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# Faux Pas Recognition Test (Adult Version)

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## **Faux Pas Recognition Test (Adult Version)**

Created by Valerie Stone & Simon Baron-Cohen

### **Correct citations for use of this test:**

- Stone, V.E., Baron-Cohen, S. & Knight, R.T. (1998). Frontal lobe contributions to theory of mind. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 10, 640-656.
- Gregory, C. , Lough, S., Stone, V.E., Erzinclioglu, S., Martin, L., Baron-Cohen, S. & Hodges, J. (2002). Theory of mind in frontotemporal dementia and Alzheimer's disease: Theoretical and practical implications. *Brain*, 125, 752-64.

The adult version was roughly based on the children's version of the test used in:

- Baron-Cohen, S., O'Riordan, M., Jones, R., Stone, V.E. & Plaisted, K. (1999). A new test of social sensitivity: Detection of faux pas in normal children and children with Asperger syndrome. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 29, 407-418.

1.        Vicky was at a party at her friend Oliver's house. She was talking to Oliver when another woman came up to them. She was one of Oliver's neighbors. The woman said, "Hello," then turned to Vicky and said, " I don't think we've met. I'm Maria, what's your name?" "I'm Vicky." "Would anyone like something to drink?" Oliver asked.

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Oliver know that Vicky and Maria did not know each other?

How do you think Vicky felt?

**Control questions:** In the story, where was Vicky?

Did Vicky and Maria know each other?

2.        Helen's husband was throwing a surprise party for her birthday. He invited Sarah, a friend of Helen's, and said, "Don't tell anyone, especially Helen." The day before the party, Helen was over at Sarah's and Sarah spilled some coffee on a new dress that was hanging over her chair. "Oh!" said Sarah, "I was going to wear this to your party!" "What party?" said Helen. "Come on," said Sarah, "Let's go see if we can get the stain out."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Sarah remember that the party was a surprise party?

How do you think Helen felt?

**Control question:** In the story, who was the surprise party for?

What got spilled on the dress?

3.        Jim was shopping for a shirt to match his suit. The salesman showed him several shirts. Jim looked at them and finally found one that was the right color. But when he went to the dressing room and tried it on, it didn't fit. "I'm afraid it's too small," he said to the salesman. "Not to worry," the salesman said. "We'll get some in next week in a larger size." "Great. I'll just come back then," Jim said.

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes,** ask:

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When he tried on the shirt, did Jim know they didn't have it in his size?

How do you think Jim felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what was Jim shopping for?

Why was he going to come back next week?

4.        Jill had just moved into a new apartment. Jill went shopping and bought some new curtains for her bedroom. When she had just finished decorating the apartment, her best friend, Lisa, came over. Jill gave her a tour of the apartment and asked, "How do you like my bedroom?" "Those curtains are horrible," Lisa said. "I hope you're going to get some new ones!"

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Lisa know who had bought the curtains?

How do you think Jill felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what had Jill just bought?

How long had Jill lived in this apartment?

5.        Bob went to the barber for a haircut. "How would you like it cut?" the barber asked. "I'd like the same style as I have now, only take about an inch off," Bob replied. The barber cut it a little uneven in the front, so he had to cut it shorter to even it out. "I'm afraid it's a bit shorter than you asked for," said the barber. "Oh well," Bob said, "it'll grow out."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

While he was getting the haircut, did Bob know the barber was cutting it too short?

How do you think Bob felt?

**Control question:** In the story, how did Bob want his hair cut?

How did the barber cut his hair?

6.        John stopped off at the gas station on the way home to fill up his car. He gave the cashier his credit card. The cashier ran it through the machine at the counter. "I'm sorry," she said, "the machine won't accept your card." "Hmmm, that's funny," John said. "Well, I'll just pay in cash." He gave her twenty dollars and said, "I filled up the tank with unleaded."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When he handed his card to the cashier, did John know the machine wouldn't take his card?

How do you think John felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what did John stop off to buy?

Why did he pay in cash?



7. Sally is a three-year-old girl with a round face and short blonde hair. She was at her Aunt Carol's house. The doorbell rang and her Aunt Carol answered it. It was Mary, a neighbor. "Hi," Aunt Carol said, "Nice of you to stop by." Mary said, "Hello," then looked at Sally and said, "Oh, I don't think I've met this little boy. What's your name?"

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Mary know that Sally was a girl?

How do you think Sally felt?

**Control question:** In the story, where was Sally?

Who came to visit?

