

# Social Communication Disorder Scale (SCDS)

Samm N. House

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The **Social Communication Disorder Scale (SCDS)** is based on the American Psychiatric Association (APA) definition of social (pragmatic) communication disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5™)* (2013). The items and subscales reflect the DSM-5™ diagnostic criteria.

The SCDS has four subscales:

- **Social** - assesses social interaction with peers and adults.
- **Context** - assesses being able to communicate appropriately in social situations and change behavior based on the setting.
- **Rules** - assesses using the rules for interaction and conversation to communicate appropriately in social situations.
- **Nonliteral** - assesses understanding nonliteral forms of language, multiple meanings of words, analogies, and picture and/or verbal absurdities.

The SCDS normative data was gathered from 2,468 randomly selected students (1,323 males and 1,145 females) ages 4 through 18 years old from 14 states. The standardization population closely approximated the demographic characteristics of the United States. Internal consistency of the SCDS was .98 for the total score. Test-retest reliability yielded a correlation coefficient of .81 for the total score. Content validity was established through the initial development process. Concurrent validity was established by comparing all four SCDS subscales to the *Pragmatic Language Observation Scale (PLOS)* (Newcomer & Hammill, 2009) and the *Pragmatic Language Skills Inventory (PLSI)* (Gilliam & Miller, 2006).

Each item on the SCDS is rated using a four-point scale from (0) NEVER to (3) ALWAYS. The SCDS takes a rater familiar with the child or youth approximately 20 minutes to complete. Following completion, four types of scores may be obtained: frequency rating for individual items (reflecting the frequency and severity of the behavior), subscale standard score, quotient, and percentile (a consistent overall basis for comparing children/youth). From the subscale standard scores, a profile of the child's or youth's behavior across the subscales is constructed. Age and gender norms are available. Examiners may compare ratings obtained for a child or youth to his/her peer group by chronological age.

The **Social Communication Disorder Intervention Manual (SCDIM)** includes goals, objectives, and intervention strategies for the behaviors on the scale and is designed for the convenient development of the student's IEP, as well as classroom intervention.

The SCDS complete kit consists of **SCDS Technical Manual, Rating Forms (50)**, and the **Social Communication Disorder Intervention Manual (SCDIM)**.



H A W T H O R N E

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# SCHOOL VERSION RATING FORM

Samm N. House

## RATING GUIDELINES

- The student should be rated by educational personnel with primary observational opportunities who work directly with the student during school situations.
- If the rater has no knowledge of the student's ability to perform a particular item on the scale, he/she may consult other school personnel (e.g., teacher, counselor, etc.) to provide information for that item.
- The rater should rely on his/her observation of the student's behavior as it occurs naturally in the school environment.
- It is recommended that the rater read each quantifier with the item before rating the item. Using item 50 as an example, the rater would first read "NEVER interprets comments literally" then "SOMETIMES interprets comments literally," then "OFTEN interprets comments literally," and finally "ALWAYS interprets comments literally."
- It is not necessary to complete the rating of a student in one day. Several days may elapse before the rater is able to complete the scale.
- If the student does not demonstrate the behavior indicated on the scale or it would be rare or accidental for the student to demonstrate the behavior, the rating should be

**0**  
NEVER

- If the student sometimes, but not often, demonstrates the behavior on the scale (i.e., does not demonstrate the behavior most of the time), the rating should be

**1**  
SOMETIMES

- If the student often, but not always, demonstrates the behavior on the scale (i.e., has some ability, but most of the time has difficulty with the behavior), the rating should be

**2**  
OFTEN

- This quantifier indicates that the student demonstrates on a regular basis the behavior indicated by the item. It may be that the student has not developed the skill or has no ability to successfully perform the behavior. This quantifier would also be chosen when an item is not an age appropriate skill and the student would not be expected to be able to demonstrate the behavior at his/her age (e.g., has difficulty understanding nonliteral forms of speech, etc.). If the student is able to perform an item that he/she would not be expected to perform at his/her age, rate the item based on his/her ability. If the student consistently demonstrates the behavior, the rating should be

**3**  
ALWAYS

IMPORTANT \*\*\* PLEASE NOTE: \*\*\* IMPORTANT

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Item #01210

SCDS

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Page 1

**TO RATER:** Rate every item using the quantifiers (0-3) provided.  
Every item must be rated. **Do not leave any boxes blank.**

