

Drs. Hickie and Block are experienced neuropsychologists with a passion for mentoring emerging neuropsychologists. This workbook combines real-world advice, actionable strategies, and inspiring tips to empower you on the path to becoming a board-certified neuropsychologist. There is no roadmap like this.

—**Marc A. Norman, PhD**, University of California, San Diego

This book pulls back the curtain as to how to pursue a career in clinical neuropsychology, from start to finish. For the first time, aspiring and current students have a comprehensive go-to resource that provides clear and practical hands-on tools, coupled with sound advice from recognized experts in education and training, to guide them on their path to specialization in clinical neuropsychology.

—**Scott A. Sperling, PsyD, ABPP-CN**, Center for Neurological Restoration, Neurological Institute, Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, OH

An essential resource for aspiring neuropsychologists, this workbook provides a clear, step-by-step guide to becoming a neuropsychologist from early preparation in high school and undergraduate to applying to graduate programs, internships, and fellowships, to obtaining licensure and professional board certification. Packed with practical tips, strategies, and worksheets, it helps readers plan, organize, and track their progress with ease. Like having a personal advisor or coach by your side, this book simplifies a complex journey into an achievable roadmap for success in neuropsychology.

—**David S. Sabsevit, PhD, ABPP**, Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Psychology, Joint Appointment in Neurosurgery, College of Medicine, Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL

This workbook is an essential companion to the parent volume, *The Neuropsychologist's Roadmap: A Training and Career Guide*. It builds on the book as the authors now give you practical and direct intel you need to move through the many stages of the professional neuropsychologist's journey. The authors share important considerations for pursuing each step, but they also share the rationale of why and how their tips lead to success. This workbook importantly evens the playing field in a competitive profession and allows everyone access to personalized specialty-specific professional coaching!

—**Beth K. Rush, PhD, ABPP**, Department of Psychiatry & Psychology, Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL

The Neuropsychologist's Workbook fills a critical gap by highlighting examples of the multiple steps involved in becoming a clinical neuropsychologist. Covering key topics like preparing graduate school applications, navigating internships and postdoctoral fellowships, obtaining licensure, and achieving board certification, it concludes with practical advice on securing a first position in neuropsychology. These blueprints enable aspiring neuropsychologists to avoid missteps, stay on track, and establish the necessary foundation for a fulfilling neuropsychology career in a variety of professional settings.

—**David W. Loring, PhD, ABPP-CN**, Professor, Departments of Neurology and Pediatrics, and Neuropsychology Program Director (Neurology), Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vii
1. On Becoming a Neuropsychologist	3
2. Early Preparation: High School and Undergraduate	11
3. Applying and Getting Into Graduate School	23
4. Preparing for and Obtaining a Predoctoral Internship in Neuropsychology	55
5. Preparing for and Obtaining a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Neuropsychology	87
6. Professional Licensure and Credentialing	103
7. Board Certification in Neuropsychology	117
8. Finding a Job: Careers in Neuropsychology	135
References	155
Index	159
About the Authors	167

1

On Becoming a Neuropsychologist

This book is designed to be a companion to *The Neuropsychologist's Roadmap: A Training and Career Guide* (Block, 2021). As a workbook, it will serve as a practical and more applied guide to help you move through the various steps in the journey to becoming a neuropsychologist. Throughout this book, you will come across clinical material that has been adequately disguised to protect client identity. If you've picked up this workbook or its companion text, you must be seriously considering a career in neuropsychology. We're glad you found us! Neuropsychology is an exciting, intellectually stimulating, diverse, and rewarding profession. But what exactly is neuropsychology?

DEFINITION OF NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

Neuropsychology is a branch of psychology that involves the study of brain and behavior relationships. It draws from a diverse array of disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, neurology, and neuroscience. It is both a science and practice. It is science in that it involves the experimental study of what happens to the brain when it is injured or ailing and how we can enhance brain health and daily function. Neuropsychology is also concerned with the study of how the healthy brain functions, adapts, and maintains its well-being and how a healthy brain supports cognitive processes, behaviors, and emotions. In this way, it is related to other research professions such as neuroscience. It is also a clinical specialty, involving the care of patients and their

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000448-001>

The Neuropsychologist's Workbook: A Hands-On Roadmap to Training and Developing Your Career, by C. Block and S. Hickie

Copyright © 2025 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.

families. In this way, it is related to other health professions, such as neurology, psychiatry, rehabilitative therapies, and counseling.

