

NIHSS Scoring

Scale Item	Coma	Difficult or Confused	Tips
1a. Responsiveness	2 - for some movement 3 - flaccid or no movement	0 - if awake, alert	Can usually tell score by greeting
1b. LOC Questions	2	1 - ET tube, trauma, severe dysarthria; 2 - Aphasia, stupor, confusion	Score initial response; patient may write answers.
1c. LOC Commands	2	2 - if unable to understand or follow the commands	You are not testing grip strength. May pantomime if patient doesn't respond to command; ok if impaired by weakness
2. Best Gaze	0 - if normal eye movement noted	0 - if patient able to track your movements	Coma - hold eyes open and turn head side-to-side. Confused - Make eye contact and move to other side of bed
3. Visual	0 - if blinks to visual threat 3 - if no blink in any field 3 - if blind due to any cause	0 - if blinks to visual threat 3 - if no blink in any field 3 - if blind due to any cause	Three ways to test - finger counting, finger movement or threat; test in four quads of each eye separately
4. Facial Palsy	3	If patient is verbal, observe for facial droop. If confused and nonverbal, use noxious stimulation to elicit grimace	Check NLF in advance; 1 - for minor asymmetry on smiling; 2 - major for asymmetry of smile; 3 - for absence of movement in upper and lower face
5a, 5b. Motor Arm	3 - for no effort against gravity 4 - for no movement at all	If unable to follow directions, use observation to score. Is the patient using the arm?	UNtestable only with amputation or fusion.

NIHSS Scoring (continued)

Scale Item	Coma	Difficult or Confused	Tips
6a, 6b. Motor Leg	3 - for no effort against gravity 4 - for no movement at all	If unable to follow directions, use observation to score. Is the patient moving the leg?	UNtestable only with amputation or fusion.
7. Limb Ataxia	0	0 - if unable to follow directions	Absent if paralyzed or unable to understand. UNtestable only with amputation or fusion
8. Sensory	2	Use pinprick and observe patient's reactions if patient unable to cooperate	Ask patient, "Can you feel this, can you feel this, and does it feel the same on each side"; (do not ask if sharper/duller)
9. Best Language	3	Choose score for stupor/limited cooperation: 2 - listener carries burden of communication; 3 - garbled or mute AND not following commands	Best language and COMPREHENSION; describe scene, name objects and read phrases. If blind, place object in hand and have patient describe
10. Dysarthria	2	1 - Difficult to understand (regardless of cause), 2 - speech not understandable, garbled	Listen to their words; if they can't read - have them repeat words or listen to the words they do say. UNtestable only with physical barrier
11. Extinction and Inattention	0	Score only if present	Looking for lack of awareness with double tactile/visual stimulation
Reminders:	a. Perform and score in numerical order.	b. Accept first response. c. Do not coach.	