

BIS/BAS scales

Several theorists have argued that two general motivational systems underlie behavior. A behavioral approach system (BAS) is believed to regulate appetitive motives, in which the goal is to move toward something desired. A behavioral avoidance (or inhibition) system (BIS) is said to regulate aversive motives, in which the goal is to move away from something unpleasant. We developed the BIS/BAS scales to assess individual differences in the sensitivity of these systems.

Carver, C. S., & White, T. L. (1994). Behavioral inhibition, behavioral activation, and affective responses to impending reward and punishment: The BIS/BAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 319-333. [abstract]

Here is how we administer the BIS/BAS scales here, followed by scoring instructions:

BIS/BAS

Each item of this questionnaire is a statement that a person may either agree with or disagree with. For each item, indicate how much you agree or disagree with what the item says. Please respond to all the items; do not leave any blank. Choose only one response to each statement. Please be as accurate and honest as you can be. Respond to each item as if it were the only item. That is, don't worry about being "consistent" in your responses. Choose from the following four response options:

- 1 = very true for me
- 2 = somewhat true for me
- 3 = somewhat false for me
- 4 = very false for me

1. A person's family is the most important thing in life.
2. Even if something bad is about to happen to me, I rarely experience fear or nervousness.
3. I go out of my way to get things I want.
4. When I'm doing well at something I love to keep at it.
5. I'm always willing to try something new if I think it will be fun.
6. How I dress is important to me.
7. When I get something I want, I feel excited and energized.
8. Criticism or scolding hurts me quite a bit.
9. When I want something I usually go all-out to get it.
10. I will often do things for no other reason than that they might be fun.

11. It's hard for me to find the time to do things such as get a haircut.
12. If I see a chance to get something I want I move on it right away.

13. I feel pretty worried or upset when I think or know somebody is angry at me.
14. When I see an opportunity for something I like I get excited right away.
15. I often act on the spur of the moment.
16. If I think something unpleasant is going to happen I usually get pretty "worked up."
17. I often wonder why people act the way they do.
18. When good things happen to me, it affects me strongly.
19. I feel worried when I think I have done poorly at something important.
20. I crave excitement and new sensations.

21. When I go after something I use a "no holds barred" approach.
22. I have very few fears compared to my friends.
23. It would excite me to win a contest.
24. I worry about making mistakes.

Items other than 2 and 22 are reverse-scored.

BAS Drive: 3, 9, 12, 21

BAS Fun Seeking: 5, 10, 15, 20

BAS Reward Responsiveness: 4, 7, 14, 18, 23

BIS: 2, 8, 13, 16, 19, 22, 24

Items 1, 6, 11, 17, are fillers.

The fact that there are three BAS-related scales and only one BIS-related scales was not planned or theoretically motivated. The factors emerged empirically, from an item set that was intended to capture diverse manifestations of the BAS, according to various theoretical statements. It is likely that a broader sampling of items on the BIS side would also have resulted in more than one scale. I do not encourage combining the BAS scales, however, because they do turn out to focus on different aspects of incentive sensitivity. In particular, Fun Seeking is known to have elements of impulsiveness that are not contained in the other scales.

If you are interested in a [French](#) version of the BIS/BAS scales.

If you are interested in a [Polish](#) version of the BIS/BAS scales (and [article](#)).

If you are interested in a [Turkish](#) version of the BIS/BAS scales (and [article](#)).

[Carver Home](#)