Neuropsychologists wear a lot of hats. We are diagnosticians, interventionists, scientists/researchers, educators, consultants, and advocates. We work in a variety of settings—university or college departments, medical centers associated with universities or colleges (or what we call an “academic medical center”), private or community hospitals, children’s hospitals, rehabilitation hospitals/centers, Veterans Affairs medical centers, and private practice. We also are found in the active duty military, the Department of Defense, government agencies (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, federal prisons), and in industry consulting firms. Neuropsychologists can also be involved in forensic work—they can work with attorneys, courts, and other legal professionals (in civil and criminal matters) to provide expertise on matters where brain function and behavior are in question. As you can see, this leaves the door open to a lot of different career options once you decide on neuropsychology.

One of the mainstays of neuropsychology as a specialty is the neuropsychological assessment, which assesses a range of domains using a multi-component approach (see Exhibit 1.1). Assessments are used to answer a variety of questions. Here are just some of the scenarios in which a neuropsychologist may be asked to conduct an assessment and the types of questions that they are asked to answer with their assessment:

- Ms. Shah is a 70-year-old woman who is attending her annual physical exam. Her daughter came to the appointment and voices some concerns about her mother’s memory. Specifically, she says that Ms. Shah has gotten lost driving home from church. She’s noticed that her mother keeps asking the same questions repeatedly. Ms. Shah is referred for a neuropsychological assessment to determine whether these changes reflect normal aging, or if this could be the onset of a neurodegenerative condition—and if so, which one?
- Mr. Porgie is a 45-year-old man who suffered a stroke a year ago. Before his stroke, he worked as a high-level executive at a large company. Immediately after the stroke, he noticed problems with his attention and memory. Even though he feels he has made huge strides in the past year with his therapies, he isn’t quite sure whether he can return to work in his previous role. His speech therapist refers Mr. Porgie for a neuropsychological assessment to help determine whether he is ready to return to work.
- Rosie Posie is going into the third grade. She has a history of seizures, which are fairly well controlled with medication, but she is starting to fall behind in school. In the past few months, she has been having meltdowns every day after school. Her epileptologist refers her to a neuropsychologist to help determine what might be driving her recent changes.

As you can see, assessments are used for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to establishing or confirming a diagnosis, assisting with differential

EXHIBIT 1.1**Neuropsychological Assessment Components and Domains****Assessment Components**

- *Clinical interview:* This interview involves meeting with the patient, and maybe also including a friend or family member, to gain background and other historical information to provide context to their cognitive changes and test results. The clinical interview covers recent/current changes in thinking (cognition), emotional well-being or personality, behavior, and ability to perform daily activities. It also covers recent medical circumstances, medical or psychiatric diagnoses in the patient and their family history, medications, brain imaging and other lab results, developmental history, school and work history, and current living situation (among other things).
- *Behavioral observations:* These are recorded observations of any cognitive, behavioral, or emotional concerns that arise during the clinical interview or testing. Is the patient alert or confused? Do they seem depressed and tearful, anxious, or irritable? Do they handle difficult tests well, or do they get frustrated easily? Are there any sensory or physical issues interfering with testing, such as vision problems or hand tremors? And so on.
- *Testing:* The neuropsychologist then conducts testing, although many instead use a trained test technician (a psychometrist), one-on-one with the patient. This entails a whole battery of tests that sample the various domains listed later in the table. Testing can take anywhere from 1 hour to 8 or more hours, although appointment length has trended downward as the field and health care in general have evolved over time.
- *Neuropsychological report:* After testing is done, the neuropsychologist reviews and integrates information and data collected during the interview, testing, and through behavioral observations. They produce a final report that is then provided to the person or agency that requested the assessment. This report contains a summarization of test results with data, explanation of what those results mean, and recommendations to enhance medical care, improve daily functioning, and develop a follow-up plan if needed.
- *Feedback:* After the report is complete, the neuropsychologist typically meets again with the patient and family to review findings and recommendations. This provides an opportunity for the patient and family to ask questions.

