

Preparing for Your Child's ABA Assessment

A Parent's Guide to Feeling Prepared and Confident

Scheduling your child's first ABA assessment is an important step. It is normal to feel nervous or unsure about what to expect. This guide explains how to prepare and what typically happens during the assessment so you can feel more confident before your appointment.

What Is an ABA Assessment?

An ABA assessment helps the BCBA understand your child's strengths, current skills, challenges, interests, and your family's priorities. Information gathered during the assessment is used to develop individualized treatment recommendations based on your child's unique needs.

What Should You Have Ready?

- Diagnostic evaluation
- Insurance card
- Medical referral (if required by your insurance)
- Previous therapy reports
- School or daycare information (if applicable)
- List of medications (if applicable)
- Questions you would like to ask your BCBA

How Can You Prepare Your Child?

- Keep your child's normal routine whenever possible.
- Bring or have available favorite toys or preferred activities if requested.
- Do not pressure your child to 'perform.'
- Allow your child to be themselves.
- There are no right or wrong answers during the assessment.

What Happens During the Assessment?

- 1 Meet the BCBA.
- 2 Parent interview.
- 3 Observation of your child.
- 4 Play-based and skill-based activities.
- 5 Discussion of your concerns and goals.
- 6 Review of next steps.

Common Questions

Will my child be tested?

Yes—but not in the way most parents imagine. ABA assessments are designed to understand your child's current skills, strengths, interests and support needs. Most activities are presented through play, conversation, or everyday interactions rather than traditional testing.

What if my child cries?

That's okay. It is not uncommon for children to feel uncertain when meeting someone new or participating in unfamiliar activities. The BCBA will work at your child's pace, prioritize their comfort, and make adjustments as needed. If your child becomes too distressed to continue, the BCBA will discuss the best next steps with your family, which may include continuing later if appropriate.

What if my child does not cooperate?

That's ok too. The assessment is not about getting every answer “right”. Your child responses—including when they need support, avoid certain tasks, or prefer specific activities—provide valuable information that helps the BCBA understand how to develop an individualized treatment plan. If necessary, the assessment may be completed over more than one visit.

Can I stay during the assessment?

YES!!!. Parents or caregivers are typically encouraged to participate in parts of the assessment. Your BCBA will explain when your involvement is most helpful and may also observe your child independently during some activities.

How long does the assessment usually take?

The length of an ABA assessment varies based on your child's age, individual needs, and the information that needs to be gathered.

After the Assessment

The BCBA reviews the information collected and develops individualized recommendations. Depending on your insurance requirements, authorization and scheduling timelines may vary.

Remember

- There is no 'perfect' assessment.
 - Your child's strengths are just as important as their challenges.
 - Your questions and concerns matter.
 - The goal is to build a treatment plan that supports your child's needs and your family's priorities.
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This educational resource is intended for general informational purposes only and does not replace an individualized clinical evaluation. Content is consistent with evidence-based ABA principles and ethical communication practices.