

FREE RESOURCE

# How to Read an Assessment Report

A practical reader protocol for scores, profiles, categories, recommendations, and limits.

Designed for adult professionals and curious learners. Original AdriaMont Institute material, adapted from expert teaching, research, and professional practice.

A guide for professionals who receive assessment reports and need to interpret them responsibly, ask better questions, and avoid overreacting to polished visuals.

<b>USE THIS WHEN</b>	You receive a test, survey, profile, diagnostic, or feedback report
<b>DIFFICULTY</b>	Introductory to intermediate
<b>FORMAT</b>	Reader protocol, red flags, provider questions, and decision note

**Source and privacy note: Built from AdriaMont's measurement literacy perspective and from teaching material on research methods, reliability, validity, reporting, and evidence-based interpretation. The examples are synthetic and do not reproduce assessment instruments.**

## Why reports are easy to misread

Assessment reports often feel more certain than they really are. Clean charts, categories, and confident recommendations can hide the fact that every score is based on a limited method, a particular model, and an intended use.

A responsible reader asks what the score represents, what evidence produced it, how dependable the interpretation is, and what decision the report is allowed to inform.

## Read the report in this order

- 01 Purpose: identify the decision or learning conversation the report is supposed to support.
- 02 Constructs: check whether each score or category is defined in plain language.
- 03 Evidence: identify whether results came from tasks, items, ratings, observation, data traces, interviews, or mixed sources.
- 04 Scoring: find out how raw evidence became a score, level, norm, profile, or recommendation.
- 05 Uncertainty: look for reliability, confidence, standard error, consistency, or a practical statement about limits.
- 06 Comparison: check the reference group, benchmark, norm, or category rule.
- 07 Recommendation: ask whether the recommended action really follows from the evidence.

## Score elements and reader questions

REPORT ELEMENT	QUESTION TO ASK	WHY IT MATTERS
Scale score	What does one unit of this score mean?	Many scores are useful for ordering people but not for precise interpretation.
Percentile	Compared with whom?	A percentile depends on the reference population.
Level	What rule defines the boundary?	Adjacent levels may not be meaningfully different.
Profile	Are differences within the profile large enough to interpret?	Small differences can create dramatic-looking charts.
Recommendation	Which evidence supports this advice?	Advice should not be stronger than the data.
Benchmark	Is the benchmark appropriate for this user or context?	A benchmark can be technically correct but practically misleading.

## Red flags in assessment reports

The report gives strong recommendations without explaining the evidence base.

Small score differences are interpreted as meaningful without uncertainty information.

Complex people are reduced to fixed types, colors, or labels.

The report claims to predict outcomes that were not validated for the intended use.

Norm groups, benchmarks, or category rules are missing or vague.

Development advice is generic and would apply to almost anyone.

The report does not say what the assessment should not be used for.

# Decision note template

<b>REPORT PURPOSE</b>	What decision, conversation, or learning step is this report meant to support?
<b>STRONGEST EVIDENCE</b>	Which part of the report seems most credible and relevant?
<b>WEAKEST EVIDENCE</b>	Which part needs caution, provider clarification, or additional data?
<b>INTERPRETATION LIMIT</b>	What should not be concluded from this report?
<b>ACTION</b>	What practical next step follows from the report, if any?
<b>REVIEW NEEDED</b>	Who should review the result before it affects a person, team, or program?

**Next step: pair this guide with the Assessment Report Review Checklist.**