8.        Joan took her dog, Zack, out to the park. She threw a stick for him to chase. When they had been there a while, Pam, a neighbor of hers, passed by. They chatted for a few minutes. Then Pam asked, "Are you heading home? Would you like to walk together?" "Sure," Joan said. She called Zack, but he was busy chasing pigeons and didn't come. "It looks like he's not ready to go," she said. "I think we'll stay." "OK," Pam said. "I'll see you later."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When she invited her, did Pam know that Joan wouldn't be able to walk home with her?

How do you think Pam felt?

**Control question:** In the story, where had Joan taken Zack?

Why didn't she walk with her friend Pam?

9. Joanne had had a major role in last year's school play and she really wanted the lead role this year. She took acting classes, and in the spring, she auditioned for the play. The day the decisions were posted, she went before class to check the list of who had made the play. She hadn't made the lead and had instead been cast in a minor role. She ran into her boyfriend in the hall and told him what had happened. "I'm sorry," he said. "You must be disappointed." "Yes," Joanne answered, "I have to decide whether to take this role."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When he first ran into her in the hall, did Joanne's boyfriend know that she hadn't gotten the role?

How do you think Joanne felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what role did Joanne get?

What kind of role had she had the previous year?

What did her boyfriend say?

10. Joe was at the library. He found the book he wanted about hiking in the Grand Canyon and went up to the front counter to check it out. When he looked in his wallet, he discovered he had left his library card at home. "I'm sorry," he said to the woman behind the counter. "I seem to have left my library card at home." "That's OK," she answered. "Tell me your name, and if we have you in the computer, you can check out the book just by showing me your driver's license."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When Joe went into the library, did he realize he didn't have his library card?

How do you think Joe felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what book did Joe get at the library?

Was he going to be able to check it out?

11. Jean West, a manager in Abco Software Design, called a meeting for all of the staff. "I have something to tell you," she said. "John Morehouse, one of our accountants, is very sick with cancer and he's in the hospital." Everyone was quiet, absorbing the news, when Robert, a software engineer, arrived late. "Hey, I heard this great joke last night!" Robert said. "What did the terminally ill patient say to his doctor?" Jean said, "Okay, let's get down to business in the meeting."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When he came in, did Robert know that the accountant was sick with cancer?

How do you think Jean, the manager, felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what did Jean, the manager, tell the people in the meeting?

Who arrived late to the meeting?

12.     Mike, a nine-year-old boy, just started at a new school. He was in one of the stalls in the restroom at school. Joe and Peter, two other boys, came in and were standing at the sinks talking. Joe said, "You know that new guy in the class? His name's Mike. Doesn't he look weird? And he's so short!" Mike came out of the stall and Joe and Peter saw him. Peter said, "Oh hi, Mike! Are you going out to play football now?"

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When Joe was talking to Peter, did he know that Mike was in one of the stalls?

How do you think Mike felt?

**Control question:** In the story, where was Mike while Joe and Peter were talking?

What did Joe say about Mike?

13.      Kim's cousin, Scott, was coming to visit and Kim made an apple pie especially for him. After dinner, she said, "I made a pie just for you. It's in the kitchen." "Mmmm," replied Scott, "It smells great! I love pies, except for apple, of course."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When he smelled the pie, did Scott know it was an apple pie?

How do you think Kim felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what kind of pie did Kim make?

How did Kim and Scott know each other?

14.     Jeanette bought her friend, Anne, a crystal bowl for a wedding gift. Anne had a big wedding and there were a lot of presents to keep track of. About a year later, Jeanette was over one night at Anne's for dinner. Jeanette dropped a wine bottle by accident on the crystal bowl and the bowl shattered. "I'm really sorry. I've broken the bowl," said Jeanette. "Don't worry," said Anne. "I never liked it anyway. Someone gave it to me for my wedding."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Anne remember that Jeanette had given her the bowl?

How do you think Jeanette felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what did Jeanette give Anne for her wedding?

How did the bowl get broken?



15.     At Fernhaven Elementary School, there was a story competition. Everyone was invited to enter. Several of the fifth graders did so. Christine, a fifth grader, loved the story she had entered in the competition. A few days later, the results of the competition were announced: Christine's story had not won anything and a classmate, Jake, had won first prize. The following day, Christine was sitting on a bench with Jake. They were looking at his first prize trophy. Jake said, "It was so easy to win that contest. All of the other stories in the competition were terrible." "Where are you going to put your trophy?" asked Christine.

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Jake know that Christine had entered a story in the contest?

How do you think Christine felt?

**Control question:** In the story, who won the contest?

Did Christine's story win anything?

