

# Pediatric Autism Screening Tools

## Level One (Population-Based)

|   | Details   | What else should I know?   | Other pros and cons   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <b>COS</b><br>Classroom Observation Scale<br><br><i>*Free*</i>  | <b>Ages:</b> 2–4.5 years<br><b>Length:</b> 13 items<br><b>Type:</b> Teacher questionnaire   | The COS was created to identify children in a classroom who may be autistic. Read more about it in <a href="#">our review</a> .<br><b>Cut-Off Score:</b> 31 or less ( <a href="#">source</a> )<br><br>Questions are found in the appendix of this <a href="#">open-access article</a> .  | + Great for identifying children who might benefit from more assessment<br><br>– Produces many false positives  |
| <b>CSBS-ITC</b><br>Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scale—Infant and Toddlers Checklist<br><br><i>*Free*</i> | <b>Ages:</b> 6–24 months<br><b>Length:</b> 24 items<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire  | The ITC is a general communication screener with sensitivity to autism. Read more about it in <a href="#">our review</a> . Recommendations vary based on age, score, and profile.<br><br>Free to download in <a href="#">English</a> and <a href="#">Spanish</a> , plus a <a href="#">Web-Based</a> version.   | + Not autism-specific, for situations where that is helpful<br><br>+ Can be used for monitoring   |
| <b>ESR</b><br>Early Social Responsiveness<br><br><i>*Free*</i>  | <b>Ages:</b> 13–24 months<br><b>Length:</b> 4 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation  | The ESR is a short play-based assessment. Its sensitivity is relatively low, so it's meant to enhance parent reports such as the M-CHAT (R/F) to help rule out kids who don't need to be evaluated. Read more in <a href="#">our review</a> .<br><b>Cut-Off Score:</b> 12 or more ( <a href="#">source</a> )<br><br>Free to download <a href="#">here</a> .                                    | + No training necessary<br><br>+ Can be used for monitoring<br><br>+ Can combine with parent questionnaires (such as M-CHAT), to increase accuracy                  |
| <b>M-CHAT (R/F)</b><br>Modified-Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (Revised with follow-up)<br><br><i>*Free*</i>  | <b>Ages:</b> 16–30 months<br><b>Length:</b> 20 items plus follow-up interview for ambiguous scores<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire | The most commonly used screener in the US. Completing the follow-up interview questions is important for ensuring adequate accuracy. As a Level 1 screener it lacks the specificity to screen children with pre-identified developmental delays. Recommendations (pass, administer follow-up, refer) vary based on score.<br><br>Free to download in multiple languages <a href="#">here</a> . | – Produces a number of false positives. Up to around a half of children who screen positive will go on to get no or a different diagnosis (Aishworiya et al., 2023) |

This free download accompanies [The Informed SLP's](#) open-access research review "[Need an autism screener? Here are 21 good options.](#)"

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| <b>POSI</b><br>Parent Observation of Interaction                               | <b>Ages:</b> 16–36 months<br><b>Length:</b> 7 items<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire                           | The POSI is a short portion of the longer developmental screener Survey of Wellbeing of Young Children (SWYC) intended to screen for autism in the general population. It has similar validity to the MCHAT despite being much shorter. The MCHAT-R/F has higher specificity (fewer false positives).<br><br><b>Cut-Off Score:</b> 3+ <a href="#">responses in “Sometimes - Never” columns.</a><br><br>Free to download in multiple languages <a href="#">here</a> .                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Produces many false positives</li></ul>   |
| <b>*Free*</b>  |  |   |   |
| <b>Q-CHAT &amp; Q-CHAT-10</b><br>Quantitative Checklist for Autism in Toddlers | <b>Ages:</b> 18–30 months<br><b>Length:</b> 25 items; 10 in the brief version<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire | The Q-CHAT is most commonly used in the UK. It has pictures that illustrate each item. Parents are asked to rate the frequency of behaviors, unlike the M-CHAT, which asks whether behaviors are present or absent. Read more about it in <a href="#">our review</a> .<br><br><b>Cut-Off Scores:</b> 39 ( <a href="#">for Q-CHAT</a> ); >3 ( <a href="#">for Q-CHAT-10</a> )<br><br>Free to download in multiple languages in both the <a href="#">full</a> and <a href="#">10-item</a> versions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ Illustrations help parents comprehend the questions</li><li>+ Brief version is very quick</li></ul> |
| <b>*Free*</b>  |  |   |   |
| <b>TIDOS</b><br>Three-Item Direct Observation Screen                           | <b>Ages:</b> 18–60 months<br><b>Length:</b> <5 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation                      | The TIDOS is a (very) short behavioral assessment designed for primary care providers to complete during a well-child visit. It's just three short tasks intended to augment the information that can be gathered from a questionnaire.<br><br>Available for free in the appendix of this <a href="#">open-access article</a> .   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ Very quick</li></ul>  |
| <b>*Free*</b>  |  |   |   |



