

Coding Social Overtures / Social Responses in the ADOS-2

A social overture can be thought of as any behaviour initiated by the examinee that is directed to another person for the purpose of communicating social intent (e.g. making eye contact, directing a facial expression, touching, addressing verbally, and so on). Social overtures may be subtle, such as making eye contact to "check in" with the examiner during joint interactive play, or they may be overt, such as looking at the examiner while handing her a toy and saying "Now, it's your turn". Social overtures also vary in quality, from high-quality overtures in which a number of forms of communication are combined with an obvious and appropriate social intent (as in the turn taking example just described), to those of lesser quality, such as a child looking down at the construction task silently while holding his palm out for more blocks. In order to be counted as a social overture, the child's actions must be purposely directed toward the examiner. Though throwing a toy at an examiner is indeed an action directed toward the examiner, unless it was an attempt to get the examiner's attention (and thus a social overture of very poor quality), it likely would not be considered an overture at all.

Social responses involve the same types of behaviours (e.g. eye contact, facial expression, gesture, verbalisations) as social overtures, but in response to another person's actions or to the social situation. Again, social responses may be subtle or overt, appropriate or inappropriate. A key difference in coding the summary items "Quality of Social Overtures" and "Quality of Social Responses" hinges on the absence of an expected behaviour.

When rating "Quality of Social Overtures", the focus is on quality not quantity, so the examiner should consider only the overtures actually made. Credit should not be taken away if the child fails to make an overture in a certain situation, such as not requesting more blocks in the 'Construction Task'. In general, the quality of existing overtures should be rated without regard to whether overtures occurred in expected situations. If the examinee makes no overtures at all throughout the administration, however, this would be captured with a code of 3 in "Quality of Social Overtures".

In contrast, when rating "Quality of Social Response", the absence of any response is expected and socially appropriate is taken into consideration. Essentially, a non-response in a situation that would normally require a response would be counted as a poor response (e.g. if a participant ignored the examiner's questions during a Module 4 administration). Responses to the social situation in general are also considered in this item; for example, a child spitting his gum out onto the table would constitute an inappropriate response to the overall situation.