

# NSS SCORING GUIDE



## INTRODUCTION

The *Narrative Scoring Scheme* (NSS) is an assessment tool that provides an index of the student's ability to produce a structurally sound and coherent narrative. This scoring procedure combines many of the abstract categories of Story Grammar, adding features of cohesion, connecting events, rationale for characters' behavior, and referencing. Each of the scoring categories has explicit examples to establish scoring criteria, reducing the abstractness of the story grammar categories.

Samples from the following SALT reference databases have all been coded for NSS:

- Narrative Story Retell database consisting of samples from typically-developing students in grades P-6 whose primary language is English.
- Bilingual Spanish/English Story Retell database consisting of Spanish and English samples from typically-developing bilingual students in grades K-3 who are native Spanish-speakers learning English as a second language.
- Bilingual Spanish/English Unique Story database consisting of Spanish and English samples from typically-developing bilingual students in grades K-3 who are native Spanish-speakers learning English as a second language.
- Monolingual Spanish Story Retell database consisting of Spanish samples from typically-developing students in grades K-3 who are native Spanish-speakers.

These databases can be utilized to compare a student's narrative skills to those of age-matched peers. Clinicians can compare individual characteristics of the NSS or the composite score using the database. The narrative retell task may be repeated to assess progress of story retell skills.

## SCORING GUIDELINES

### **Assigning NSS Scores**

The NSS is scored using a 0 - 5 point scale. 5 points are given for "proficient" use, 3 points for "emerging" use, and 1 point for "minimal" or "immature" use. Scores of 2 and 4 are undefined and require scorer's judgment. A score of 0 is given for speaker errors. Examples include: telling the wrong story, conversing with examiner, not completing/refusing task, using wrong language creating inability of scorer to comprehend story in target language, abandoned utterances, unintelligibility, poor performance, and/or if components of the rubric are entirely imitated. A score of NA (non-applicable) is given for mechanical/examiner/operator errors. Examples include: interference from background noise, issues with recording (cut-offs, interruptions), examiner quitting before target speaker does, examiner not following protocol, and examiner asking overly specific or leading questions rather than open-ended questions or prompts. The scores for each characteristic can be considered individually or combined into a total composite score (highest possible score being 35).

Refer to the following rubric for guidance when assigning scores to each of the NSS characteristics of a narrative language sample. Examples are provided on the NSS documents for each story retell narrative.

**NSS SCORING RUBRIC**

Characteristic	Proficient (5)	Emerging (3)	Minimal/Immature (1)
<p><b>Introduction</b> The presence, absence, and qualitative depiction of character and setting components.</p>	<p><b>1) Setting:</b> - States general place and provides some detail about the setting (e.g., reference to the time of the setting, daytime, bedtime, season). - Setting elements are stated at appropriate place in story.</p> <p><b>2) Characters:</b> - Main characters are introduced with some description or detail provided.</p>	<p><b>1) Setting:</b> - States general setting but provides no detail. - Description or elements of setting are given intermittently through story. - May provide description of specific element of setting, e.g., the frog is in the jar.</p> <p><b>2) Characters:</b> - Characters of story are mentioned with no detail or description.</p>	<p>- Launches into story with no attempt to provide the setting or introduce the characters.</p>
<p><b>Character Development</b> The acknowledgment of characters and their significance throughout the story.</p>	<p>- Main character(s) and <u>all</u> supporting character(s) are mentioned. - Discriminates between main and supporting characters, e.g., more description of, or emphasis upon, main character(s). - Narrates in first person using character voice, e.g., “You get out of my tree”, said the owl.</p>	<p>- Both main and active supporting characters are mentioned. - Main characters are not clearly distinguished from supporting characters.</p>	<p>- Inconsistent mention of involved or active characters. - Character(s) necessary for advancing the plot are not present.</p>
<p><b>Mental and Emotional States</b> Score based on the vocabulary used to convey character emotions and through processes.</p>	<p>- Mental states of main and supporting characters are expressed when necessary for plot development and advancement. - A variety of mental state words are used.</p>	<p>- Some use of evident mental state words to develop character(s).</p>	<p>- No use of mental state words to develop character(s).</p>
<p><b>Referencing/ Listener Awareness</b> Scores based on the consistent and accurate use of antecedents and clarifiers throughout the story. Use of correct pronouns and proper names should be considered when scoring.</p>	<p>- Provides necessary antecedents to pronouns. - References are clear throughout story.</p>	<p>- Inconsistent use of referents/antecedents.</p>	<p>- Excessive use of pronouns. - No verbal clarifiers used. - Speaker is unaware that listener is confused.</p>