16. Tim was in a restaurant. He spilled some coffee on the floor by accident. "I'll get you another cup of coffee," said the waiter. The waiter was gone for a while. Jack was another customer in the restaurant, standing by the cashier waiting to pay. Tim went up to Jack and said, "I spilled coffee over by my table. Can you mop it up?"

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Tim know that Jack was another customer?

How do you think Jack felt?

**Control question:** In the story, why was Jack standing by the cashier?

What did Tim spill?

17. Eleanor was waiting at the bus stop. The bus was late and she had been standing there a long time. She was 65 and it made her tired to stand for so long. When the bus finally came, it was crowded and there were no seats left. She saw a neighbor, Paul, standing in the aisle of the bus. "Hello, Eleanor," he said. "Were you waiting there long?" "About 20 minutes," she replied. A young man who was sitting down got up. "Ma'am, would you like my seat?"

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When Eleanor got on the bus, did Paul know how long she had been waiting?

How do you think Eleanor felt?

**Control question:** In the story, why was Eleanor waiting at the bus stop for 20 minutes?

Were there any seats available on the bus when she got on?

18. Roger had just started work at a new office. One day, in the coffee room, he was talking to a new friend, Andrew. "What does your wife do?" Andrew asked. "She's a lawyer," answered Roger. A few minutes later, Claire came into the coffee room looking irritated. "I just had the worst phone call," she told them. "Lawyers are all so arrogant and greedy. I can't stand them." "Do you want to come look over these reports?" Andrew asked Claire. "Not now," she replied, "I need my coffee."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Claire know that Roger's wife was a lawyer?

How do you think Roger felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what does Roger's wife do for a living?

Where were Roger and Andrew talking?

19.      Richard bought a new car, a red Peugeot. A few weeks after he bought it, he backed it into his neighbor Ted's car, an old beat-up Volvo. His new car wasn't damaged at all and he didn't do much damage to Ted's car either -- just a scratch in the paint above the wheel. Still, he went up and knocked on the door. When Ted answered, Richard said, "I'm really sorry. I've just put a small scratch on your car." Ted looked at it and said, "Don't worry. It was only an accident."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

Did Richard know what his neighbor Ted's reaction would be?

How do you think Ted felt?

**Control question:** In the story, what did Richard do to Ted's car?

How did Ted react?

20.      Louise went to the butcher to buy some meat. It was crowded and noisy in the shop. She asked the butcher, "Do you have any free-range chickens?" He nodded and started to wrap up a roasted chicken for her. "Excuse me," she said, "I must not have spoken clearly. I asked if you had any free-range chickens." "Oh, sorry," the butcher said, "we're all out of them."

Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

**If yes, ask:**

Who said something they shouldn't have said or something awkward?

Why shouldn't he/she have said it or why was it awkward?

Why do you think he/she said it?

When he started wrapping up a chicken for Louise, did the butcher know that she wanted a free-range chicken?

How do you think Louise felt?

**Control question:** In the story, where did Louise go?

Why did the butcher start to wrap up a roasted chicken for her?

### **Administering the faux pas task:**

Print out a version of the test that has just the stories, not the questions you ask. Put this in front of the participant. Say, "I'm going to be reading you some brief stories and asking you some questions about it. You have a copy of the story in front of you so you can read along and go back to it."

Then read the stories out loud and ask the questions. If they say to the first question, no, no one said anything they shouldn't have said or that was awkward, skip to the control questions for that story.

Make sure you ask the control questions, whether or not they say "yes or no" about someone saying something awkward.

### **Scoring the faux pas task:**

Basically, use common sense. For each story containing a faux pas (stories 2, 4, 7, 11-16, and 18), the subject gets 1 point for each question answered correctly.

**First question:** "Did anyone say something they shouldn't have said?"

Faux pas stories:	Correct: Yes	Incorrect: No
Control stories:	Incorrect: Yes	Correct: No

**Second question:** "Who said something they shouldn't have said?"

Any answer that unambiguously identifies the correct person is correct.

story about calling little girl a boy: Mary (also acceptable: the neighbor)

story about crystal bowl: Anne (also acceptable: the hostess, or the woman who got married, etc.)

story about lawyers: Claire (also acceptable: the woman, or the woman in a bad mood, etc.)

story about curtains: Lisa (also acceptable: the friend)

story about cancer joke: Robert (also acceptable: the guy who came in late)

story about losing story contest: Jake (also acceptable: the guy who won)

story about spilled coffee: Tim (also acceptable: the guy who spilled his coffee)

story about new kid in school: Joe (also acceptable: Joe and Peter)

story about surprise party: Sarah (also acceptable: the woman who spilled the coffee)

story about pie: Joe (also acceptable: Kim's cousin)

Subjects who answer "no" to the first question don't get asked this question and score a 0 for this one.

