

Introduction to the Situational Judgement Test of ACT congruent Responses (ACT SJT)

Aim of the ACT SJT:

This questionnaire uses scenario-based questions to evaluate responses which are congruent with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

What is a SJT and how has the ACT SJT been developed?

A situational judgement test (SJT) assesses applied knowledge by analysing responses to hypothetical situations. The content of this current SJT has been developed by experts specialising in ACT (and other therapeutic modalities). ACT experts have participated in a Delphi study, which helped to refine the scenarios and response options for each item in the ACT SJT.

Use of the ACT SJT:

This questionnaire can be used by professionals to self-assess their clinical application of ACT knowledge or by trainers wishing to evaluate the effectiveness of ACT training. This questionnaire is best administered to professionals who are less familiar with the ACT modality (e.g., it can be used to assess acquired ACT applied knowledge pre-and post-ACT training, or to assess any ACT specific training needs). Responses to the questionnaire will enable respondents to identify areas for improvement and refine their therapeutic abilities in working within the ACT framework.

The Situational Judgement Test of ACT Congruent Responses (ACT SJT)

This questionnaire uses scenario-based questions to evaluate responses which are congruent with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

INSTRUCTIONS: Below is a list of scenarios which may arise in different settings. Please consider the list of possible responses and tick the checkbox beside the response which best describes how you would choose to respond in each situation. Please select one response only, even if there are several plausible responses for each situation.

1. What would you do if someone you are working with says, “the things I think are true – I am ‘a failure’ and that won’t change no matter what I try”:

- A. Respond by acknowledging that their mind is giving them a hard time telling them that they are a failure. Ask them how it might affect them if they were to cling too tightly to this thought.
- B. Reflect that it sounds like they feel that the thought will always stay with them. Ask them to say more about any life experiences which taught them to believe they were a failure.
- C. Gather evidence for and against their belief that they are a failure with questions such as, would someone else describe them as a failure? Why not? What would be a more balanced way of looking at this?

2. In your previous session the person you are working with identified a goal of ‘taking the dog for a walk each morning’ and committed to trying this between sessions. At the start of your session, they say “You would be so proud of me, I managed to do it – I walked the dog every morning!”. Do you:

- A. Say that’s great they achieved that goal. Ask if that has had any effect on how they were feeling.
- B. Praise them on their effort in achieving their goal and consider how they can maintain their progress. Ask if there are any potential barriers that might arise and problem-solve how might they manage these.
- C. Stay with this experience, invite them to tell you more about what motivated them to do it and then ask them to notice how it feels now to share about acting in line with their values.

3. You ask the person you’re working with how their week has been. They launch into a long and angry ‘rant’ about how someone let them down with something. It’s hard to get a word in and you can see they are getting more and more worked up. Do you:

- A. Ask if they have had many experiences of other people letting them down and ask if you could explore a bit more about how they have navigated this previously.
- B. Say you are noticing your own feelings of tension rising as they are sharing this. Ask if they are willing to share the sensations, feelings and urges that are coming up for them.
- C. Explore this specific situation with the goal of creating a more balanced perspective on what happened. Ask what other reasons the individual might have for behaving that way.

4. What would you say if someone you are working with did not complete a task which was agreed upon the last time you had met, and they tell you it’s because they didn’t feel confident:

- A. Say that’s OK. Ask if they want to pick another task that they would be more confident to try.
- B. Ask what thoughts they were having at that moment in time, and how believable they were. Ask if there was a time in the past when they had similar thoughts but were able to challenge them.
- C. Thank them for their willingness to acknowledge their lack of confidence and encourage them to notice what showed up (thoughts, feelings, sensations, urges, memories) when they considered doing the task.

5. You ask the person you're supporting what's really important to them. They reply, "I just love the gym, when I'm there I just totally clear my head and I'm completely distracted from all the difficult thoughts I normally have." Do you:

A. Affirm how much they enjoy going to the gym and ask what personal qualities going to the gym reflects.

B. Get them to reflect on what they were thinking and feeling before going, what it was like during the gym, and after. Ask about the effects of going to the gym on controlling difficult thoughts or feelings, and if these reduced as a result.

C. Commend them for identifying an effective strategy and see how they might be able to schedule more gym time.

6. What would you do if a person you're supporting says: "The thing is, it's not 'just a thought' that 'people can't be trusted'. Every partner I've had has either been abusive or unfaithful, or both":

A. Encourage more balanced thinking by developing a pie chart which contains the number of people in their life, and in the public, and explore if all of them can't be trusted.

B. Validate their difficult past experiences, and then help explore the implications of seeing the world through this thought.

