

**Manual of Administration**  
***The Rapid Interactive Screening Test for Autism in Toddlers***  
***(RITA-T) T<sup>V</sup> – Tele-Video***



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## **I. Description of the RITA-T (T<sup>V</sup>) Tele-Video:**

The RITA-T (T<sup>V</sup>) includes seven semi-structured play-based presses that examine constructs that are delayed in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Each play-based press looks at the integration of 1 or 2 constructs, including: Joint Attention (JA), visual problem solving, Human Agency (HA), Social Awareness (SA), communication, and Self-Awareness (SA). One item is also related to the developmental level of the child and coded (C) for Cognition/visual problem solving. Each press is coded and scored depending on the child's response: the lower the score, the more typical the response. A total score is then calculated by adding the 7 individual scores.

**Based on current cut-off-score studies WITHOUT last item GB (Reaction to neutral face)**

**A score between 5 and 9 is a grey area or moderate risk.**

**A score above 9 is high risk and concerning for Autism Spectrum Disorder.**

**A score below 5 is low risk and most probably not associated with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.**

**A child with a score between 5 and 9 will need to be further evaluated.**

**HOWEVER:** this is only a screening test and a clinician specializing in testing of toddlers for Autism would need to make the final diagnosis through a comprehensive evaluation.

See Appendix 1 for a copy of the RITA-T (T<sup>V</sup>) scoring sheet.

This manual details the different presses, administration, and scoring.

## **II. What you need/Family needs**

1. 2-3 small handheld toys that the child likes and enjoys (car, plane, train, phone, etc.)
2. Blank, white sheet of paper
3. Caregiver whom the child bonded with

## **III. Administration and scoring of the RITA-T (T<sup>V</sup>):**

It is preferable that items are administered in order, especially A, B, C as they use the same toy, however items can be administered in a different order as well. The items will be administered by the caregiver. The caregiver will act as the examiner of the RITA-T (T<sup>V</sup>); however, it will be scored by a reliably trained clinician.

The caregiver is already aware about the visit. They have set up their video camera in a play area, and the child is seated next to them, and next to their toys. Both caregiver and child need to be visible in the video conferencing tool. Let the caregiver know that he/she will have to pretend to cry and have a neutral face before you start so the caregiver can be cued in when this is needed.

Score items directly after you administer them. Take a habit of circling the N or Y for items then add their score.

### A. Blocking of Toy

**Materials Needed:** Small Handheld Toy (does not have to be a toy phone)

**Constructs measured:** Social Awareness (SA) and awareness of Human Agency (HA). *This is a timed test. However, for ease of administration, we have not included a stopwatch but recommend counting for seconds.*

#### Administration:

Allow the child to explore the toy for few seconds. Then, while the child still holds the toy, the examiner will demonstrate to the caregiver to quickly block the toy with his/her hand, covering the hands of the child. Count how long it takes the child to look to the caregiver's eyes.

Maximum wait time: 10 seconds. **This trial should be done three times. Best score is kept.**

#### The following criteria will be scored for this task:

The child's response of looking into the eyes of the caregiver:

- A- If the child looks at the caregiver's eyes, then count the time it takes the child to do so.
- B- Child abandons the phone and it is hard to get them interested in this activity.

#### Scoring:

The score will vary between 0 (best response: child looks at caregiver's eyes between 0-5s) and 2 (no eye contact, or much delayed response, after 10 seconds). If the child abandons, score 1. Maximum scoring obtained here is 4.

When the child does not look at 10s or after, automatically a score of 2 for seconds is provided.

Take the best score of the 3 presses.

#### Rationale:

A typically-developing child will look to the caregiver's face and eyes for help and to understand why the phone is being blocked. A child with ASD or risk of ASD will look at the hand blocking the toy instead of the face, will give up, or will look at the face/eyes of the person blocking but after a prolonged period.

#### A. Blocking of Toy: 3 times - **T** Take best score.

SA, HA

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Looks at caregiver's eyes:           | Y (0)    N (1)                      |
| 2. Latency to look at caregiver's eyes: | 0-5s = (0); 6-10s = (1); >10s = (2) |
| 1. Abandonment (gives up):              | Y (1)    N (0)                      |

(0-4)





## B. Toy Tease

**Materials Needed:** Small Handheld Toy

**Constructs Measured:** Social Awareness (SA) and Joint Attention (JA)

**Administration:**

Instruct the caregiver to present the child with the toy but do not let the child take it – the caregiver should continue holding it even when presenting. Ask and demonstrate to the caregiver to present the toy to the child close-up and then pull it back to the side so that you can tell if the child looks at the caregiver's eyes or the toy. Observe the child's reaction. Repeat this task 3 times and combine all trials for this one.

See below.

**The following criteria will be scored in this section:**

Does the child look immediately to the caregiver's face?

**Scoring:**

The score varies between 0 (best response: child looks at caregiver at least once out of the 3 teases) and 1 (no response joint attention to caregiver).

**Rationale:**

A typically-developing child would directly look at the caregiver's face and eyes when teased. A child with an ASD or risk of ASD is more likely to look only at the hand holding the toy or give up.