Assessment Domains

- Orientation to person, time, place, and circumstance
 - Sensory and motor functioning
 - Intellectual functioning
 - Academic achievement
 - Speech and language
 - Visuospatial and constructional skills
 - Attention and working memory
 - Processing speed
 - Verbal learning and memory
 - Nonverbal/visual learning and memory
 - Executive functioning
 - Mood and personality
 - Behavioral health
-

diagnosis, providing a baseline for tracking purposes, determining one's ability to perform activities of daily living (e.g., basic tasks such as brushing one's hair up to more complex ones like driving, managing medications, paying bills, and attending medical appointments), determining one's decision-making ability (e.g., for financial or medical decisions), documenting deficits for disability benefits or accommodations to make work or school more manageable, determining candidacy or risk as part of a presurgical workup, and assisting in treatment planning.

Neuropsychologists are also often engaged in treatment. For instance, they conduct psychotherapy to help someone adjust to a new diagnosis or its associated cognitive, emotional, and functional deficits. They also conduct cognitive rehabilitation/remediation treatment, which is a special form of therapy that helps directly address cognitive deficits—by helping someone recover as much as possible or by compensating for what cannot be recovered by utilizing their cognitive strengths and other available tools and technologies.

Neuropsychologists are also involved in research, education, and mentorship. Some examples of research studies in which they may be involved include the following:

- Studying the efficacy of new medications or therapeutic interventions for neurological disorders.
- Using neuroimaging techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging to investigate brain function in clinical populations at rest or during specific tasks.
- Tracking individuals over time to understand how neurological conditions progress and how they impact cognition and behavior, as well as which factors increase or decrease risk of progression.
- Investigating the neural basis of cognitive functions such as attention, language, learning, and memory.
- Examining neurological disorders that have a genetic basis and identifying genetic markers associated with these conditions; exploring how the brain develops in infants, children, and adolescents and how genetic and environmental factors influence outcomes
- Investigating the brain's potential to reorganize itself after injury or disease and developing rehabilitation strategies to optimize recovery.
- Exploring how cultural factors influence brain structure, function, behavior, and test performance.

A day in the life of a neuropsychologist can look different based on the setting and what portion of their time is spent on which of these tasks because often, neuropsychologists are involved in several of these activities. Here is what a day might look like across several different neuropsychologists:

- Dr. Vasquez is a neuropsychologist in the psychology department at ABC University. She has several grants that support her work on the neuroimaging of brain tumors. She trains graduate students in her lab. She teaches two courses in the graduate clinical psychology program. She also supervises several assessment cases in the university training clinic.
- Dr. Smith is a neuropsychologist at XYZ Rehabilitation Center. It is a private facility, but he holds an appointment at a nearby medical school. He performs a combination of cognitive rehabilitation and assessment in persons with brain injury, stroke, and multiple sclerosis. He also does some legal consultations on the side.
- Dr. Azarenka is a clinical neuropsychologist in the neurology department at the School of Medicine. They conduct 8 to 10 assessments per week. They also attend and present at educational events, such as case conferences. They are also involved in training; they conduct supervision every week with their trainees and review their testing and reports. They also collaborate on a research study with other neurologists in the department.

NEUROPSYCHOLOGY AND RELATED PROFESSIONS

You may be asking how a neuropsychologist may differ from other health professions. There are many points of overlap in that they work with individuals with neurological and psychiatric conditions, but there are some crucial differences.

Neuropsychology Versus Neurology

Both neuropsychologists and neurologists serve clinical patients with neurological disorders and diseases. Neurology primarily deals with the medical aspects of neurological disorders, focusing on diagnosis and medical treatment (e.g., medications, surgery). A neuropsychologist focuses on assessing the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impact of the condition on daily life. When a neuropsychologist is involved in treatment, they use cognitive rehabilitation techniques and behavioral interventions. The pathway to a career in neuropsychology involves a doctoral degree with further specialization in neuropsychology. Neurology involves medical school followed by a residency in neurology. Additional fellowships may be pursued for specialized areas within neurology.

Neuropsychology Versus Psychiatry

Both neuropsychologists and psychiatrists work with patients who have mental health/psychiatric conditions. Psychiatry concentrates on diagnosing and treating mental health conditions through medication management and sometimes

various forms of therapy. Similar to neurology, the training pathway involves medical school, followed by a residency in psychiatry.

