

TIME SAVING IN THE STANFORD-BINET TEST

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The clinical examiner whose work requires that he examine large numbers of subjects either in the schools, an out-patient clinic, or an institution, finds himself continually pressed for time in the handling of his cases. It seems pretty well agreed that an hour is not too long for a complete examination with the Stanford revision, and if this is accompanied by some of the performance and school subject tests, as the best practice now requires, the time necessary for one individual is exceedingly long. To meet this difficulty several abbreviated scales have been devised,¹ but these have not yet found general favor among examiners. In the work of the Psycho-Educational Clinic in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University there have been developed several points in the technique of administering the Stanford Revision which aid materially in reducing the time and effort necessary, and which this paper proposes to set forth.

If it can be said that there is one principle at the basis of the several points to be enumerated, this principle is the utilization of the "set" or mental attitude of the child, so that when he is started on one kind of test he is carried through as high as he can go before another field is attacked. For instance the repetition of digits occurs in the year III, IV, VII, X, XIV, and XVIII. When the directions for this test are first given to the subject in, say, year IV, it is very easy to go onto the longer numbers without intervening tests. This obviates the necessity of repeating the directions when a similar test is to be given in the upper years, and thus saves considerable time, especially if the range of subject is a wide one. It must be remembered, however, that, as Dr. Terman points out,² the younger children will, in many cases, not be able to give sustained attention to the same kind of a test for more than two or three minutes at a time. The practice in this respect must be guided by the age of the subject and the manner in which he

¹ Terman gives a short scale in connection with the Stanford Revision. An abbreviation almost identical with this was used in the army. See also *Psychological Clinic*, Vol. XI, 1917-18, p. 210, "A Brief Binet-Simon Scale," by E. A. Doll. Also, *School and Society*, Vol. X, No. 259, Dec. 13, 1919, "An Abbreviated Mental Age Scale for Adults," by Lincoln and Cowdery.

² "The Measurement of Intelligence," p. 196.

is responding. If he succeeds easily with the first set of numbers in any group, it is undoubtedly safe to go on to the next higher year in which the test occurs. When, however, there are signs of drooping interest and lagging attention it is better to shift quickly to some other field.

The method of giving tests in groups has another advantage. After one or two such groups have been given, it is usually possible to place the subject very accurately on the scale, and thus save time by determining at the outset the upper and lower limits beyond which he is not likely to go. It is our experience that beginners in testing waste considerable time in giving tests which are either much above or much below the abilities of the subjects with whom they are working.

Among the groups or series of tests which we have found most useful are the following:

COMPREHENSION	SIMILARITIES	DIGITS FORWARD	VOCABULARY AND DEFINITIONS
IV, 5	VIII, 4	III, alt.	V, 4
VI, 4	XII, 8	IV, 6	VIII, 5
VIII, 3		VII, 3	VIII, 6
X, 5		X, alt.	X, 1
		XIV, alt.	XII, 1
		XVIII, 3	XIV, 1
			XVI, 1
			XVIII, 1
DRAWING	DIGITS BACKWARD	REPEATING SENTENCES	DIFFERENCES
VI, 4	VII, alt.	III, 6	VII, 5
VII, 6	IX, 4	IV, alt.	XIV, 3
VIII, 1	XII, 3	VI, 6	
X, 3	XVI, 5	X, alt.	
XII, 4	XVIII, 5	XVI, alt.	

Some further points may be noted in connection with the use of these groups. It has been found advisable to give the "digits backward" tests before the "digits forward," and that the two series should be separated by other tests. This is because the latter is the more natural reaction, and thus a good bit easier. If it is given first it is sometimes impossible to break up the "set" of the subject so that he can give the digits backward. A similar consideration holds in the case of the similarities and differences. The latter seem to be much easier, so the similarities should be given first, and several tests should intervene before the differences are given.

The advantage in the drawing series is that once the child is given the pencil he will do all that is to be done with it at once, thus saving

the time which is ordinarily consumed in giving him a pencil and taking it away several times.

Much time may be gained or lost at the beginning of the examination when the examiner is getting into the good graces of the child. Most beginners make too lengthy and ponderous a business of getting "rapport." In almost every instance if the child is greeted with a smile and asked if he would like to do some puzzles there will be little difficulty. Much depends on the test with which the examination is opened. We make it an almost invariable rule to begin with the pictures. Nearly every child is interested in them, and will make some response to them. Furthermore, the picture test is a great help for the preliminary placing of the subject, for it receives credit in year III, VII, or XII according to the kind of reaction.

Let us see how this scheme would work with a typical case. Suppose a nine year old subject is given the examination. He is shown the pictures, and describes all except one, in which there is a little interpretation. Thus he scores plus in VII, 2, but minus in XII, 7. We then pass to the group of comprehension questions, beginning in the middle of the series with VIII, 3. He passes this, and also, X, 5. The next series will be the memory for digits backward, in which he gets four digits in IX, 4, but misses the five at XII, 6. The vocabulary test should come next, and in this he gets 32 words, thus passing VIII, 6 and X, 1, but failing XII, 1. It now has become reasonably clear that the subject's mental age is somewhere near the nine or ten year level. The remaining tests at these years should now be given, further exploration being unnecessary.

It is, of course, highly desirable to get as complete a record of the child as possible. However, it becomes necessary at times to sacrifice somewhat in thoroughness for the sake of saving time. In the tests where a number of responses are required it is unnecessary to go on giving the various items after the subject has failed in so many items that he cannot possibly receive credit for the test. In the case of the Absurdities (X, 2) for instance, after two have been missed the test cannot be passed, so it may be marked immediately with a minus sign, and may be left for something else. Other tests in which this procedure may be used are found in every year.

It is also unnecessary to go on giving further items in a test after the subject has done enough correctly to give him credit. In the Definitions test at VIII a child has to give only two out of the four required definitions in order to receive credit. If he responds cor-

rectly to the first two there is nothing gained by giving him the third and fourth, and if he gets two out of the first three there is no need to give him the last one. A case of this sort where considerable time is likely to be saved occurs at XIV, 3, the differences between the president and the king. Many children get two of these differences immediately, but cannot find a third, or can discover it only after long study.

The use of the tests in this manner requires that the examiner be thoroughly conversant with the location of the various tests, and that he be able to score the responses without reference to the directions, except in the occasional case of the uncommon reaction. It is also absolutely necessary, if the full benefits of this method are to be gained, that the materials for the test be arranged in a convenient way and that the examiner be completely familiar with this arrangement.