**NEVER**

**SOMETIMES**

**OFTEN**

**ALWAYS**

0

1

2

3

**SOCIAL**

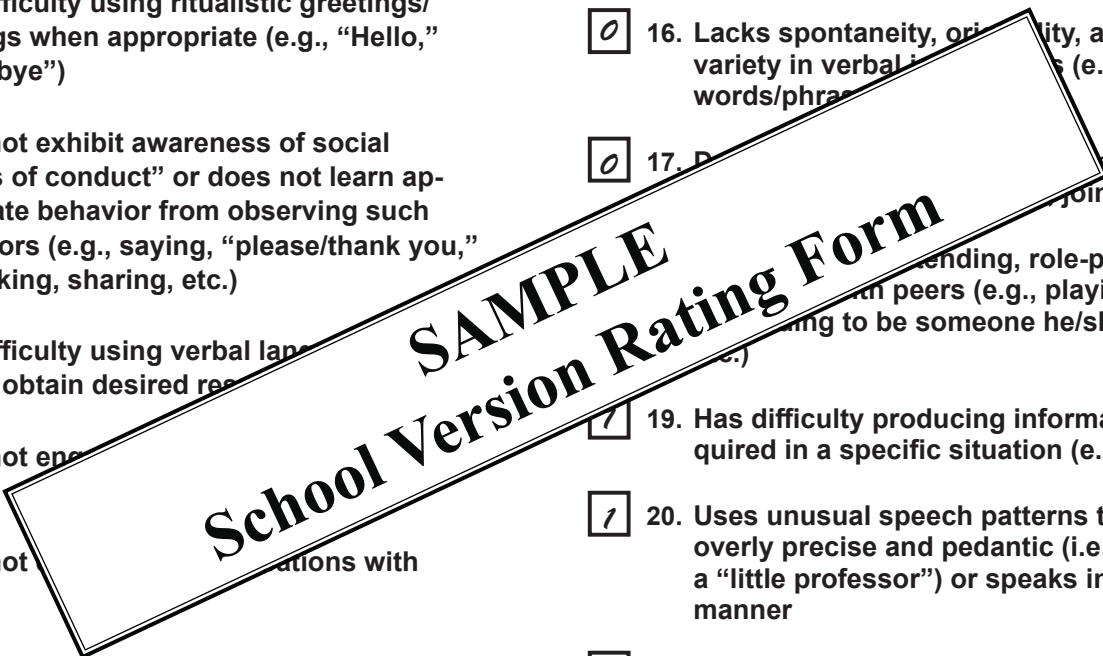
- 1. Has difficulty expressing opinions, feelings, and/or emotions
- 2. Does not interact/reciprocate socially with others
- 3. Has difficulty using ritualistic greetings/closings when appropriate (e.g., "Hello," "Goodbye")
- 4. Does not exhibit awareness of social "codes of conduct" or does not learn appropriate behavior from observing such behaviors (e.g., saying, "please/thank you," turn taking, sharing, etc.)
- 5. Has difficulty using verbal language as a tool to obtain desired results
- 6. Does not engage in conversations with peers
- 7. Does not engage in conversations with adults
- 8. Has a limited expressive vocabulary
- 9. Has a limited receptive vocabulary
- 10. Does not express complete thoughts when speaking (e.g., speaks in incomplete sentences, unable to retrieve words to express ideas accurately, etc.)
- 11. Does not use appropriate verbal and/or nonverbal language in social situations or interactions with peers
- 12. Does not use appropriate verbal and/or nonverbal language in social situations or interactions with adults
- 13. Does not show change in emotion through facial expressions (e.g., flat or inappropriate facial expressions in varying situations, etc.)