<p><b>Conflict/Resolution and Event/Reaction</b> Scores based on the presence or absence of conflict/resolutions and event/reactions required to express the story as well as how thoroughly each was described.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly states all conflict/resolutions and event/reactions critical to advancing the plot of the story.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under developed description of conflict/resolutions and event/reactions critical to advancing the plot of the story.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not all conflict/resolutions or event/reactions critical to advancing the plot are present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resolution(s) or reaction(s) stated with no mention of cause or conflict.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conflict (s) or event(s) mentioned without resolution.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many conflict/resolutions or event/reactions critical to advancing the plot are not present.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cohesion</b> Scores based on the sequence of, details given to, and transitions between each event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Events follow a logical order.</li> <li>- Critical events are included while less emphasis is placed on minor events.</li> <li>- Smooth transitions are provided between events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Events follow a logical order.</li> <li>- Excessive detail or emphasis provided on minor events leading the listener astray.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transitions to next event unclear.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimal detail given for critical events.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equal emphasis on all events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No use of smooth transitions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b> Scores are based on the conclusion of the final event as well as the wrap up of the entire story.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Story is clearly wrapped up using general concluding statements such as “and they were together again happy as could be”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specific event is concluded, but no general statement made as to the conclusion of the whole story.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stops narrating and listener may need to ask if that is the end.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scoring:</b> Each characteristic receives a scaled score 0-5. Proficient characteristics=5, Emerging=3, Minimal/Immature=1. Scores in between are undefined, use judgment. Scores of 0 and NA are defined below. A composite is scored by adding the total of the characteristic scores. Highest score possible=35.</p> <p>* <b>A score of 0</b> is given for <u>TARGET SPEAKER</u> errors (i.e., telling the wrong story, conversing with examiner, not completing/refusing task, abandoned utterances, unintelligibility, poor performance, components of rubric are given in imitation-only manner).</p> <p>* <b>A score of NA</b> (non-applicable) is given for <u>MECHANICAL/EXAMINER/OPERATOR</u> errors (i.e., interference from background noise, issues with recording, examiner quitting before target speaker does, examiner not following protocol, examiner asking overly specific or leading questions rather than using open-ended questions or prompts).</p>			

**Helpful Scoring Tips**

- Be familiar with the narrated story. It is recommended that the scorer have a copy of the story to reference while scoring.
- Print the narrative transcript.
- Read the transcript as fluidly/inclusively as possible, ignoring SALT transcription codes.
- Write comments and circle or flag key words/utterances such as mental state words or difficulty with referents and pronouns.
- For *each* characteristic, review the NSS before assigning a score. Read the criteria along the continuum of points. Determine what is present in the transcript and score accordingly. This will insure better intra- and inter-rater reliability.
- Many of the characteristics are distributed across the entire narrative. They do not occur at one static point within the story. The scoring of these characteristics must take into account the story as a whole.
- Frequently review what constitutes a score of 0 or NA. Explanations are given at the bottom of the NSS scoring rubric.
- Proficiency in assigning scores will develop with experience.

**USING SALT TO ENTER NSS SCORES**

Use **Edit menu** → **Insert Template** → **Narrative Scoring Scheme** to insert the NSS plus line template at the bottom of your transcript. Then type the individual scores after each label.

NSS Template	Example of NSS Scoring
+ Introduction:	+ Introduction: 3
+ CharacterDev:	+ CharacterDev: 2
+ MentalStates:	+ MentalStates: 2
+ Referencing:	+ Referencing: 2
+ ConflictRes:	+ ConflictRes: 1
+ Cohesion:	+ Cohesion: 3
+ Conclusion:	+ Conclusion: 2

**ANALYZING THE NSS SCORES**

- Use the **Analyze menu** → **Narrative Scoring Scheme** report to list each individual NSS score along with the composite score.
- Use the **Database menu** → **Narrative Scoring Scheme** to list each individual NSS score along with the composite score. Scores are listed for your transcript and for the selected database samples.

**TRYING IT OUT**

The free online training course, [1502: NSS – Narrative Scoring Scheme](#), has practice transcripts. Compare your scores to those of our trained transcribers.

**REFERENCES**

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