**B. Toy Tease: 3 times.**

JA

1. Looks at caregiver's eyes:

Y (0)    N (1)

(0-1)



### C. Blocked Vision

**Materials Needed:** Small Handheld Toy, Blank White Sheet of Paper

**Constructs Measured:** Human Agency (HA), Joint Attention (JA). *This is a timed test.*

#### **Administration:**

Allow the child to explore the toy for few seconds. While the child continues to explore it, instruct the caregiver to move behind the child and block the toy with the blank white sheet of paper, between the toy and the child, approximately 3-5 inches in front of the child's eyes. Count how long it takes the child to look back at the caregiver's eyes. Maximum wait time: 10 seconds.

#### **The following criteria will be scored in this section**

The child's response: Does the child look up at the caregiver and, if so, how long does it take him/her to look?

#### **Scoring:**

The score varies between 0 (best response: child looks at caregiver between 0-5s) and 3 (child does not look after 10s of wait time). When child does not look back at caregiver within 10s, he/she automatically receives a 2 for timing and 1 for N.

#### **Rationale:**

A typically developing child will look at the caregiver blocking them from a toy they are playing with whereas a child with ASD, or a very young one, or at risk for an ASD will continue looking at the paper and will not look at the caregiver blocking.

#### **C. Blocked Vision: 1 time - T**

JA, H

- |                               |                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Looks at caregiver's eyes: | Y (0)    N (1)                      |
| 2. Latency to look:           | 0-5s = (0); 6-10s = (1); >10s = (2) |

(0-3)



## D. Social Smile

**Materials Needed:** None

**Construct Measured:** Social Awareness (SA), Cognition (C)

**Administration:**

Instruct the caregiver to position him/herself in front of the child. Then, the caregiver calls the child's name and covers their face and plays peek-a-boo three times. Note the child's response, if they look at the caregiver and smile.

**The following criteria will be scored for this task:**

The child's response: Does he/she smile in response to peek-a-boo?

**Scoring:**

Scoring varies between 0 (best response: child looks at caregiver and smiles) to 1 (the child does not look at caregiver and/or smile)

**Rationale:**

A typically developing child will look up at caregiver and smile when caregiver plays peek-a-boo. A child with ASD or at risk for ASD, will not respond to the game (will not look at caregiver and/or smile).

**D. Social Smile: 3 times**

SA, C

1. Peek-a-boo: Looks at caregiver and smiles Y (0) N (1)

(0-1)



### E. Making a Choice

**Materials Needed:** 2 small handheld toys the child enjoys playing with

**Constructs Measured:** Social Awareness (SA). *This is a timed test.*

**Administration:**

The examiner will instruct the caregiver to hold a toy or a snack in each hand. The caregiver will show the toys/snacks to the child and will allow 10 seconds for the child to look at them. Observe how the child requests for the toy/snack.

Caregiver says: "Do you want this or this?".

**The following criteria will be scored for this task:**

The child's response: how the child requests for the toy (eye contact, intentionally pointing, and/or reaching for the toy).

**Scoring:**

Score varies between 0 (pointing and eye contact) to 2 (reaching and/or no eye contact); pointing with no eye contact will be scored as 1.

**Rationale:**

A typically developing child will point to the toy they want and/or make eye contact with the caregiver. A child at risk for ASD will reach for the toy and will not make eye contact with the caregiver holding the toy.

**E. Making a choice: T**

SA

Preference for:

Points and EC	Y (0)
Points and no EC	Y (1)
Reaches and/or no EC	Y (2)
No Preference	Y (2)

—  
(0-2)





## F. Response to Rapid Joint Attention

**Materials Needed:** None: ceiling fan or lamp

**Construct Measured:** Rapid Joint Attention (JA)

**Administration:**

The examiner will instruct the caregiver to position him/herself at ear level with the child. Then, the caregiver calls the child's name and points suddenly at the light on the ceiling saying: "X, look!" Caregiver can do this twice if no response is obtained after initial try. Note the child's response and looking at where the caregiver is pointing.

**The following criteria will be scored for this task:**

The child's response: Does he/she follow the caregiver's point to the light?

**Scoring:**

Scoring varies between 0 (best response: child looks at the light, same direction of point) to 1 (the child does not follow point to light)

**Rationale:**

A typically developing child will follow a point and will show joint attention. A child with ASD, or at risk for ASD, will not respond to name or to following a point.

**F. Rapid Joint Attention (name and point to overhead light): Two times**

JA

1. Child looks same direction:

Y (0) N (1)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(0-1)



### G. Reaction to Caregiver's Emotions (Sad/Neutral)

**Materials Needed:** Participation of caregiver (can be the same caregiver that has been performing the previous prompts)

**Constructs measured:** Social Awareness (SA); communication. *This is a timed test.*

#### **Administration:**

The examiner will instruct the caregiver to pretend to cry for 10 seconds (count for time). Observe the child for: looking towards caregiver, interest (sustained looking), distress (or a degree of concern), and/or coming closer to the caregiver (proximity seeking). You can let the caregiver know at the beginning of the session that they will be asked to do this and then cue the caregiver when it is time for this.

