

**Becoming the NHTSA  
Expert In the Courtroom**

Standardized Field Sobriety Tests



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Most Current NHTSA SFST Curriculum

2/2023 – Edited 4/2025

- Effective 04/01/25
- Provided to all State SFST Coordinators
- Replaced the original 2/2023 Curriculum
- Changes primarily non-substantive – typos & formatting issues



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Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus Test

Involuntary jerking of eyes, occurring as eyes gaze to the side.



session 8, page 11



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### HGN - Two Main Components

- Medical Assessment
- Rule out medical impairment
- Alcohol/Drug Assessment
- Clues



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### HGN - Medical Assessment Component

- Equal Pupil Size
- Resting Nystagmus
- Equal Tracking

session 8, page 19



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### HGN - Medical Impairment

*"If the eyes track together, continue with the test and document the results."*

session 8, page 19



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### HGN - Medical Impairment

*"If there are any abnormal findings on the pre-test checks, the officer may choose not to continue with the testing. If HGN testing is continued, officers are reminded this does not follow the standardized protocol and should acknowledge such in any report."*

session 8, page 20



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### HGN – Medical Assessment Question

*"Officers are reminded to ask questions about the subject's eyes and general health conditions prior to administering the HGN test."*

session 8, page 20



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### HGN - Administrative Procedures

1. Check for eyeglasses
2. Verbal instructions
3. Position stimulus
4. Check for Equal Pupil Size and Resting Nystagmus
5. Check for Equal Tracking

session 8, page 22



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### HGN - Administrative Procedures

- 6. Check for Lack of Smooth Pursuit
- 7. Check for Distinct and Sustained Nystagmus at Maximum Deviation
- 8. Check for Onset of Nystagmus Prior to 45 Degrees
- 9. Total the clues
- 10. Check for Vertical Gaze Nystagmus

session 8, page 22




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### HGN - Standardized Clues

- Lack of Smooth Pursuit
- Distinct and Sustained Nystagmus at Maximum Deviation
- Onset of Nystagmus Prior to 45 Degrees

session 8, page 27




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### HGN – Lack of Smooth Pursuit

*“The stimulus must be moved in a smooth, continuous manner without stopping at either side or the center while checking for this clue.”*

session 8, page 29




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**HGN – Distinct & Sustained Nystagmus at Maximum Deviation**

*“In order to count this clue as evidence of impairment, the nystagmus must be distinct and sustained for a minimum of 4 seconds.”*

session 8, page 32



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**HGN – Onset of Nystagmus Prior to 45-Degrees**

*“When you see the eye jerk, stop moving the stimulus, hold it at that position, and verify the jerking continues.”*

*“When you locate the point of onset of nystagmus, stop moving the stimulus and determine whether it is prior to approximately 45 degrees.”*

session 8, page 35



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**HGN – Positional Alcohol Nystagmus (PAN)**

- *“A person who is secured to a back board, partially upright on a gurney, or is seated upright, provided their head is in line with the spine, should not display PAN.”*

session 8, page 13



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**HGN - Standardized Scoring Criterion**

4 or more clues indicates  
BAC at or above 0.08 (88% accurate)

session 8, page 36



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**Walk and Turn Test**

Divided Attention Test  
Mental Task and Physical Task

- Instruction Stage
- Walking Stage

session 8, page 39



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**W&T - Administrative Procedures**

1. Put left foot on the line, right foot in front touching heel-to-toe.
2. Demonstrate.
3. Place your arms at your sides.
4. Demonstrate.
5. Maintain this position.
6. Do not start the test until instructed to do so.
7. Do you understand the instructions so far?

session 8, page 40 & 41



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**W&T - Administrative Procedures**

- 8. Take 9 heel-to-toe steps down the line.
- 9. Demonstrate minimum of 3 heel-to-toe steps.
- 10. On your 9<sup>th</sup> step, leave your lead foot on the line and turn taking a series of small steps.
- 11. Demonstrate turn.
- 12. Take 9 heel-to-toe steps back up the line.

session 8, page 40 & 41



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**W&T - Administrative Procedures**

- 13. Watch your feet.
- 14. Count out loud.
- 15. Keep your arms at your sides.
- 16. Once you start walking do not stop walking until the test is completed.
- 17. Do you understand the instructions?

session 8, page 40 & 41



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**W&T - Standardized Clues**

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Cannot maintain balance. | 5. Steps off line.                               |
| 2. Starts too soon.         | 6. Raises arms for balance                       |
| 3. Stops while walking.     | 7. Turns improperly/loses balance while turning. |
| 4. Misses heel-to-toe.      | 8. Wrong number or steps.                        |

session 8, page 42 & 43



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### W&T – Interrupting the Driver

*“If the subject does not count out loud or watch his/her feet, remind him/her to perform these tasks. This interruption will not affect the validity of the test and is essential for evaluating divided attention.”*

No source given for this change / not in OLS section

session 8, page 41



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### W&T - Standardized Scoring Criteria

