



Cognitive Function: Exam to Assess Mental Status

A number of tests can assess mental status. A common one used is called “Mini-Mental State Examination.” It was written by M.S. Folstein, S.E. Folstein, and P.R. McHugh in 1975. Adapted from this examination are the questions that follow. They were taken from “Working With Your Older Patient: A Clinician’s Handbook” by B. Gaskel, Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Aging, National Institutes of Health, 1994.

Questions and Tasks	Score
<p>1. These questions test for orientation to time and place. Give 1 point for each correct answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What year is it? ■ What season is it? ■ What is today’s date? ■ What day is it? ■ What month is it? ■ What state are you in? ■ What country are you in? ■ What city or town are you in? ■ What place (home, building, etc.) are you in? ■ What room are you in or what floor are you on in this place? 	<p>_____ out of 1</p>
<p>2. This part tests instant recall. (These things will be asked to be recalled later.) Give 1 point for each object named.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Name 3 objects (e.g. apple, table, dime.) Take 1 second to name each object. Have the person repeat the 3 objects named. 	<p>_____ out of 3</p>
<p>3. This part of the exam tests for attention and calculation skills. Give 1 point for each correct answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Count backwards from the number 100 by 7s. Do this for 5 numbers. (The answers are 93, 86, 79, 72, and 65.) ■ Another option is to spell the word WORLD backwards. (The answer is D L R O W.) 	<p>_____ out of 5</p>



Questions and Tasks	Score
<p>4. This part tests for recall. Give 1 point for each object named.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ask for the 3 objects stated in step 2 (i.e., apple, table, dime). 	<p>_____ out of 3</p>
<p>5. This part tests for language skills. Give 1 point for each correct answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Point to a pencil or pen. Ask the person to name it. _____ out of 1 ■ Point to a wristwatch or clock. Ask the person to name it. _____ out of 1 ■ Ask the person to repeat this phrase “No ifs, ands, or buts”. _____ out of 1 ■ Ask the person to do these 3 things: Give 1 point for each step done correctly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a piece of paper in your right hand. _____ out of 1 • Fold the paper in half. _____ out of 1 • Put the paper on the floor. _____ out of 1 ■ Write CLOSE YOUR EYES in large letters on a piece of paper. Ask the person to read the phrase and to do what it says. Give 1 point for following the command. _____ out of 1 ■ Give the person a pen or pencil and a piece of paper. Tell him or her to write a sentence with a subject and an object. It’s okay if words are not spelled correctly. Give 1 point for writing a sentence. _____ out of 1 ■ Give this design on a piece of paper to the person. Tell the person to copy it on the same piece of paper. Give 1 point if the person copies the design correctly. <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; margin-left: 20px;">  </div> <p>_____ out of 1</p> 	
Total	_____ out of 30
<p>In general, a score of 24 or less for persons with 12 or more years of schooling and 20 or less for persons with 4 or fewer years of schooling may mean a cognitive problem. Check, though, with a health care provider. A more complete assessment may need to be done to check for mental status.</p>	