Neuropsychology Versus Occupational or Speech Therapy

Occupational therapists (OTs) and speech/language pathologists (SLPs) also work with patients who are affected by neurological (and other medical) conditions. An OT's emphasis is on assessing and restoring a person's ability to perform daily activities, enhancing their engagement in self-care, work, and other activities. OTs work directly with their patients to teach techniques, how to use adaptive equipment, and ways to modify the environment to improve their ability to perform their daily activities independently. SLPs specialize in communication and swallowing disorders. They also work directly with their patients, creating treatment plans and using various exercises to improve speech, language, and swallowing abilities. The pathway to be an OT or SLP typically involves master's level training.

Neuropsychology Versus Psychometry

A psychometrist typically works under the supervision of a psychologist. They serve the same patient population. A psychometrist administers and scores assessment measures, but they do not interpret results, make diagnoses, develop treatment plans, or (typically) write reports. The training pathway typically involves a bachelor's or master's degree.

As you can see, there are many points of overlap between these professions. Which profession you pick really depends on your interests, the degree to which you want to be involved in patient care and treatment, and your ability to devote time to a specific training pathway. If you like neuropsychological assessment and working directly with patients but don't want to spend 6 to 8 years training, you may enjoy being a psychometrist. If you like working one-on-one with neurological populations but are not interested in medical school and don't like the idea of conducting neuropsychological assessments, you may enjoy being an OT or SLP. If you love the brain and cognition but are not keen on the idea of clinical work, you may enjoy being a neuroscientist or experimental psychologist.

THE JOURNEY TO BECOMING A NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST

Becoming a neuropsychologist requires dedication, extensive education, and practical training. The typical pathway to becoming a neuropsychologist involves an undergraduate degree (e.g., bachelor's degree in psychology, neuroscience, or a related field) focusing on coursework in neuroscience, research methods, and psychology. At least in the United States, the next step is a doctoral graduate program—ideally one that has specialized coursework in neuropsychology (i.e., assessment, neuroanatomy) and has neuropsychologists that can serve as

supervisors and mentors, as well as neuropsychology practica (a supervised training experience that offers hands-on opportunities to learn neuropsychological knowledge and skills). The final year of graduate training is internship, which involves 1 year of full-time work at a new institution. Neuropsychologists are also expected to complete 2 years of postdoctoral training for further specialization, which is necessary for board certification.

Our workbook is organized by each step of the training journey to becoming a neuropsychologist, so we have a chapter each dedicated to early preparation (i.e., high school and undergrad), graduate school, internship, and postdoctoral fellowship. We also cover topics in the early career phase and have a chapter each on licensure, board certification, and the first job. Within each of these chapters, we include information, advice, and activities designed to help you assess and improve your readiness to apply to the next step, locate and apply to programs/positions, practice interview skills, and identify any potential roadblocks. We wanted to ensure that our book was timely, relevant, and data driven. So before writing this workbook, we created a survey and sent it out to actual directors/codirectors and supervisors within neuropsychology training programs who are involved in the review and selection of applicants for graduate school, internship, and postdoctoral fellowship or in the review and selection of neuropsychology job candidates to ensure that the advice provided in this book is up-to-date, accurate, and timely. Fifty-seven neuropsychologists¹ responded, and we've infused their advice into each of our chapters. As a nice complement to the broad overview provided in *The Neuropsychologist's Roadmap*, you will find many visual aids, thought exercises, worksheets, and checklists that you can use to aid you on your journey to becoming a neuropsychologist. To get the most out of this workbook, we recommend that you actively engage with the materials. For our thought exercises and brainstorming activities, take the time to review the prompts and write down what you are thinking. Use our sample materials as a starting point, but make sure to adapt them so they are personalized for your needs and setting. Feel free to make copies of worksheets, tables, and checklists. These are designed to help you organize everything effectively, and they will help you be systematic as you check off items to make sure you don't miss an important step. And between this workbook and the main text, you will be well-prepared to conquer each step of that journey!

¹If you would like group-level data on respondent demographics and information about the training programs, please email the authors (Block.cady@mayo.edu or s.diana.na@gmail.com).