2 or more clues indicates  
BAC at or above 0.08 (79% accurate)

session 8, page 45



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### One Leg Stand Test

Divided Attention Test  
Mental Task and Physical Task

- Instruction Stage
- Balance & Counting Stage

session 8, page 46



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OLS - Administrative Procedures

1. Put your feet together.
2. Place your arms at your sides.
3. Demonstrate stance.
4. Do not start the test until instructed to do so.
5. Do you understand the instructions so far?

session 8, page 47 & 48




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OLS - Administrative Procedures

6. Raise one foot approximately six inches off the ground.
7. Elevated foot parallel to the ground.
8. Demonstrate.
9. Keep both legs straight.

session 8, page 47 & 48




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OLS - Administrative Procedures

10. Keep your arms at your sides.
11. Look at your elevated foot.
12. Count out loud in the following manner: "one thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three, and so on until told to stop.
13. Do you understand?

session 8, page 47 & 48




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### OLS – Timing

30 seconds

*“Officer should always time the 30 seconds. Test should be discontinued after 30 seconds.”*

session 8, page 48



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### OLS – Standardized Clues

1. Puts foot down
2. Uses arms for balance
3. Sways while balancing
4. Hopping

session 8, page 49 & 50



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### OLS – Puts Foot Down

*“Although not part of the administrative procedures, if the subject puts the foot down, give instructions to pick the foot up again and continue counting from the point at which the foot touched the ground.”*

session 8, page 48



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OLS - Standardized Scoring Criterion

2 or more clues indicates  
BAC at or above 0.08 (83% accurate)

session 8, page 51



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Test Conditions - Surface

Reasonably dry, hard, level, non-slippery surface

*If not, the research recommends:*

1. subject be asked to perform the test elsewhere, or
2. only HGN be administered

session 8, page 39 & 46



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Test Conditions – Age & Physical Problems

*“The original SCRI studies **suggested** individuals over 65 years of age or people with back, leg, or inner ear problems had difficulty performing this test.”*

*“overweight by 50 or more pounds may have difficulty performing this test.”*

session 8, page 39 & 47



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**Test Conditions – Footwear**

*“Individuals wearing heels more than 2-inches high should be given the opportunity to remove the shoes.”*

session 8, page 39 & 47



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**Test Conditions – Footwear**

*“Subjects with heels two inches or more or any other form of unusual footwear (i.e., flip flops, platform shoes, etc.) should be afforded the opportunity to remove that footwear prior to the test.”*

session 8, page 51 & 61 (Instructor)



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**Physical Assessment Question**

*“Remind participants prior to administering psychophysical tests to ask the subject if they have any physical problems or disabilities.”*

session VIII, page 51 & 60 (Instructor)



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### Physical Questions v. Medical Questions

- Physical conditions
- Physician’s care
- Medical issues
- Medications

session 6, page 13



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### Deviating from the Standardized Elements

“If any one of the standardized field sobriety test elements is changed, the validity may be compromised.”

session 8, page 11



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PARTICIPANT PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION  
STANDARDIZED FIELD SOBRIETY TESTS

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Agency \_\_\_\_\_

**1. HORIZONTAL GAZE NYSTAGMUS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Have subject remove glasses if worn.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give verbal instructions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Observe both eyes in proper position (approximately 15°-20° from nose, just slightly above eye level).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check for equal head size and resting nystagmus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check for equal tracking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Smoothly movement from center of nose to maximum deviation in approximately 2 seconds and then back across subject's face to maximum deviation in right eye, then back to center.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check left eye, then right eye. (Repeat)
- \_\_\_\_\_ For head at maximum deviation for a minimum of 4 seconds (no white showing). Check left eye, then right eye. (Repeat)
- \_\_\_\_\_ For second slowly (approximately 4 seconds) from center to 45 angle. Check left eye, then right eye. (Repeat)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Total the number of clues.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check for Vertical Gaze Nystagmus. (Repeat)

**2. WALK AND TURN**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Instructions given from a safe position.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to place feet on a line in heel-to-heel manner (left foot behind right foot with arms at sides and given demonstration).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to take eight heel-to-heel steps on the line and demonstrates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Explains and demonstrates turning procedure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to return on the line taking nine heel-to-heel steps.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to count steps out loud.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to look at feet while walking.

FD-36 (REVISED 1-8)

Revised 12/2013



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10. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject not to raise arms from sides.  
 11. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject not to stop walking once they begin.  
 12. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject if all instructions are understood.


13. ONE LEG STAND

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Instruction given from a safe position.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to stand straight, place feet together, and hold arms at sides, undisturbed.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to raise one leg, either leg, approximately 45 degrees the ground, keeping other foot parallel to the ground and give instructions.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to keep both legs straight and to look at elevated foot.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject to count out loud in the following manner: one thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three, and so on until told to stop, and give instructions.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells subject if all instructions are understood.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Checks actual time subject holds leg up. (Time for 30 seconds.)

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: In order to pass the proficiency examination, the student must explain and proficiently complete each of the steps listed.

Pa. 88 | Revision 14      Revised 11/2023



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