

Accommodations for ACCESS for ELLs®

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Under the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, states must measure the development of the English language proficiency skills of their English language learners (ELLs) in grades K-12 on an annual basis within the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Members of the WIDA Consortium will use ACCESS for ELLs® to fulfill this requirement. Therefore, **the primary purpose of ACCESS for ELLs® is to measure English proficiency growth** tied to the criteria of the WIDA Consortium's English language proficiency standards, which are aligned to the academic content area standards of every WIDA state.

ACCESS for ELLs® serves additional purposes depending on the needs of states and local schools, including as a tool for determining academic program and assessment placements and assisting with program exit decisions. In addition, WIDA states that currently have alternate academic assessments for beginner ELLs will use ACCESS for ELLs® to determine if individual ELLs should participate in the alternate assessment or the regular statewide academic assessment with accommodations. This is an important purpose of most English proficiency tests and a sound reason to ensure that scores are validly illustrating a student's level of proficiency. To do otherwise could potentially target individual ELLs for an academic assessment for which they are not yet ready or misidentify them as being ineligible for accommodations they might otherwise receive.

The WIDA Consortium encourages the participation of all English language learners in the ACCESS for ELLs® testing program and feels that it is an appropriate assessment for all but the most severely disabled. The ACCESS for ELLs® has "built in" certain standard features of the test that might lessen the need for accommodations. For example, ACCESS for ELLs® is not a timed test. ELLs may take longer than the average stated time in each section. The thematic orientation of the test and the heavy reliance on graphic support are features that should lend themselves to enhanced comprehension, not only for ELLs in general, but many students with special needs. However, testing accommodations may be appropriate for some students.

Testing accommodations are changes in the way a student is given a test or asked to respond to test questions. Testing accommodations are meant to offset challenges caused by a disability, without changing the test measures. Testing accommodations provide students with disabilities the same opportunity to improve and demonstrate their English language proficiency as students without disabilities. To maximize fairness and validity while maintaining the integrity of the ACCESS for ELLs® test, WIDA has provided the following guidelines for considering appropriate accommodations for English Language Learners with disabilities.

The following guidelines are divided into each of the four domains of the test—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—with indications of whether a particular accommodation is appropriate for the domain (Yes), inappropriate and therefore not recommended (No), or Not Applicable (N/A) because the "accommodation" is already incorporated into the test design or is irrelevant for the domain.

Accommodation	Assessment Domains			
Presentation Format/Test Directions	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Explanation of directions (English)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Repeat directions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Use directions that have been marked by teacher	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A ¹
Sign directions to students	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Translation of directions into native language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Translation of test into native language	No	No	No	No
Translation of test into sign language	No	No	No	No
Oral reading in English	No	No	Yes	No
Oral reading in native language	No	No	No	No
Bilingual dictionary	No	No	No	No
Use of highlighters (yellow only) by student	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Use of marker to maintain place	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Large Print or visual magnification device	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Audio amplification device or noise buffer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Student reads questions or responses aloud to self	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A

Setting Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Test administered by school personnel familiar to student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alone in study carrel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administer test in separate room	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
With small groups	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Preferential seating	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individually	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
By special education personnel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special lighting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special acoustics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special furniture	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administer test with school personnel in non-school setting (e.g., home or hospital)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Timing/Scheduling	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Extended testing time (same day)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
More breaks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extending sessions over multiple days	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Response Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Braille writers	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
Word processors or similar assistive device (Spell and grammar check and dictionary/thesaurus must be turned off)	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A
Write directly in test booklet	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Tape recorders	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
Scribes ²	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Responses in native primary language	No	No	No	No
Answer orally, point to answer	Yes	Yes	No	N/A

<i>Other Administration Considerations</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>
Provide verbal praise or tangible reinforcement to increase motivation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administer practice test or examples before the administration date of the assessment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Allow use of equipment or technology that the student uses for other tests and school work (e.g., pencils adapted in size or grip, slant board or wedge)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Other Accommodations	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
<i>Other Accommodations Not Provided and Not Recommended by the WIDA Consortium at this Time</i>				
Braille edition of assessment ³	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible
Signing questions or answers ⁴	No	No	No	No

- (1) N/A means Not Applicable either because this is already an integral part of the test design (e.g., responding orally on the speaking test) or irrelevant because the given accommodation would not be of any use (e.g., using scribes for the speaking test—there is no writing involved).
- (2) If an IEP team determines that a scribe is necessary, all student responses must be transcribed verbatim, including spelling, punctuation, and paragraph breaks.
- (3) ACCESS for ELLs[®] is not available in Braille at this time. If an IEP team determines that it is in the best interest of a student to make the test available in Braille, the following guidelines are recommended to ensure the integrity of the assessment:
 - a. The student must be Braille proficient so as not to confound English language proficiency with proficiency in Braille;
 - b. Braille graphics must be included as this is a graphic dependent test; and
 - c. If the Braille graphics are also verbally described by the test administrator, such descriptions should be made in the student’s native language so as not to confound with English language listening skills;
 - d. The student’s responses should be transcribed verbatim by a school staff member into a regular ACCESS for ELLs[™] test booklet for scoring;
 - e. The writing assessment should be transcribed verbatim into the test book by a school staff member.
- (4) Deaf and hard of hearing students, including those for whom American Sign Language (ASL) is their first language, can generally participate in the reading and writing sections of the test with few or no accommodations necessary. Lip-reading with spoken responses for those students who possess these abilities may be possible for the listening and speaking parts of the test. IEP teams should make such determinations on a case by case basis. **Translating the listening and speaking prompts into sign language is equivalent to translating into another spoken language, such as Spanish or Arabic, and therefore is prohibited as it changes the construct and invalidates the test.**