

What to expect ...

ASSESSMENT MATTERS



Thank you for choosing Therapy Matters for your child's speech assessment. You are now on your way to better understand your child's communication. This first step may raise mixed feelings about having your child assessed, and you may feel uncertain as to what to expect. Be assured that we will support you and your child through this journey, starting with sharing with you what our team and other parents have found MATTERS in preparing for assessment.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS

You know your child's best. You are the expert in your child. You've watched them grow through every milestone, big and small. Now you've noticed that their development might be looking a little different to others, perhaps they are struggling or you've noticed a problem and you're not sure whether to worry about it or what to do. You've reached out for help but as therapists, we often see just a brief snapshot of your child. You are the one with such a wealth of knowledge on your own child SO we want to hear your insights. It is an invaluable first step in our assessment process.

You will have already received an email from our team confirming your appointment details as well as our ALL ABOUT MY CHILD background form. We invite you to share as much information about your child as you can on this form. This enables our therapist to better understand your child's strengths and current difficulties to develop an in-depth picture about any potential factors that may influence their communication. It also helps us understand what you are particularly concerned about and what answers you are hoping to gain from the assessment process.

SHARING INFORMATION MATTERS

High quality therapy relies on a comprehensive understanding of what the child's problem is, from a range of perspectives. For that reason, we encourage you to share as much information as possible from others that know your child well, so we can really understand their insights into the "big picture" of your child's life. Providing information from everyone in your child's team (e.g. doctors, therapists and teachers) helps us collaborate and connect. Useful information might include:

- ✓ Medical reports & referrals
- ✓ Therapist reports
- ✓ School or childcare reports & letters
- ✓ Videos or descriptions of your child in different settings

helping children and
their families



YOUR CHILD MATTERS

We want your child to feel at ease on the day of the assessment.

1. Know where you are going. Arriving on time and without confusion will help both you and your child to feel relaxed before the appointment even begins.

2. Parents are always welcome. Parents are welcome into the therapist's room too! It helps your child feel at ease and you get to see the assessment session first hand. Although it is difficult, it is important that you avoid commenting or providing help to your child during their formal testing. Often children must get a set number of items incorrect before testing can be discontinued so please don't be concerned if your child makes mistakes.

3. Talk to your child about what to expect. Use positive language and tell them it will be fun! Tell them that they are going to play and look at books. Approach the appointment with wonder and curiosity (e.g. "*I wonder what toys you might play with*"). If your child is older, explain that the therapist is someone who helps children with their listening and talking. Avoid telling children that they will need to talk as this may create pressure and affect their interaction with the therapist. Sharing photos/videos from our website with your child will help familiarise them with our clinic and therapists.

4. Bring a favourite toy. Many children open up when they start talking about their favourite toy, game or interest. It can be a great ice-breaker and makes children feel at ease.

5. Be Prepared. Organise care for other siblings if possible. Make sure your child is well rested. Bring snacks and a drink bottle. Visit the toilet on arrival.

6. Make it a special. Most children love the opportunity to have dedicated time with their parent 1:1. The assessment time can be made more special by pairing the visit with a "special treat" to the wonderful coffee shops and playgrounds in our local surrounds too.



Most children will take their lead from you in feeling calm and at ease with the therapist. All children are different however. Some children will be at ease from the moment they arrive. More sensitive children may be wary and need additional support to feel comfortable. That's OK. It is important to respect their need for a slow, steady and responsive approach without undue pressure. Our speech pathologists are very skilled at communicating with children, even reluctant ones! Please be reassured that we will know what to do.



A very small number of children may find the assessment overwhelming and challenging. They may have challenging behaviours or have significant difficulties attending. If you are aware that your child might respond like this, it is very important that you share this knowledge before the assessment so that we can speak with you to design an appropriate assessment session.



If you have any worries or questions about your child's upcoming assessment, don't hesitate to call us. Our team are flexible, fun and friendly with experience in meeting all children's needs, in a responsive way.

FEELINGS MATTER

Whether it is your first time having your child assessed or you are a regular, long term speech therapy client, as a parent you may experience a range of emotions. In having your child assessed.