Then, the examiner will instruct the caregiver to call the child one time, to look away and to have a neutral face, a face without emotions. The examiner can also call the child and direct their attention to the caregiver. Wait for 10s for this item before scoring reactions of child: looking (even if answering to name gets that credit, interest: sustained looking, proximity seeking and concern/distress)

#### **The following criteria will be scored for this task (separately for sad and neutral).**

Looking, interest, proximity seeking, and distress/concern will be scored each with 0 (best response) to 1 (absent response); the child will have a score of 0-4 for each and a total score of 0-8 combining both presses.

#### **Rationale:**

A typically developing child will attempt to look and be interested, then will appear distressed/cry, and/or will express concern, getting closer to the sad caregiver to comfort. A typically developing child will also be distressed by a neutral face and by a sad face. A child with an ASD, or at risk for ASD, may avoid looking at the caregiver; may make eye contact for a short period, or will act indifferently to the emotion.

#### **G. Reaction to emotions - Caregiver's participation: T - 10 seconds each.**

SA

##### **A. Sad (Pretend to cry):**

- |  |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|
| 1. Proximity seeking:                  | Y (0) | N (1) |
| 2. Looking (child looks at caregiver): | Y (0) | N (1) |
| 3. Distress (concern):                 | Y (0) | N (1) |
| 4. Interest:                           | Y (0) | N (1) |

(0-4)

##### **B. Neutral (No emotion):** Caregiver calls child's name once at beginning and disengages. Examiner can direct child to caregiver once.

- |  |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|
| 1. Proximity seeking:                  | Y (0) | N (1) |
| 2. Looking (child looks at caregiver): | Y (0) | N (1) |
| 3. Distress (concern):                 | Y (0) | N (1) |
| 4. Interest:                           | Y (0) | N (1) |

(0-4)





## TOTAL SCORE

The scores of each press are then summed and a total score for the RITA-T (T<sup>V</sup>) is calculated. Total score varies between 0 and 20 with the maximum high score is 20. Without item GB: total score is 16.

## TOTAL SCORE

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(0-20)

## Behavioral Observations:

A “Behavioral Observations” additional item can be completed during this testing: Each one of those items can be scored from 0 (none) to 2 (frequently observed) with 1 being sometimes observed. This is more qualitative. For example, note if you observed repetitive behaviors, sensory seeking behaviors, visual stimming behaviors and/or if it was hard for you to direct the child's attention.

The following observations are noted during the evaluation. These are qualitative observations made during testing.

Hyperactivity	Sensory seeking behaviors	Repetitive Behaviors	Difficult to get attention	Other



# **RITA-T (Rapid Interactive Screening Test for Autism in Toddlers) (TV) Tele-Video Scoring Sheet**

Child's Name:

DOB:

DOV:

Examiner:

*Items can be administered in any order, however A, B, and C have to follow. JA=Joint Attention; SA=Social Awareness; HA=Human Agency; C= Cognition; T= Timed – always timed for 10 seconds.*

## **A. Blocking of Toy: 3 times - T Take best score.**

**SA, HA**

1. Looks at caregiver's eyes: Y (0) N (1)
2. Latency to look at caregiver's eyes: 0-5s = (0); 6-10s = (1); >10s = (2)
2. Abandonment (gives up): Y (1) N (0)

**(0-4)**

## **B. Toy Tease: 3 times**

**JA**

1. Looks at caregiver's eyes: Y (0) N (1)

**(0-1)**

## **C. Blocked Vision: 1 time - T**

**JA, H**

3. Looks at caregiver's eyes: Y (0) N (1)
4. Latency to look: 0-5s = (0); 6-10s = (1); >10s = (2)

**(0-3)**

## **D. Social Smile: 3 times**

**SA, C**

2. Peek-a-boo: Looks at caregiver and smiles Y (0) N (1)

**(0-1)**

## **E. Making a choice: T**

**SA**

Preference for:

- |                      |       |  |
|----------------------|-------|--|
| Points and EC        | Y (0) |  |
| Points and no EC     | Y (1) |  |
| Reaches and/or no EC | Y (2) |  |
| No Preference        | Y (2) |  |

**(0-2)**

## **F. Rapid Joint Attention (name and point to overhead light): Two times**

**JA**

1. Child looks same direction: Y (0) N (1)

**(0-1)**

## **G. Reaction to emotions - Caregiver's participation: T - 10 seconds each.**

**SA**

### **A. Sad (Pretend to cry):**

5. Proximity seeking: Y (0) N (1)
6. Looking (child looks at caregiver): Y (0) N (1)
7. Distress (concern): Y (0) N (1)
8. Interest: Y (0) N (1)

**(0-4)**

### **B. Neutral (No emotion):** Caregiver calls child's name once at beginning and disengages. Examiner can direct child to caregiver once.

5. Proximity seeking: Y (0) N (1)
6. Looking (child looks at caregiver): Y (0) N (1)
7. Distress (concern): Y (0) N (1)
8. Interest: Y (0) N (1)

**(0-4)**

## **TOTAL SCORE**

**(0-20)**

Hyperactivity	Sensory Seeking Behaviors	Repetitive Behaviors	Difficulty to get attention	Other