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## Testing the Limits

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### Definition

Testing the limits of an examinee allows extended time or attempts in an effort to evaluate maximum abilities in the individual completing the test. A secondary benefit of letting a patient complete a task beyond a cutoff is to maintain rapport.

### Current Knowledge

The purpose of a neuropsychological evaluation is well known to be an attempt to most accurately describe an individual's cognitive presentation. Most data are obtained through evaluating the scores from the different tests that are given. However, the numbers reflected in test scores do not always provide all of the necessary information.

When "testing the limits," examinees are given extra time or attempts to continue working on a task that they have not yet completed. By allowing additional time or extra trials for the person taking

the test, psychologists are offered further information about the examinee's approach to the task and ability to accurately complete the test if given enough leeway. Such findings are helpful in distinguishing failed performance associated with insufficient time from those related to the capacity to perform a task.

For example, imagine a patient fails to complete the construction of a complex puzzle within time limits (e.g., Block Design). The manner in which the design is not completed offers significant qualitative information. If the patient has none of the items put together, the examiner could assume that the patient lacks the capacity to do so. Alternatively, if the test item is almost completed but requires a few seconds beyond the time limit, then the examiner understands that the patient has the ability to complete the task but requires more time than most. Also, by not terminating the test when the clock runs out, you allow the patient to feel good about the ability to complete the test item and offer the opportunity to keep motivation high for the evaluation.

### See Also

► [Boston Process Approach](#)