



PRELIMINARY SUGGESTIBILITY TESTING

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What It Is, Why We Use It, and How It Guides Hypnosis

What Is Suggestibility Testing?

Suggestibility testing is a **brief non-invasive set of exercises used before formal hypnosis** to observe how a client:

- Responds to suggestion
- Processes language
- Engages imagination
- Follows internal vs external focus
- Responds to permissive vs authoritative guidance

NOTE: These are not tests of intelligence, willpower, or “hypnotizability.”

They are communication diagnostics.

We are not testing the client.

We are learning how to speak their unconscious language.

Why We Do Suggestibility Testing

Suggestibility testing serves multiple purposes at once:

1. Builds Expectancy and Confidence

- The client experiences something happening
- This reduces skepticism and performance anxiety

- Success creates positive anticipation for hypnosis

Suggestibility testing demonstrates that hypnotic phenomena are real and happening to them ...Reduces anxiety by proving they can respond to suggestions...Builds expectancy and belief in the process...Creates early success that builds momentum

2. Establishes Rapport and Trust

- Client learns: “I can follow this process”
- Practitioner learns how the client responds
- Creates safety and cooperation

3. Reveals Response Style

We observe:

- Visual vs kinesthetic dominance (Reveals the client’s natural response pattern (kinesthetic, visual, analytical)
- Literal vs imaginative responders
- Speed of response
- Depth of absorption
- Resistance or compliance tendencies

What Testing Reveals About Your Client Response Patterns:

- **Strong immediate responders:** Can move quickly into deeper work; respond well to direct suggestions
- **Gradual responders:** Need more time and layering; benefit from permissive, accumulating suggestions
- **Analytical responders:** May need education about the process; respond to logic and explanation, use analytical techniques
- **Minimal initial responders:** They are not non-hypnotizable —they just need different approach, more rapport, coaching and/or bypass methods

4. Primes the Nervous System

- Light trance begins naturally
- Attention narrows
- Body responds before conscious analysis

What Suggestibility Testing Tells Us About Our Client

Suggestibility testing gives us usable data:

We learn:

- How easily they follow suggestions
- Whether they respond better to:
 - Permissive language (“you may notice...”)
 - Authoritative language (“your hands will...”)
- Whether they respond better to:
 - Ideomotor movement
 - Imagination
 - Physical sensation
- How quickly belief follows experience

This tells us:

- How to word the induction
- How direct to be
- How fast to pace
- Which techniques will land most easily

How We Use the Results

IMPORTANT: We match the hypnosis to the client, not the other way around.

- Strong ideomotor response → use more body-based suggestions
- Strong imagination → use visualizations and metaphors
- Slower response → pace gently and allow more processing time
- Analytical response → explain process briefly, then lead

So suggestibility testing helps us personalize hypnosis to the client.

Ideomotor Responses Defined

Ideomotor response is unconscious muscular movement triggered by thought or suggestion without conscious deliberate effort.

The Mechanism/The Science:

Mental imagery and suggestion activate the same motor cortex pathways as voluntary movement, but below the threshold of conscious control. The thought becomes the action automatically. **Examples:** Your arm rising “by itself,” fingers closing without deciding to close them, body swaying in response to imagined movement. **Why This Matters:** Ideomotor responses prove the unconscious mind is already responding—the foundation of all hypnotic work

Do We Always Need to Do Suggestibility Testing?

No — but it is highly recommended, especially for new hypnotists.

Reasons to use it:

- First sessions
- Anxious or skeptical clients
- Group hypnosis
- Training environments
- When confidence or trust needs building

When it may not be necessary:

- Experienced repeat clients
- Deep trance specialists who integrate testing into induction
- Time-limited sessions with known responsiveness

Even then, **micro-testing is often built into inductions naturally.** Example: Eye Closure techniques,

COMMON SUGGESTIBILITY TESTS

What They Do & Why They Work

1. Chevreul's Pendulum

What it is:

A small object suspended on a string, responding to ideomotor movement.

What it tests:

- Ideomotor responsiveness
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- Unconscious cooperation
- Internal focus vs conscious control

Science behind it:

- Ideomotor effect: tiny unconscious muscle movements guided by expectation
- The unconscious responds faster than conscious thought
- Minimal effort = minimal resistance

What to observe:

- Directional clarity
- Speed of movement
- Whether client “tries” or allows

2. Arms Rising and Falling

What it is:

One arm suggested to feel light, the other heavy.

What it tests:

- Imaginative involvement
- Somatic responsiveness
- Ability to accept opposing suggestions simultaneously

Science behind it:

- Sensory expectation alters muscle tone
- Attention shifts perception of weight and effort
- Mild dissociation begins

What to observe:

- Degree of contrast
- Facial softening
- Breath changes

- Emotional engagement
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3. Hand Clasp (Permissive)

Language style:

“You may begin to notice...”

What it tests:

- Willingness to explore
- Imaginative suggestibility
- Autonomy-driven responsiveness

Science behind it:

- Reduces resistance by preserving choice
- Engages curiosity
- Works well for analytical or cautious clients

What to observe:

- Gradual movement
 - Relaxed compliance
 - Subtle engagement
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4. Hand Clasp (Authoritative)

Language style:

“Your hands are locking together now...”

What it tests:

- Compliance
- Trust in authority
- Ability to respond to direct instruction

Science behind it:

- Clear expectations reduce ambiguity
- Nervous system follows certainty
- Confidence in delivery amplifies effect

What to observe:

- Speed of response
 - Physical tension or relaxation
 - Emotional reaction to authority
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IMPORTANT NOTE: The Hypnotist Is Part of the Test

The effectiveness of suggestibility testing depends on:

- Voice certainty
- Congruence
- Timing
- Expectation management

Clients respond not only to the suggestion—but to the hypnotist’s belief in it.

Key Takeaway

Suggestibility testing is not about control.

It is about communication.

We are discovering:

- How the client’s unconscious listens
 - What kind of language it trusts
 - How easily it responds to direction
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**The better you understand how your client responds before hypnosis,
the less effort you need during hypnosis.**