

Pfeiffer Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire (SPMSQ)

The following instructions are for administering the Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire (SPMSQ):

This Questionnaire is optional for both consumer and/or caregiver. In administering the SPMSQ, the Interviewer should read the introduction printed at the top: "Sometimes people have trouble remembering things. If you do not know the answers to some of the next questions, that's okay. If you do know the answers, the questions may seem obvious." Each of the ten questions should be asked as printed, without prompting or cues. Interviewer should write the person's answers on the lines provided and check the appropriate column depending on whether the answer is correct. If the person refuses to answer, check the column marked incorrect/not answered. Allow the person sufficient time to answer, but move to the next question if it appears that the person does not know the answer.

To be correct, answers must be given without reference to a calendar, newspaper, birth certificate or other memory aid. Refusal to answer counts as incorrect. If the person gives an incorrect answer or waits a long time to answer, simply check "incorrect/not answered", say "thank you" or "that's okay," and move on to the next question.

1. **Date Today** -The answer is correct if the person provides the exact month, day, and year. If the person offers only the month and date, the interviewer should ask, "And what is the year?"
2. **Day of the Week** -The correct day, Monday, Tuesday, etc., must be given.
3. **Name of this Place** -Any accurate description of the location is considered correct. For example, if the interview is taking place in the person's home, and the person says "my home," this is considered correct. The name of the town or city, or (if institutionalized) the name of the hospital or nursing facility can also be accepted as correct answers.
4. **Telephone Number** -The person's telephone number can be considered correctly answered when the interviewer can verify the number the person offers. The Interviewer can verify the number via the phone console, the phone book, or other records. If none of these methods are possible, the phone number can be checked by asking the person to repeat his/her phone number later during the interview. If the person repeats the same number as earlier, the interviewer should consider this correct. If the person has no phone, the Interviewer should ask question 4a, "WHAT IS YOUR STREET ADDRESS" in place of the phone question. Do not ask question 4a if the person has a phone.
5. **How old are you?** - Score correct or incorrect according to person's actual age on the day of the interview.
6. **When were you born?** - Score correctly if the person gives the correct month, day and year. Interviewer should be able to verify this date based on Intake data, report of significant other, or hospital/medical records.

7. **President of the U.S.** - The correct last name of the current President is required.
8. **President before him** - Only the last name of the previous President is required.
9. **Mother's Maiden Name** -Score the person correct if a female first name is given with a last name other than the person's last name.
10. **Subtraction** - Read this question exactly as printed. You may repeat it if necessary or you may offer the probe, "Can you subtract three from 20? And three from that?" The person must get the entire series correct to be scored correct (17, 14, 11, 8, 5, 2).

Before determining the SPMSQ score be sure to ask the person what is the highest grade completed in school.

Add up the total number of errors checked in the far right-hand column. Put the total at the bottom on the line designated "Total Number Errors." The facing page provides a scoring guide developed by Eric Pfeiffer to help evaluate the results of the SPMSQ. Subtract one point from the number of errors if the person has had a grade school education (up to an 8th grade education or less). Add one point to the error score if the subject has had education beyond high school (e.g., one or more years of college or professional school). Information relating to education may be found in the previous section, Social Participation. For example, a person with 3 errors on the SPMSQ who had received one year of college education would be given a score of 4. A person with 3 errors who dropped out of school in the 5th grade would be given a score of 2. This scoring technique adjusts in the SPMSQ for the biasing effects of educational background. This adjusted score can be compared to the recommended scoring guidelines provided:

0 -2 errors -intact intellectual functioning
3 -4 errors -mild intellectual impairment
5 -7 errors -moderate intellectual impairment
8 -10 errors -severe intellectual impairment

Interviewers should note that these are only guidelines. The SPMSQ should not be used to make a definitive diagnosis of cognitive impairment, dementia, O8S, etc. However, poor performance on the SPMSQ is highly correlated with the presence of cognitive disorders and therefore, high SPMSQ error scores suggest a possible need for further medical and/or psychiatric evaluation.

Pfeiffer E: A short portable mental status questionnaire for the assessment of organic brain deficits in the elderly. J Am Geriatr Soc 1975; 23: 433-441.

**THE SHORT PORTABLE MENTAL STATUS QUESTIONNAIRE
(SPMSQ)**

Question	Response	Incorrect Responses
1. What are the date, month, and year?		
2. What is the day of the week?		
3. What is the name of this place?		
4. What is your phone number?		
5. How old are you?		
6. When were you born?		
7. Who is the current president?		
8. Who was the president before him?		
9. What was your mother's maiden name?		
10. Can you count backward from 20 by 3's?		

SCORING: *

0-2 errors: normal mental functioning

3-4 errors: mild cognitive impairment

5-7 errors: moderate cognitive impairment

8 or more errors: severe cognitive impairment

*One more error is allowed in the scoring if a patient has had a grade school education or less.

*One less error is allowed if the patient has had education beyond the high school level.

Source: Pfeiffer, E. (1975). A short portable mental status questionnaire for the assessment of organic brain deficit in elderly patients. Journal of American Geriatrics Society. 23, 433-41.