

Recommended Test Accommodations for ELLs with Disabilities

PLEASE REFER TO YOUR STATE'S ACCOMMODATION POLICIES FOR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTING FOR POLICY GUIDANCE. WIDA PROVIDES ONLY RECOMMENDATIONS ON ACCOMMODATIONS.

Accommodations

This section describes WIDA's recommended test accommodations for ELLs with special needs, particularly students with an Individualized Education Program and/or a 504 Plan as determined by the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), respectively.

The list of acceptable accommodations is reviewed and updated annually.⁵ **However, for the definitive policy for administering ACCESS for ELLs with accommodations, refer to your state's policy on accommodations for language proficiency testing.**

Testing accommodations are changes in the way a student is given a test or asked to respond to test questions, and they are meant to offset challenges caused by a disability without changing what the test measures. Testing accommodations provide students with disabilities an opportunity to demonstrate their English language proficiency in a way that is similar to students with no disabilities. In other words, appropriate accommodations level the playing field for students with disabilities, providing an equitable opportunity to demonstrate what they can do.

The WIDA Consortium encourages participation of all ELLs in the ACCESS for ELLs testing program and believes that it is an appropriate assessment for all but the most significantly disabled students. The ACCESS for ELLs test has certain standard features that might lessen the need for accommodations. For example, the test is paced appropriately, with time guidelines determined from pilot and field testing, and the thematic orientation of the test and heavy reliance on graphic support are features that should enhance comprehension. However, additional testing accommodations may be appropriate for some students with disabilities.

Appropriate Use of Accommodations

Accommodations are appropriate when the standard test presentation, timing, or response format prevents a student from accessing or responding to the test items because of physical, emotional, cognitive, or learning disabilities, thus denying the student the opportunity to demonstrate what he or she can do in English as measured by ACCESS for ELLs. In other words, accommodations may be appropriate for students with identified special needs who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or a 504 Plan. However, not all students with IEPs or 504 Plans are in need of accommodations. Decisions should be made by IEP and/or 504 Plan teams and documented within those plans.

⁵ The accommodations listed in the tables on pages 41-43 are drawn from 1) accommodations policies of WIDA Consortium member states; 2) accepted practice in language proficiency testing; 3) consultation with representatives of WIDA member states who are experts in the education of ELLs and students with disabilities; and 4) expertise of the test developers at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

The Following Must Be Considered When Choosing Appropriate Accommodations:

- Does the accommodation address the student's special need(s)?
- Does the student have experience with the given accommodation(s) on an ongoing basis in the classroom or testing situations?
- Does the accommodation maintain the validity of the construct of what the test measures (e.g., the test administrator reading text for the Reading Test would not maintain the construct of reading that is being tested)?
- Does the test administrator know how to accurately apply the accommodation?
- Does the accommodation adhere to state policies for the accommodation of ELLs with disabilities on language proficiency tests?

Special Considerations Regarding the Use of Accommodations

Please remember that ACCESS for ELLs is an English language proficiency test; as such, it is a tool used to assess the construct of ELLs' receptive and productive skills in English. Because it focuses on language rather than content area knowledge and skills, some accommodations that might be appropriate for the classroom or content areas tests should not be used with ACCESS for ELLs as they will invalidate the construct. In other words, students would be taking a test that is no longer measuring just their English language proficiency, making any interpretation or inferences from the scores invalid. For example, if the Listening Section of ACCESS for ELLs were presented in American Sign Language (ASL) to a deaf or hard of hearing student, the test would be measuring the student's proficiency in interpreting ASL, not spoken English. Similarly, if the Reading Test were translated into Braille, the construct (reading English) would be confounded because ACCESS for ELLs would become a test of a student's ability to read Braille.

In general, appropriate accommodations help a student who needs them, but the application of accommodations for students who don't need them can be detrimental. For example, some students with processing disorders or attention deficit disorders may need to take each part within a test in short segments of two at a time, followed by a break, in order for them to be able to best show what they can do. For most students, however, such frequent breaks are more likely to prove disruptive and detrimental, preventing these students from showing what they can do to the best of their ability. Consequently, it is best to follow the standardized test administration procedures whenever possible so that there are no doubts about the reliability of the scores for an individual student and in the aggregate.

Circumstances may arise that require a child who does not have an IEP or 504 Plan to take part of the entire test with an accommodation. For example, a child may break his arm in such a way that prohibits him from writing his responses. In this case, at this time, the use of a computer word processor or a scribe may be appropriate.

Furthermore, if state policy guidelines allow the use of a particular accommodation or set of accommodations for all students taking ACCESS for ELLs, such as the use of highlighters or extended, multiple breaks during testing, these state guidelines must be considered when making decisions about the use of accommodations. Please note your state's accommodations policy for language proficiency testing, rather than guidelines or policy for ELLs on state content tests. **They are not the same nor are they interchangeable.**

Please note that the accommodations recommended here are NOT appropriate for ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities. Students with significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate fully in ACCESS for ELLs may be eligible to take Alternate ACCESS for ELLs. To determine eligibility, see the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs Test Administration Manual. Please contact your state educational agency for guidance on assessing the English language proficiency of ELLs with significant cognitive disabilities.

WIDA Recommended Accommodations

The following tables of 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 (e.g., responding orally on the Speaking Test) or is irrelevant for the domain (e.g., use of a scribe for the Speaking Test that requires no writing). If a student is tested using a particular accommodation or set of accommodations, use the code column to find the appropriate code to mark on the student’s test booklet.

