

CGI Users Guide

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CGI is designed to be very user-friendly. Here are instructions for those who administer CGI to students:

1. When you have retained use of CGI, you will receive a link that opens your school's CGI. ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS: You may open the link to make sure it works with your school's browser settings but... Please DO NOT ANSWER ANY ITEMS as it will record you as a student taking CGI. To look at CGI as students will see it, copy and paste this link into your browser:
(https://umsl.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_096jn0qLou6mfQN&Q_JFE=0)
2. You may want to introduce the survey with a statement such as: "The Character Growth Index is not a test but a survey that will give us an idea, based on your answers, what are your levels in 16 character strengths. Please take the survey seriously and answer honestly to insure accuracy. We hope you will take CGI each year you are here so you will have a record of your character growth over time. (Smiling) If you rate yourself extremely high the first time you take CGI, your future scores won't show growth. This should take 10-20 minutes. If you do not answer all the questions, your score will not count."
3. Then you can give each student the link provided to take CGI. Direct them to click on the link provided.
4. This will open CGI website to the first page. You can read the student instructions aloud or have them read them silently.
5. Some schools make CGI mandatory while others make it optional. The first question says, "By checking this box, I agree to participate in this study." At this point you can make some statement about your school's policy.
6. VERY IMPORTANT: CGI has a dual answer set. The selections are identical, ranging from "Not at all like me" to "More like me than anyone I know".

The difference is the headings: One says 'Before' and the other 'Now'. **'Before' is a time you must set as the baseline for their recent character growth.** It should be a minimum of four months and a maximum of 12 months. If they are taking CGI at the beginning of school, you might set the time period as April 1 or after they returned from spring break. If they are taking CGI toward the end of the school year, 'Before' should be at the beginning of school.

Say to the students, “The answer set for most of the question is a little different so let’s look at #1. Notice the row across the top of the answers has seven choices that increase likeness to you, from ‘Nothing like me’ to ‘More like me than anyone I know.’ Now notice the column on the left that says ‘Before’ and ‘Now’. ‘Before’ means…” and tell them the date or period of time your administration has determined for this test. Ask them if they all understand the answer set and answer any questions.

7. Then tell them, “At the end of the survey, you will be asked to enter your student ID” or whatever number your administration determines to use as student identifiers. Then ask, “Do you all have your number?” It is best for the teacher to have their student IDs available to you can provide this if they forgot their number. (Liston Group will provide your spreadsheet with the student IDs but will delete them from our records to insure student confidentiality)
8. Some schools want students to see their scores. If so, you may want to prepare some confidential means by which students may see how their scores compare to school and national norms. The Liston Group will provide your school with a spreadsheet with all student scores by their student ID. Your school may purchase a full color report with graphs of your combined students’ averages for each strength and their overall average compared to national norms.

Student instructions given at the beginning of CGI are simple and hopefully phrased in a way students enjoy reading:

“Want to see how you are growing in character? That's what CGI will help you do. It's easy and it's a group thing so you won't be graded.

“The multiple-choice items say something about Courage, Kindness, Optimism, and other character strengths and asks if it sounds like you or not. Many of the questions are similar so you can fly through them all in 10-20 minutes.

“You can take CGI each year to see how much you’ve matured in character. If you want, you can get ideas from CGI to make character goals to shoot for, like being less stressed out or stronger when life is hard.

“You can ask the teacher any questions that you have, especially if you're not sure what a word means.

“By taking CGI, you will be part of doing something that has never been done: Measure character growth. Only the administration will see your answers because a computer will total the scores.

“Some of the questions are a little personal, asking about your feelings, values, behavior, or what other people think of you. If you feel uncomfortable answering something, you can skip it. The school counselor can discuss it with you.

“You can even quit if CGI bothers you but **all incomplete surveys will be deleted.** You won’t get to see how your scores compare to your school averages.

“Thanks!”

Interpreting Your Students' CGI Results

CGI results can be a bit confusing when we don't deal with statistical measurement frequently. If we don't use the stats training we received in school, we lose it.

Here are some helps to understand the scores.

Means

Because CGI answers all use a 7-Point Likert scale, every answer is a number between 1 and 7. The lowest score a student can get on any question is a 1 and the highest is a 7. The lowest score on any character strength, each of which has 5 questions, is 5 and the highest is a 35.

The bar graphs for each character strength show a scale range on the vertical line (y-axis) of 0-10 instead of CGI's actual range of 1-7. This is set by the software and cannot be changed.

Significance of Scores

Statistical significance is one way of seeing how important the differences are between means of scores. This information is reported to you if your school chooses the full analysis of Option Three (see Service Options and Pricing: <https://characterchallenge.org/character-growth-index/options-pricing-ordering>)

As a very general rule, means of greater than .25 have some statistical significance. The larger the number of students taking CGI, the more significant these differences become.

National Norms

The lines on the bar graph show the CGI norms for your language or nation. At this time, they are for all scores. In time, norms for age and gender will be developed.