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|---|--|--|--|
| <b>ADEC</b><br>Autism Detection in Early Childhood                            | <b>Ages:</b> 12–36 months<br><b>Length:</b> 10–15 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation | The ADEC was developed in Australia. This is an observational play-based screening tool in which a provider observes a child and rates the presence and absence of a number of behaviors.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ Can be completed virtually</li><li>+ Nominal cost; no training required</li><li>+ Differentiates between autism and other developmental delays; Can help to triage children who need a diagnostic evaluation</li></ul> |
| <b>\$\$</b>   |  | Available for purchase <a href="#">here</a> .  |  |
| <b>ASDQ</b><br>Autism Symptom Dimensions Questionnaire                        | <b>Ages:</b> 2–17 years<br><b>Length:</b> 39 items<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire          | The ASDQ is a new open-access measure that covers the entire pediatric age range. More research is needed to establish its use for screening purposes, but preliminary data seems promising. It is aligned with the DSM-V.<br><b>Cut-Off Score:</b> 2.9 ( <a href="#">source</a> ) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ Aligns with DSM-V</li><li>– Research on use for screening is still preliminary</li></ul>   |
| <b>*Free*</b>   |  | Available for free download <a href="#">here</a> . Excel sheet for scoring can be downloaded <a href="#">here</a> .  |  |
| <b>BABY-BISCUIT</b><br>Baby and Infant Screen for Children with aUtism Traits | <b>Ages:</b> 17–39 months<br><b>Length:</b> 6 items<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire         | The BABY-BISCUIT is a short screener that has strong sensitivity, but will produce many false positives. It has scaled recommendations based on the score. Cutoff scores and more information can be found in <a href="#">our TISLP review</a> .                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>+ Very short</li><li>+ Highly sensitive</li><li>– Produces many false positives</li></ul>  |
| <b>*Free*</b>   |  | Available for download in <a href="#">this TISLP review</a> .  |  |

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| <b>CARS-2</b><br>Childhood Autism Rating Scales                          | <b>Ages:</b> 2+ years<br><b>Length:</b> 5–10 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation               | The CARS is a 15-item rating scale based on an observation completed by the therapist. A short parent questionnaire is used to provide additional perspective to inform ratings.<br><br>Available for purchase <a href="#">here</a> .  | + Combines therapist observation and parent report<br><br>+ Can help triage children who need diagnostic evaluation<br><br>– Deficit-based language  |
| \$\$   |   |  |  |
| <b>CASD</b><br>Checklist for Autism Spectrum Disorders                   | <b>Ages:</b> 1–17 years<br><b>Length:</b> 15 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation and interview | The CASD is a 30-item checklist is completed by the therapist based on information drawn from sources including the parent, teachers, direct observation, and records.<br><br>Available for purchase <a href="#">here</a> .  | + Draws from multiple sources of information<br><br>+ Differentiates between autism and other developmental delays; Can help to triage children who need a diagnostic evaluation<br><br>– Deficit-based language |
| \$\$   |   |  |  |
| <b>ESAC</b><br>Early Screening for Autism and Communication Disorders    | <b>Ages:</b> 12–36 months<br><b>Length:</b> 10–15 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire            | The ESAC is embedded within the Autism Navigator parent platform as the “SoCo Checkup.” Parents need to create a free account in order to complete and are reminded via email every three months to retake between 9 and 24 months.<br><br>Available online <a href="#">here</a> . | + Web-based; parents complete independently<br><br>+ Offers monitoring<br><br>– Therapist is not given scores  |
| *Free*   |   |  |  |
| <b>RITA-T</b><br>Rapid Interactive Screening Test for Autism in Toddlers | <b>Ages:</b> 18–36 months<br><b>Length:</b> 5–10 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation           | The RITA-T consists of nine play-based items that the therapist engages in with the child. Training is required to administer. Read more <a href="#">here</a> .<br><br>Available for purchase <a href="#">here</a> .   | + Differentiates between autism and other developmental disorders; can help triage children for diagnostic evaluations   |
| \$\$   |   |  |  |