C. Show empathy and give the client space to share more about their difficult life experiences that they have had in the past, and the impact that they have had on them.

7. What would you do if, in your first meeting with someone, you ask them what they hope to achieve through your work with them and they say: "I would like to feel less stressed":

A. Try to get a sense of how severe their stress is, how it is interfering with their life now, and what is causing the stress. Ask what currently makes them feel more stressed, and what helps with reducing stress.

B. Ask if stress was no longer a concern for them, what would they like to be doing more of with their time and energy.

C. Say that it sounds like it's been a stressful time and ask what their most stressful life situations have been recently and explore how they might manage their current challenges better.

8. A person you're working with says, "I get what you're saying about these skills, but this depression is in my genes; my mum had it and my grandad was really mentally ill with it too". Do you:

A. Validate their perspective and invite them to observe how this belief makes them feel. Then, explore what happens when they say the words: '*I'm noticing the thought that...*' before '*It's in my genes*'.

B. Validate their experience and ask them to tell you a bit more about the history of depression in their family.

C. Validate genetics as one potential cause and then ask if they can list examples about how they are different from their parents in other ways.

9. You're discussing what is important and a person you're helping says: "what really matters is pleasing others. I just really want people to like me". Do you:

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| A. Reflect on how they would interact with others if pleasing them wasn't important. Ask what would happen if they were not liked. |
| B. Nod in agreement and say that it's understandable, they seem like a thoughtful person and there is a lot of societal pressure to please others. |
| C. Discuss the evolution/survival aspect of why we want to be liked by others and support them to restructure their beliefs about being liked by others. |

10. Someone you are working with says "I did what you said, and I still felt anxious". Do you:

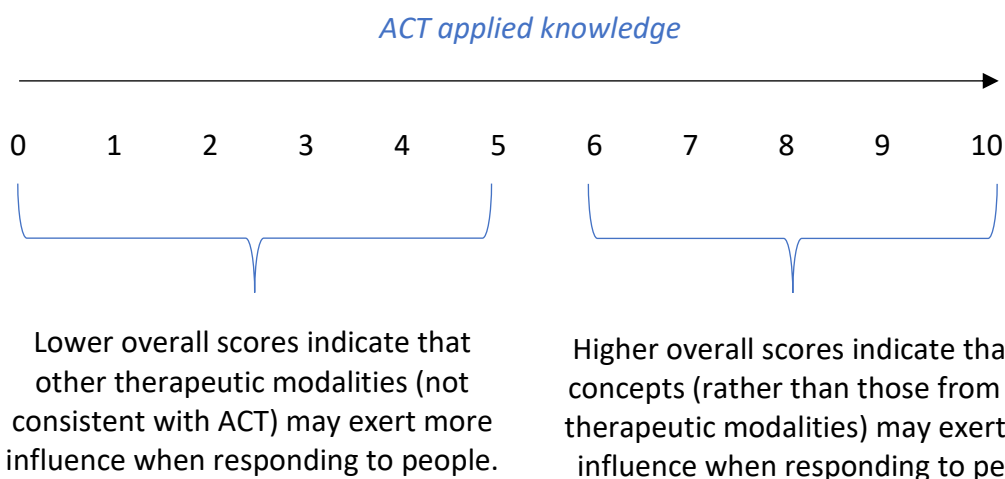
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| A. Say that you are really sorry to hear that they felt anxious and ask them if they have any ideas about how to get rid of the anxiety. |
| B. Review what relaxation techniques they are using currently, and practice these together, suggesting new ideas if required. |
| C. Acknowledge their willingness to try. Ask if their mind has them believing that the measure of success is whether they feel anxious. Then enquire about any costs of focusing on eliminating anxiety. |

Scoring the Situational Judgement Test of ACT Congruent Responses (ACT SJT)

This questionnaire used scenario-based questions to explore behaviour which is congruent with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). The following scoring instructions should not be read until after all responses have been finalised (if self-assessing), or not provided alongside the ACT SJT if assessing others.

ACT consistent responses	Please score 1 for each ACT consistent response and 0 for inconsistent responses
1. A	
2. C	
3. B	
4. C	
5. A	
6. B	
7. B	
8. A	
9. A	
10. C	
Overall score out of 10:	

What does the overall score mean?



Developer details: Jamison, K., Curran, D., White, R., and Samuel, V. (2025)

Reference: Jamison, K., Curran, D., White, R., & Samuel, V. (2025). Applied knowledge of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT): developing and assessing the utility of a situational judgement test (SJT). *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*, 38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2025.100949>