- 14. Does not laugh appropriately at humor
- 15. Does not participate in friendly teasing

17 Raw Score

**CONTEXT**

- 16. Lacks spontaneity, originality, and/or variety in verbal interactions (e.g., repeats words/phrases)
- 17. Does not maintain purpose of joint attention
- 18. Does not engage in pretend, role-playing, and other play with peers (e.g., playing house, acting out, trying to be someone he/she is not, etc.)
- 19. Has difficulty producing information required in a specific situation (e.g., excited)
- 20. Uses unusual speech patterns that are overly precise and pedantic (i.e., talks like a "little professor") or speaks in a singsong manner
- 21. Does not use others' emotional responses to guide behavior (i.e., social referencing)
- 22. Inappropriately uses newly learned communication skills in novel and familiar communicative situations (e.g., overapplies greetings to everyone he/she sees, answers "fine" to all questions directed to him/her, etc.)
- 23. Has difficulty assuming role reversals in play (e.g., always is the "chaser" rather than being chased, always plays the "monster," etc.)
- 24. Demonstrates little tact/politeness in interactions; is very blunt in communication.
- 25. Does not respond to others' communication initiations (e.g., doesn't respond to his/her name)



1 26. Demonstrates difficulty with topic initiation, maintenance, and/or closure including irrelevant, tangential, or associative response; and/or tends to circumlocute - talking "around" instead of "on" the topic

2 27. Has difficulty understanding or accepting others' point of view

0 28. Remains fixated on topics of personal interest in conversation with others

1 29. Exhibits overly animated or odd facial expressions, for no apparent reason, that seem inappropriate for the context

1 30. Is unable to interpret nonverbal facial cues of others (i.e., emotional state of others)

13 Raw Score

RULES

1 31. Is unable to participate in conversational turn taking

1 32. Is slow to respond and/or fails to respond with relevant response (e.g., "What is your name?" "I don't know." "Respond, 'I'm...'"

1 33. Demonstrates difficulty with sequencing (e.g., inaccurate) sequencing of events in a story or sequence of events in the correct order, including events in a day and/or rote-type activities such as counting)

1 34. Does not ask for clarification when confused, but instead ignores others or changes the subject (e.g., won't say, "I don't know.")

1 35. Uses language to get his/her needs met, yet is unresponsive to the communicative needs of others

1 36. Overly obsessive about looking into others' faces/eyes

0 37. Does not use grammatically complete sentences when speaking (e.g., "Ball under the table." instead of "The ball is under the table.")

0 38. Avoids looking at speaker when spoken to, as if the person speaking is not there

1 39. Interrupts others' conversations often with no consideration of his/her behavior.

2 40. Has difficulty identifying and/or maintaining personal space/boundaries

9 Raw Score

NONLITERAL

1 41. Demonstrates difficulty expressing logical and reasonable responses to questions (e.g., problem solving, making decisions, and making inferences)

2 42. Has difficulty understanding nonliteral forms of speech such as idioms, proverbs, similes, metaphors, jokes, puns, and riddles

1 43. Has difficulty understanding passive voice (e.g., "The boy was being hit by the girl." "Was the sister in the car?")

1 44. Has difficulty understanding analogies (e.g., hot is to cold as up is to down)

2 45. Has difficulty understanding and using synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms (e.g., pretty/beautiful, up/down, and sea/see)

1 46. Has difficulty understanding cause-and-effect relationships (e.g., If you oversleep, you will be late for school.)

1 47. Has difficulty recognizing and using multiple meaning words (e.g., "The fly is on the wall." and "I will fly home.")

1 48. Demonstrates difficulty understanding the meaning of words indicating a question (e.g., who, what, when, where, why, and how)

1 49. Demonstrates difficulty comprehending picture and/or verbal absurdities (e.g., cannot explain what is wrong when given a picture or a verbal statement such as "The miniature dog is as big as a horse.")

2 50. Interprets comments literally

14 Raw Score

**SAMPLE  
School Version Rating Form**

# SCHOOL VERSION RATING FORM

Samm N. House

## PROFILE SHEET

Name of student: Andrew Thomas Gender: M

School: Midvale Elementary

Class: all subjects Grade: 1

City: Midvale State: PA

Date of rating: 2014 9 17  
(year) (month) (day)

Date of birth: 2008 5 14  
(year) (month) (day)

Age at rating: 6 4 3  
(years) (months) (days)

Rated by (observer's name): M. Jackson

Dates during which observation of student occurred:  
From 8/15/14 To 9/17/14

Amount of time spent with the student:  
Per day 5 hours Per week 25 hours

SUMMARY OF SCORES			
Subscales	Raw Score	Standard Score (Appendix A)	Standard Score SEM (Appendix C)
1. Social	17	8	1.28
2. Context	13	9	1.28
3. Rules	9	9	1.74
4. Nonliteral	14	8	1.12

TOTAL SCORE				
Sum of Subscale SS	Quotient (Appendix B)	Percentile (Appendix B)	Quotient SEM (Appendix C)	Confidence Interval (Chapter 3)
34	93	33	3.80	95%

How well the student is known by the rater (indicate type of interactions): \_\_\_\_\_

Individual & group interaction on a daily basis.