As grade-level norms are developed, you will have another standard to assess your students' character development. You can compare the scores of a class of students to the national norms each year they are in your school.

For example, a middle school can have students take CGI each year. They can compare students' scores to the national average in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. If the class' overall mean score is .02 points higher than the national average in sixth grade, .04 points

higher in seventh grade, and .06 points higher in eighth grade, this would likely be statistically significant character development.

These are the best way to determine your students' character in each of the 16 strengths.

Discussing Scores with a Students

Here are some very important recommendations for discussing with a student his/her individual scores:

- Use individual student scores as discussion points about character development. For example, you might say, "I see Love is a strength for you, that you feel close to your family and friends. Tell me about that..." Ask them questions that draw them into a discussion of a strength: "Your Courage score is strong. When was a time when you expressed great Courage?"
- Discuss the student's highest scores first. These are her greatest strengths that she can use to deal with any character challenges she might have.
- Take a growth mindset into these discussions. Emphasize to the student that she can grow in any character strength by intention and effort. Our 'want to' empowers our 'can do.'
- Don't put too much emphasis or weight on a student's individual scores, whether high or low. First of all, it could cause her to "fake good" or inflate her scores the next time she takes CGI so she "won't get in trouble." Second, she could see herself as "bad at Peace" rather than understanding it takes training, effort, and time to develop Peace. Or if she had a high score, she could think, "I don't need to work on Peace because I'm already so good at it." Too much emphasis on the score could reduce motivation to grow.

CGI Honesty

A higher Honesty score is not necessarily a better score.

At the beginning of CGI, students are asked if they intend to answer honestly: "I intend to answer all of these questions honestly, even if I'm not proud of my answer." We call this **Honesty Intent**.

At the end of the test, students are asked if they answered honestly: "I answered all these questions honestly, even if it makes me look bad." We call this **Honesty Report**.

CGI asks 5 more questions about Honesty, including if the student has lied, cheated on schoolwork, or stolen in the last month. We call this **Trait Honesty**.

Reasons Why Honesty is Difficult to Measure

Honesty is the most interesting character strength in CGI and the hardest to measure for these reasons:

CGI is a student self-report. Often students care more about *appearing to be* Honest than they do about *being* Honest. In statistics, this is called "social desirability." Logically, if students lie in their CGI answers, they will make their Trait Honesty score higher. If they tell the truth, their Trait Honesty score will sometimes be lower.

To correct for this is complicated and difficult but we are working on it. **An algorithm is being developed** using the Honesty Intent and Honesty Report questions. If the student score is high on Honesty Intent and Report but low on Trait Honesty, the algorithm will correct Trait Honesty score is increased slightly. If the student score was high on Honesty Intent and Report, the Trait Honesty score is *not* changed. This adjustment isn't explained to the students, of course. Only administrators know this.

Trait Honesty's average is usually the lowest of any CGI strength. We see this as both an indication of student Honesty and an indication of the rewards of adolescent theft, deception, and cheating. Teens who choose to be honest are not often rewarded for their integrity. Those who lie, cheat, and steal often receive benefit from their deception.

Assessing Honesty

Honesty has struggled to make a place for itself on CGI as its questions tend to group with Humility's questions in statistical analysis (called Factor Analysis). This is similar to results from other sophisticated studies of personality measures. Based on expert opinion and research on Honesty, the CGI Honesty items are valid and well-developed.

Much more study of Honesty needs to be conducted. CGI hopes to contribute to this research.

In the meantime, expect CGI Honesty scores to be lower than the other traits. For this trait, a higher Honesty score doesn't necessarily mean the student is more honest.

Other Factors that Affect CGI Scores

Assessing Humility has a similar challenge to Honesty. If students have a higher view of themselves and their abilities, they will tend to answer the Humility questions with higher scores. Their thinking can be, "With all my abilities, it's amazing that I'm as humble as I am!" Those students who have a lower view of themselves and their abilities will often score themselves lower in Humility. This could be accurate or it could indicate depression or low self-worth.

In addition, student scores on most CGI strengths could be negatively or positively affected by “mood variance.” That is, extreme changes in mood, whether happy or sad, could raise or lower their CGI score.

To correct for this, an algorithm is being developed using the **Youth Flourishing Scale** (YFS; Liston & Diener, 2013). This has 8 questions about the students' sense of well-being like, "My life has purpose and meaning" and "I think my future looks great".

As we establish national norms for CGI, we will be able to develop these algorithms. This will make CGI scores more precise in assessing character growth over time.

Extreme Scores or “Outliers”

Some students are highly motivated to do well on tests. When they take a test like CGI that requires honest reflection upon their values and behavior, their desire for a higher score overrides their objectivity. Psychologists call this “social desirability” and its result is an inflated CGI score. If the score is so inflated that it is metrically considered invalid, the score will not count.

Social desirability can take another twist. Some teens prefer to defy adults and resist doing what they suggest or require. Some won't take CGI or will put down very low scores for their character strength. If the score is so low that it is metrically considered invalid, even when corrected by the student's **Youth Flourishing Scale**, the score will not count.