

Trail Making Test Documentation Cheat Sheet

Reviewed by the BastionGPT Clinical Advisory Board · August 2026 · Reproduces no forms, layouts, or norms

The Trail Making Test is a timed paper-and-pencil measure: Part A connects 25 numbered circles, Part B alternates numbers and letters, and the raw score is seconds to complete each part. Raw seconds mean nothing without a named norm system, errors are corrected in real time (the clock runs; nothing is deducted) but still get counted, ceilings differ by protocol, and no authority sets a universal cutoff for impairment or driving. Defensible charting preserves the data a reviewer needs to re-derive the score.

Exact test identity + form classic vs D-KEFS vs CTMT-2 vs Color Trails

Do: name the instrument, form source, alternate form, language, modality (paper, tablet, oral), and hand used.

Pitfall: "Trails" unversioned, or a D-KEFS switching score charted as TMT-B.

Raw seconds, both parts the datum a reviewer re-derives from

Do: chart Part A and Part B in seconds with completion status, plus the standardized metric and direction.

Pitfall: a standardized score with no raw time, or a time with no norms.

Errors + the convention corrected in real time, still counted

Do: state that errors were corrected with timing continuing, then count them per part and type them: sequencing vs set loss.

Pitfall: errors uncounted; in lesion data the errors, not the time, carried the signal.

Discontinuation, sourced no invented completion times

Do: record elapsed time, the prespecified ceiling and its source, errors so far, and the reason; note the floor effect.

Pitfall: charting 300 or 301 seconds as observed, or a percentile on an unfinished part.

Norm system + inputs the value lives in the norms

Do: name the set and edition (Tombaugh 2004, Heaton RCN, Mayo systems) and record exact age and education used.

Pitfall: "age norms" unnamed; accepted systems move the same time by about half an SD.

Derived indexes, supported B-A and B/A are not pure

Do: if reported, name the formula and its supporting norms; keep the two direct times primary.

Pitfall: a universal ratio-of-3 rule; large TBI studies found no added value over direct times.

Validity + interpretation confounds first, pattern second

Do: chart motor, visual, literacy and alphabet, and language factors; interpret the pattern in the battery; frame driving as a referral trigger.

Pitfall: confounded slowing read as executive impairment, or a fitness-to-drive call from one score.

Before the note is signed

- ☐ Instrument, form, modality, and hand named exactly
- ☐ Both parts in raw seconds with completion status
- ☐ Correction convention stated; errors counted and typed
- ☐ Any discontinuation sourced; no invented times
- ☐ Norm system named with exact age and education inputs
- ☐ Derived indexes named and supported, or omitted
- ☐ Confounds charted; driving framed as referral only

Drafting with AI

Give it the facts: form and modality, raw seconds, errors and types, completion status, ceiling and source, norm system and inputs, observations, confounds, prior testing.

"Draft TMT documentation: classic paper form, Part A 74 seconds one corrected error, Part B discontinued at the 300-second clinic ceiling with four errors, three set losses, Tombaugh norms age 79 education 10, dementia battery, driving referral language."

Never paste patient-identifying information into consumer AI tools. BastionGPT is HIPAA-compliant with a signed BAA on every plan.

Seconds, raw

per part; keep them after conversion

Errors: no deduction

corrected live, counted anyway

Name the norms

systems differ by about half an SD

No driving cutoff

screen triggers referral, not a verdict

Trail Making Test Documentation Template

Copy or print for your practice · Adapt fields to your organization's, payer's and jurisdiction's documentation requirements. Contains no test content.

Setting: Patient (initials): Date: Clinician:

Test identity + form + modality: Norm system + inputs (age, education):

Referral context and administration
Battery context · hand used · vision correction · sample-item performance · deviations from standard administration

Part A result
Seconds · completed Y/N · errors · standardized score and metric

Part B result
Seconds or discontinued · errors typed: sequencing vs set loss · standardized score only if completed

Discontinuation record
Elapsed time · prespecified ceiling + source · errors to that point · reason · floor effect noted · no invented completion time

Derived index (optional)
B-A or B/A · formula named · supporting norm or regression source · direct times remain primary

Observations and validity
Search pattern · set losses · pencil lifts · motor, visual, literacy, alphabet, language factors · conclusion: interpretable / with caution / not interpretable

Interpretation, driving framing, and plan
Pattern within the battery · what it does not establish · driving: screening trigger and referral only · serial plan: alternate form, reliable change

Clinician (name and credentials): Signature: Date: