

Wong-Baker FACES Documentation Cheat Sheet

Reviewed by the BastionGPT Clinical Advisory Board · September 2026 · Reproduces no faces artwork or instructions

The Wong-Baker FACES Pain Rating Scale is a patient self-report tool: a person aged three or older chooses the face that matches their pain, recorded on a 0 to 10 metric. It is never observer-rated, never used for unresponsive patients, and never mixed with numeric-scale values in one trend; the artwork and the name belong to the Wong-Baker FACES Foundation. Defensible charting names the scale and why it was chosen, states that the patient selected the rating, gives location, onset, and character, and ties the rating to an intervention and a timed reassessment.

Scale selection and reason why this scale, not numbers or observation

Do: name the tool and the clinical reason: age, understanding shown, language, literacy, or cognition; if self-report was not obtainable, name the observational tool.

Pitfall: a rating with no scale named; a tool chosen by habit with nothing to show the patient could use it.

Self-report, stated as such the patient chooses, never the clinician

Do: write the value as the patient's choice with the time; label any parent or caregiver impression as a proxy impression.

Pitfall: "appears to be a 6 on FACES"; a parent's guess entered in the pain score field.

Location, onset, character the assessment behind the number

Do: record site and laterality, when and how it started, the patient's own words, and what makes it worse or better.

Pitfall: "FACES 8" with no location, onset, or character, so nothing can be compared or defended.

Comfort and function goal what the patient needs to be able to do

Do: set and record a functional goal (hold still for splinting, deep breathe, sleep, walk) agreed with the patient or family.

Pitfall: "goal: pain below 4" alone, with no function and no record that anyone agreed it.

Intervention drug, dose, route, time; or the measures used

Do: chart the analgesic with dose, route, and time matching the administration record, the nonpharmacologic measures, or the reason nothing was given.

Pitfall: "medicated per order" with no drug, dose, route, or time, or a time that conflicts with the record.

Reassessment on the same scale timed to the route; patient chooses again

Do: reassess at the interval policy sets for the route, same scale, patient selected; record function, side effects, and a sedation score if an opioid was given.

Pitfall: "pain improved" with no time or value; a 30-minute rule for every route; a sleeping child scored 0.

Trend, tool changes, handoff FACES values stay in a FACES trend

Do: never mix numeric and FACES values; start a labeled new trend when the tool changes; carry the scale name into handoff and discharge.

Pitfall: a pain graph mixing two scales; a handoff of pain 4 with no scale, so the next shift switches tools.

Before the note is signed

- ☐ Scale named beside every rating
- ☐ Reason for choosing this scale recorded
- ☐ Patient selected the face, written as self-report
- ☐ Location, onset, and character in the patient's words
- ☐ Intervention charted with drug, dose, route, time
- ☐ Reassessment timed to the route, same scale
- ☐ FACES and numeric values never mixed in one trend

Drafting with AI

Give it the facts: the scale used and why, that the patient chose the face and when, location, onset, character, and what changes the pain, the function goal, the intervention with dose, route, and time, the reassessment value and time on the same scale, observed behavior and any parent impression, and the plan.

"Draft Wong-Baker FACES documentation: pediatric ED 09/12, age 6, numeric scale not understood, chose a face readily; FACES 8 patient selected 16:25, right forearm after a fall; ibuprofen 210 mg PO 16:35, splint, ice; reassessed 17:25 FACES 4; goal met; discharge plan names the scale."

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

Self-report only

the patient chooses the face

Ages 3 and older

children and adults alike

0 to 10 metric

steps of two, never an NRS value

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Full guide and sample note:

bastiongpt.com/template/wong-baker-faces

BastionGPT drafts complete Wong-Baker FACES Pain Rating Scale documentation. Free 7-day trial.

Wong-Baker FACES Documentation Template

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

Setting: _____ Patient (initials): _____ Date: _____ Clinician: _____

Scale used + reason chosen: _____ Patient chose the face? (yes / no) + language: _____

Rating and self-report

Wong-Baker FACES value on the 0 to 10 metric · time · written as patient selected · parent or caregiver impression, if any, labeled as such

Pain description in the patient's words

Location and laterality · onset and cause · character · what makes it worse or better · pattern since the last assessment

Comfort and function goal

What the patient needs to be able to do (breathe deeply, hold still for splinting, sleep, walk) · agreed with the patient or family

Intervention

Drug, dose, route, and time matching the administration record · nonpharmacologic measures (ice, immobilization, positioning, distraction) · or none, with the reason

Reassessment

Time chosen to the route under unit policy · same scale, patient selected again · function against the goal · side effects · sedation score if an opioid was given

Observed behavior and sleep, kept separate

Behavior noted beside the rating, never in place of it · sleeping patient: describe sleep and breathing, do not score · parent or caregiver observations labeled

Trend, tool changes, and communication

Same scale as prior entries · if the tool changed, new trend with the reason · observational tool substituted when self-report was not obtainable · provider notified, handoff, discharge plan

Clinician (name and credentials): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____