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| <b>SCQ</b><br>Social Communication Questionnaire<br><br>\$\$     | <b>Ages:</b> 4 years – Adult<br><b>Length:</b> 40 items (<10 minutes)<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire  | The SCQ is a parent questionnaire that evaluates communication and social functioning for children who may be autistic. It looks at both developmental history and the child's current abilities. The content parallels the ADI-R, a diagnostic instrument.<br><br>Available for purchase <a href="#">here</a> . Spanish version available.  | + Can help to determine if a full diagnostic evaluation is warranted                                 |
| <b>SORF</b><br>Systematic Observation of Red Flags<br><br>*Free* | <b>Ages:</b> 16–24 months<br><b>Length:</b> ~20 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation  | The SORF is a rating of structured observations of either a behavioral sample or home recording. Observations are rated for the presence of signs of ASD. Read more in our <a href="#">TISLP review</a> .<br><br>Available for free download <a href="#">here</a> .  | + Can be completed virtually<br>+ No training required<br><br>– Deficit-based language               |
| <b>SRS</b><br>Social Responsiveness Scales<br><br>\$\$           | <b>Ages:</b> 2.5 years – Adult<br><b>Length:</b> 65 items (15–20 minutes)<br><b>Type:</b> Parent and/or questionnaire to age 18, then self-report | The SRS has a separate self-report form for adults over 18. It assesses “social functioning.” Rather than simple “yes/no” questions, it looks at the frequency of different behaviors. It aligns with the DSM-V and is useful for differentiating between autism and other developmental disorders.<br><br>Available for purchase <a href="#">here</a> . Available in multiple languages.  | + Aligns with DSM-V<br><br>– Time-intensive for a questionnaire                                      |
| <b>SSI</b><br>Screen for Social Interaction<br><br>*Free*        | <b>Ages:</b> 2–5 years<br><b>Length:</b> 26 items; can do short forms<br><b>Type:</b> Parent questionnaire  | The SSI has separate forms for younger (24–42 mo, SSI-Y) and older children (43–61 mo, SSI-O). Showed moderate convergence with diagnostic measures and could differentiate children with ASD from those with other developmental disorders.<br><br><b>Cut-Off Scores:</b> <45 for SSI-Y; <37 for SSI-O ( <a href="#">source</a> )<br><br>Available in the appendix of <a href="#">this open-access paper</a> (pdf <a href="#">here</a> ). | – Only available in English<br><br>– Would need to reformat for practice or complete as an interview |

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| <b>STAT</b><br>Screening Tool for Autism in Toddlers | <b>Ages:</b> 24–36 months<br><b>Length:</b> 20 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation  | The STAT examines social and communicative skills that are indicative of autism. It includes 15 play-based items. Training is required to administer.<br><br>Available for purchase <a href="#">here</a> .  | + Differentiates between autism and other developmental disorders; can help triage children for diagnostic evaluations<br><br>– Does not probe sensory domain |
| \$\$   |  |   |   |
| <b>TASI</b><br>Toddler Autism Symptom Inventory      | <b>Ages:</b> 12–36 months<br><b>Length:</b> 28 questions<br><b>Type:</b> Parent interview      | The TASI is a semi-structured interview that can be used alongside other measures in a developmental evaluation. It aligns with the DSM-V and includes a section on RRB. This tool can be excellent to structure conversations with parents about whether or not they would like to move forward with an autism evaluation process. Read more in our <a href="#">TISLP review</a> .<br><br><b>Cut-off:</b> 7+ → elevated likelihood of autism<br><br>Available for free download <a href="#">here</a> . | + Aligns with DSM-V<br><br>– No behavioral sample or observations   |
| *Free*   |  |   |   |
| <b>TELE-ASD-PEDS</b>                                 | <b>Ages:</b> <36 months<br><b>Length:</b> 10–20 minutes<br><b>Type:</b> Structured observation | The TELE-ASD-PEDS is a virtual assessment, and psychometric properties are forthcoming. The clinician walks a parent through several tasks with their child and rates the child's responses. This is appropriate for children who do not yet have phrase speech. Therapists can use this to take a closer look at autistic characteristics in a structured way to inform referral and assessment.<br><br>Available for free download <a href="#">here</a> .   | + Can be completed virtually<br><br>+ Can help triage children who need diagnostic evaluation<br><br>– No psychometrics as yet                                |
| *Free*   |  |   |   |