Standard Scores	Subscales				Quotients	Quotient	Percentiles	Percentile Rank
	Social	Context	Rules	Nonliteral				
20	●	●	●	●	150	●	≥99	●
19	●	●	●	●	145	●	95	●
18	●	●	●	●	140	●	90	●
17	●	●	●	●	135	●	85	●
16	●	●	●	●	130	●	80	●
15	●	●	●	●	125	●	75	●
14	●	●	●	●	120	●	70	●
13	●	●	●	●	115	●	65	●
12	●	●	●	●	110	●	60	●
11	●	●	●	●	105	●	55	●
10	●	●	●	●	100	●	50	●
9	●	●	●	●	95	●	45	●
8	●	●	●	●	90	●	40	●
7	●	●	●	●	85	●	35	●
6	●	●	●	●	80	●	30	●
5	●	●	●	●	75	●	25	●
4	●	●	●	●	70	●	20	●
3	●	●	●	●	65	●	15	●
2	●	●	●	●	60	●	10	●
1	●	●	●	●	55	●	5	●
					50	●	≤1	●

Important: Before using this scale, read the section titled *Rating Guidelines* on page one.

SCDS  
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### III. Goals, Objectives, and Interventions

#### 1 Has difficulty expressing opinions, feelings, and/or emotions

**Goal:**

1. The student will improve his/her ability to express opinions, feelings and/or emotions.

**Objectives:**

1. The student will maintain appropriate eye contact during verbal interactions in \_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_ trials.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to express feelings through three different modes (e.g., drawing, acting, gesture) \_\_\_\_ % of the time.
3. The student will demonstrate the ability to describe the emotion of a pictured character with \_\_\_\_% accuracy.
4. The student will demonstrate the ability to complete a “what if” statement \_\_\_\_ of the time.
5. The student will demonstrate the ability to report the emotions of the \_\_\_\_ book which he/she has read, with \_\_\_\_ % accuracy.
6. The student will demonstrate the ability to correctly complete a sentence \_\_\_\_ in (e.g., “I am happy when ....”) \_\_\_\_ % of the time.

**Interventions:**

1. Have the student’s hearing checked if he/she has not been recently checked.
2. Evaluate the student’s ability to express opinions involving a story (e.g., *The Boy and the Hare, The Boy and the Bear*, etc.) and state his/her opinions about the outcome of the stories.
3. Provide the student with a list of questions involving opinions, feelings, and/or emotions and assist him/her in answering verbally (e.g., “How do you feel when you get an A on a test?” “Do you think recess should be before or after lunch?” “Should people wear seat belts?” etc.).
4. Reinforce those students in the classroom who express opinions, feelings, and/or emotions.
5. Be an appropriate model for the student by expressing your own opinions, feelings, and/or emotions. Attempt to clearly identify each when you do express them.
6. Each day provide the student with situations which elicit particular emotions and assist the student in expressing those emotions (e.g., “A stranger takes you by the arm in a department store. How do you feel?” “You see smoke coming out of a neighbor’s house. Are you happy?” etc.).
7. Provide the student with a list of questions involving opinions, feelings, and/or emotions and assist him/her in answering verbally (e.g., “How do you feel when you get an A on a test?” “Do you think recess should be before or after lunch?” “Should people wear seat belts?” etc.).
8. Provide the student with a list of questions involving opinions, feelings, and/or emotions and assist him/her in answering verbally (e.g., “How do you feel when you get an A on a test?” “Do you think recess should be before or after lunch?” “Should people wear seat belts?” etc.).
9. Require the student to explain outcomes, consequences, etc. (e.g., when the student earns a reward or privilege, make certain he/she can explain that the reward was the result of hard work and accomplishment and that he/she should feel proud).
10. Have the student respond to “What if...?” statements (e.g., “What if it rained for forty days and forty nights?” “What if there were no rules and laws?” etc.) to encourage the expression of opinions and/or feelings.
11. Have the student read short stories without endings. Assist the student in expressing opinions, feelings and/or emotions about possible endings to the stories.

**SAMPLE  
Social Communication Disorder  
Intervention Manual**