Third question: "Why shouldn't they have said it?"

Any reasonable answer that makes reference to the faux pas is acceptable. The subject does not have to explicitly mention mental states, as in, "He didn't know about the guy who was sick with cancer, but everyone else did." It is sufficient to say, "Because John is terminally ill," or "because the guy standing right there is married to a lawyer," or "you shouldn't walk into a new apartment and criticize it; you don't know who bought what." This question only gets scored as incorrect if the person's answer doesn't reflect an understanding of the faux pas, that is, of what would have been offensive. Examples (from amygdala patients): "The neighbor shouldn't have called her little. Kids like to feel grown up." (Misses the point that Sally is a girl, not a boy.) "Claire shouldn't tell him she needs her coffee." (Misses the insult to Roger.) "You shouldn't come into a meeting late." (Doesn't mention the inappropriate joke.)

Subjects who answer "no" to the first question don't get asked this question, and score a 0 for this one.

Fourth question: "Why did they say it?" or "Why do you think they said it?"

Again, any reasonable answer that makes reference to the faux pas is acceptable. As long as the subject's answer indicates that they understand that one of the story characters didn't know something or didn't realize something, it is correct, even if they do not explicitly mention mental states. This question gets scored as incorrect if the subject seems to think that the person said it deliberately. Some more examples, also from patients: "Tim shouldn't order around other customers. He just basically went up to an equal and said, 'On your knees, boy.'" (Doesn't reflect an understanding that Tim mistook Jack for someone who worked at the restaurant.) "He was trying to put Christine down, make himself one up by gloating." (Doesn't reflect that he didn't know Christine was in the contest.) "She was trying to make Helen feel jealous." (Looks like a confabulation, and doesn't mention surprise party.) Some patients also just say, "I don't know," which also gets a zero.

Subjects who answer "no" to the first question don't get asked this question, and score a 0 for this one.

Fifth question: Did X know that Y? Again, this is to test whether they realize the faux pas was unintentional. Scoring is straightforward.

Sixth question: How did X feel? A test of subjects' empathy for the story characters. Should reflect feelings of hurt, anger, embarrassment, disappointment, as appropriate.



Seventh and eighth questions: Control questions. These should tell you if the person has gotten confused and forgotten the details of the story. Answers are pretty obvious. These are scored separately from the other questions.

Examples for faux pas stories,

In the story, where was Sally? "At her aunt Carol's house." (I think one subject said, "In the doorway next to her aunt," and I scored it as correct.)

In the story, what had Jeannette given Anne for her wedding? "A crystal bowl," "a bowl."

In the story, what did Robert's wife do for a living? "She was a lawyer."

In the story, what had Jill just bought? "New curtains," "curtains."

In the story, what had Jean West just told people in the meeting? "VP had cancer."

In the story, who won the competition? "Jake."

In the story, where was Jack standing? "By the cashier."

In the story, where was Mike while Joe and Peter were talking? "In the stalls (cubicles)."

In the story, who was Helen's husband throwing a surprise party for? "Helen."

In the story, what kind of pie had Kim made? "Apple."

Dorsolateral frontal patients, for example, often got some of these wrong. One patient said the surprise party was for Sarah's birthday, and that Helen was upset because her husband was throwing a party for another woman, and she wondered if they were having an affair.

All subjects get asked these questions, even if they answer "no" to the first question.

Overall, there are a total of 60 points that subjects can get on the faux-pas-related questions on the 10 faux pas stories. Someone who answers "no" to the first question for a story will get 0 points for that whole story. On the 10 control stories, score 2 points if they get it correct that no one said anything they shouldn't have said, 0 if they say someone said something they shouldn't have said, for a total of 20 points on the control stories. Score 1 point each for control questions on these stories.

Report separate scores for faux-pas-related questions on the faux pas stories, control questions on the faux pas stories, the faux-pas-related question on the control stories, and the control questions on the control stories. Then you can get a feel for if they are making more faux-pas-related errors (theory of mind errors) than errors on the factual control questions.

If anyone answers any of the control questions incorrectly, their other errors for that story should be interpreted with caution. You can throw out their other answers for that story and score their answers on the remaining stories, calculating a percent correct out of 54 points total, or 48 or whatever.

Discrepancies between answers to the first question and to the fifth question should be noted.