An assessment is that one point in time where you receive news about your child's development that might be expected or unexpected and as a result, lead to a range of reactions that are unique to each family member.

relief
anticipation
curiosity
understanding
empathy
hope

anxiety
anger
worry
grief
frustration
confusion
disbelief
guilt

So many of these reactions are to be expected and are a natural part of seeking help to understand your child's problems and adjusting to what the assessment findings mean. Be kind to yourself and please reach out if these feelings become overwhelming. Our therapists are here to help and are always happy to listen. You are not alone.

WHAT HAPPENS IN AN ASSESSMENT?



Assessments usually begin with a chat with parents followed by a game or informal play with the child. It may just look like fun, but a lot of information can be gathered during play. If formal assessment is indicated, this will be done sitting at a table and chairs. Your child will be shown pictures in a book and asked to point to pictures or talk about what they see. Your child's age, temperament and your current concerns, will all be factors in the type of assessment activities used.

When our therapists use formal assessments, there are rules about how these are administered, what the therapist can and can't say and how much help the child can be given. By following these rules, therapists gain an objective view of your child's abilities in comparison to other children their age. However, it is also important to understand from you, what the child's everyday communication abilities look like and how these compare with the results of formal assessment.

Typically, assessments require a full 90 minutes. However, because every child is different, we may suggest to spread an assessment across two shorter 45min sessions particularly for younger children or reluctant communicators. If your school-aged child has been referred for a literacy (reading and spelling) assessment, typically the therapist will need two long sessions : the initial 90 min appointment and a subsequent 45-60+ min appointment.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



- At the end of the assessment session the therapist will provide you with feedback on whether your child has a problem, whether therapy is needed and how long they might expect to need therapy.
- The therapist will do their best to provide you with as much information as possible on the day, however, sometimes formal testing takes time to score and analyse before a diagnosis and recommendations can be made.
- Sometimes more information is needed from medical professionals, teachers or other therapists to better understand the assessment findings and the functional impact of your child's difficulties in other environments. .

REPORT MATTERS

- Parents will be emailed a detailed report within 2-4 weeks of the assessment.
- Our report formats have been extensively developed with inputs from parents, our team and research to make sure that they communicate meaningful and useful information.
- Our reports take time to write and are comprehensive. They provide the clear foundations for the design of high quality therapy. They help everyone: parents, teachers, doctors and therapists to clearly understand what is happening for your child and how to help.
- Following the report, you will be offered a complimentary 15-30min phone consultation if needed. This can give the therapist an opportunity to discuss and explain assessment findings further and talk about recommendations, and for you to ask questions. We can also arrange more extensive parent consultations of >30min in person, on the phone or face to face (fees apply) if needed.
- School or multidisciplinary team consultation meetings (fees apply) can also be arranged to share the findings of the report to keep everyone in the loop.

*tailoring therapy for
each child's needs*



Making a difference... one word at a time.



Therapy Matters

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD NEEDS THERAPY?

- ◆ If the therapist recommends that your child needs therapy, we understand that you would like to get started straight away. We need to know all the days and times that you would be available to attend. Please remember that the greater flexibility families have in terms of days and times for appointments, the easier and quicker this process can be.
- ◆ While we always try to book you in with the same therapist that did the assessment, sometimes this isn't possible or perhaps a therapist with different skills and experience is needed.
- ◆ Some therapy approaches specify the exact frequency needed to make progress (e.g. weekly or twice weekly). As providers of ethical, high quality therapy, Therapy Matters always adheres to these recommendations and will support parents to book appointments that match the research evidence.
- ◆ Unfortunately, at times of high demand, we may not be able to find an appointment schedule that immediately matches your needs. At these times, we use a waiting list and prioritisation system. We will work hard to allocate an appointment for as soon as possible. We thank you for responding promptly to our SMS texts about opportunities for appointment vacancies.
- ◆ Speech therapy services are rarely a quick fix. Communication skills are complex and take time to change. We need your help to implement home activities in between speech therapy sessions as just attending the session is often not enough. Without your help, therapy is likely to be slower, take longer and be less effective. Mild, isolated difficulties typically respond quickly and easily to therapy when children are young although even these mild cases may need speech therapy for 6-12 months or longer. Most typical clients attend therapy services over a 1-2 year period, with many clients attending services for many years to address unfolding difficulties with new learning challenges.