

Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement

The Woodcock-Johnson III (WJ-III) is an individually administered test of academic achievement. The subtests that will be used on the National Children’s Study (NCS) focus on reading achievement, both with regard to the ability to decode letters and words and the ability to comprehend words and passages.

Equipment Used:

- Administration easel with pictures
- Administration and scoring protocol

Administration Time:

- 10 minutes per subtest

Administration Method:

Two subtests from the WJ-III are planned for use on the NCS. Each subtest is administered to the participant by an interviewer. For each subtest of the instrument, the participant is shown letters, pictures, or text on a tabletop easel and asked questions about them. The respondent points to the correct answer on the easel or answers the questions verbally, depending on the nature of the question asked.

Administration Procedures:***Basal Starting Points and End Points***

Each participant is asked only a subset of the total complement of questions in each subtest. Questions within each subtest are ordered by difficulty. The starting point for asking questions is determined by a combination of the participant’s age and the participant’s responses to the initial items. Questions begin at the point identified for the participant’s age and education level. Incorrect answers for any of the first six questions result in a shift to an easier start point. After the appropriate start point is identified, questions move forward until either six consecutive incorrect answers are given or the end of the subtest is reached.

Subtests:***Letter–Word Identification***

The Letter–Word Identification subtest assesses the participant’s word decoding skills. The easiest set of items, intended primarily for preschool-aged children, requires the participant to identify letters that appear in large type and then to pronounce simple words correctly. The most difficult items still involve asking the participant to pronounce words correctly; the participant does not need to know the meaning of the words. The most difficult items are those words that appear less and less frequently in written English. The Letter–Word Identification subtest includes 76 items. Individuals from grade 7 to average adult (e.g., high school graduate) would start on item 49 and, moving forward on the subtest, would therefore be asked 28 items or fewer. College students or above average adults (e.g., college graduates or more education) would start on item 57 and, moving forward on the subtest, would be asked 20 items or fewer.

Passage Comprehension

The Passage Comprehension subtest assesses the participant’s language comprehension and reading skills. The easiest questions ask the individual to match a “rebus” (pictographic representation of a word) with a more detailed drawing of the object. The next items ask the participant to point to the picture represented by a word or phrase. The remaining items require the person to read a short passage and identify a missing key word that makes sense in the context of that passage. The initial key words are pictures; the items become increasingly difficult by replacing the pictures with words, and then by increasing the passage length, level of vocabulary, and complexity of syntactic and semantic cues. The Passage Comprehension subtest includes 47 items and two sample items. Individuals from Grade 2 through adulthood begin with the second sample item. Individuals from grade 9 to average adult (e.g., high school graduate) would start on item 28 and, moving forward on the subtest, would therefore be

asked 20 items or fewer. College students or above average adults (e.g., college graduates or more education) would start on item 32 and, moving forward on the subtest, would be asked 16 items or fewer.

Scoring

Raw scores are derived by counting number of correct responses, each receiving 1 raw score point. Items that fall lower than the start point are counted as correct responses. These scores can then be standardized to yield grade equivalent scores, age equivalent scores, or percentile ranks relative to a norming sample based on either age or grade.

Risks and Protections Against Risks

This instrument involves minimal risk. The examination is comparable to that which would be experienced in the course of routine educational testing. Some participants might find themselves briefly unable to answer questions and might find this slightly frustrating. Because basal starting points are identified both by age and initial responses and the subtests are discontinued after six consecutive incorrect responses, participant frustration with the questions is minimized.