

GETTING ASSESSED · 3.16

The ADOS-2 for Adults: What Happens and Why It Looks the Way It Does

The adult ADOS-2 is about an hour in person, mostly conversation with a few short activities. This summary explains why the activities look the way they do, what the assessor is really observing, and how to prepare.

FOR

Adults booked for an autism assessment

AUDIENCE AGE

18+

REVIEWED

18 September 2026

PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

The ADOS-2 for Adults: What Happens and Why It Looks the Way It Does

What the session is

- **A structured observation, not a test.** Module 4 of the ADOS-2, one of the tools NICE recommends for adults. Around an hour with a trained assessor. No pass or fail, no right or wrong answers.
- **In person at the Bedford clinic.** It cannot be done over video. Cheyenne, our Specialist ADOS-2 Practitioner, leads the session with Tina Fox observing. The session itself is one to one; a supporter can wait nearby.
- **Mostly conversation.** Everyday life, emotions, relationships and plans, with a few short activities such as a picture book, describing a picture or telling a short story.

Why it can feel odd

- **It is the same for everyone.** The same materials and topics whether you are 18 or 60. That consistency is what makes the observation reliable across thousands of people.
- **The activity is not the point.** Simple materials fade into the background. What is observed is how conversation flows, how you share thoughts and feelings, and how you relate to someone new.
- **Unrehearsed on purpose.** Your expertise and interests are avoided because rehearsed topics reveal little about unscripted social moments, which are usually the hard part.
- **Awkward is normal.** Most people feel self-conscious during parts of it. Saying so is fine and does not count against you.

How to prepare

- **Do not rehearse, mask or exaggerate.** The ADOS-2 depends on spontaneous responses. Arriving without a plan is the most useful thing you can do.
- **Tell us about sensory needs in advance.** Lighting, noise, temperature and textures can be adjusted where possible. Bring anything that helps you feel settled.
- **No result on the day.** The ADOS-2 is one part of the assessment. It is combined with the ADI-R, questionnaires and records before any conclusion, then you receive an outcome letter and report.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

If autism is on your mind for yourself, NHS routes start with a GP referral. NeuroFX offers private autism assessment for adults using both the ADOS-2 and the ADI-R. Seek same-day help via 111 (or 999 in an emergency) for any mental health crisis.

SOURCES

Lord et al. 2012 (ADOS-2); Hus and Lord 2014 (Module 4); NICE CG142; DSM-5-TR; NeuroFX ADOS-2 guide for adults v1.0

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
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