Accommodations FOR ELLs WITH DISABILITIES	Assessment Domains				
Test Directions	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>Test “directions” refers to all text in the Test Administrator’s Script that is provided to explain logistics of the test, including all practice items. Directions include what is scripted in the Test Administrator’s Script. For Speaking, the directions end just before the test administrator reads “Part A,” and for Listening, the directions end just before the test administrator presses Play.</i>					
Translation of directions into native language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TD
Signing directions to students	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TD
Explanation of directions in English and/or native language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TD
Repeating directions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TD
Use of directions that have been marked by teacher in the <i>Student Response Booklet</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	TD

Accommodations FOR ELLs WITH DISABILITIES	Assessment Domains				
Presentation Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>"Test" refers to test items (including introductory text and graphic support), but not scripted test directions (previously defined)</i>					
Translation of test into native language	No	No	No	No	-
Translation of test into sign language	No	No	No	No	-
Oral reading of test in English	No	No	Yes	No	PF
Oral reading of test items in native language	No	No	No	No	-
Use of bilingual dictionary	No	No	No	No	-
Use of highlighters (yellow only) by student, in test booklet text only; must not be used in answer area ⁶	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	-
Use of marker to maintain place	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	PF
Large Print (Student responses must be transcribed into a standard test booklet)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	LP
Low vision aids or magnification device	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	LV
Audio amplification device or noise buffer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	AA
Student reads questions or responses aloud to self	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	PF
Student reads questions or responses aloud and records with tape recorder	No	Yes	No	No	PF
Oral reading of <i>Recording Script</i>	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	PF

Setting Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>Test may be administered...</i>					
By trained school personnel in non-school setting (e.g., home or hospital)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
With preferential seating	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
In study carrel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
In space with special lighting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
In space with special acoustics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
With special furniture for student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
With 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	SF

Timing/Schedule	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>Flexibility with timing of test is permitted for students who require extra time or have limited attention spans as documented in their IEPs.</i>					
More breaks as needed by student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TS
Short-segment testing (refers to administration of very brief sections of the test at a time, such as three or four items related to a common theme)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TS
Extended testing time within same school day	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	TS
Extended testing sessions over multiple days	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	TS

⁶ The use of highlighters may be available to all students in some states. Please contact your state educational agency if you have questions about the use of highlighters.

Accommodations FOR ELLs WITH DISABILITIES	Assessment Domains				
Response Format	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>Certain devices or practices may be used to facilitate testing for students who have difficulty with bubbling or writing in the correct area of the test booklet.</i>					
Braille writers	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	—
Computer, word processor, or similar assistive device (spell check, grammar check, and dictionary/thesaurus must be turned off)	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	CA
Tape recorders for recording student responses	N/A	N/A	No	No	OA
Scribes: all student responses must be transcribed verbatim, including spelling, punctuation, and paragraph breaks	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	SB
Responses in native language	No	No	No	No	OA
Answers are given orally or pointed to	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	OA

Other Test Administration Considerations for all Students	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
<i>Certain practices can reduce testing anxiety for students. For example, test administrators may...</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	-
Be school personnel familiar to student	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
Be special education personnel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
Administer the test in a separate room	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SF
Administer the test in a small group	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	SF
Administer the test to students individually	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	SF

Other Accommodations Not Recommended by the WIDA Consortium at This Time (See pp. 44 for more information)	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Code
Braille edition of assessment	Possible	Yes	Yes	Possible	BR
Signing questions or answers	No	No	No	No	-

Figure 10: Accommodations for ELLs with Disabilities

Additional Information About Braille

Based on a careful consideration of the implications of Braille ACCESS for ELLs, including experience creating a Braille version of the assessment in a previous testing cycle, WIDA does not recommend that the assessment be given in Braille. We believe that to do so would change the nature of the test, seriously affecting the validity of ACCESS for ELLs scores. One of the most important reasons for this is the fact that a student's proficiency in Braille confounds the assessment of English language proficiency. Furthermore, many of the test items cannot be translated into Braille as they are currently written, particularly the heavily graphics-dependent Listening and Speaking items, because this changes the test.

However, in the unusual circumstances that an IEP team determines that it is in the best interest of a student to make the test available in Braille, WIDA will provide the Tier B version of the Reading and Writing tests in Braille. The following guidelines should be followed:

- The student must be Braille proficient so as not to confound English language proficiency with proficiency in Braille.
- Braille graphics will be included, as this is a graphic-dependent test.
- 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.
- The student's responses should be transcribed verbatim by a school staff member into a regular ACCESS for ELLs test booklet for scoring.
- The writing assessment should be transcribed verbatim into the test booklet.
- All test materials, including the test booklets translated into Braille, must be returned to MetriTech, Inc.

Additional Information About Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

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 Speaking 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 (i.e., assesses proficiency in a language other than English) and invalidates the test.

Additional Information About Oral Reading of Recording Script

This accommodation may be used in the event that an IEP team determines an oral reading of the Listening Test rather than use of prerecorded audio would be a necessary accommodation.

During the IEP team meeting, IEP teams may consider the following when determining appropriate accommodations:

- a student needs to hear a familiar voice
- a student needs to have visual support by having the test administrator reading the text

In order to provide this accommodation when administering the Listening Test, test administrators will need the following test materials:

- *Test Administrator Script*
- *Recording Script booklet**
- *Student Response Booklet(s)*

*The *Recording Script* booklet contains a transcript of all the recorded Listening Test items, which is no longer available in the *Test Administrator Script*.

The *Recording Script* booklet will not be included in the test materials ordered. In the event that this accommodation needs to be provided in place of the media-delivered Listening Test, District Test Coordinators may request a copy of the booklet from MetriTech, Inc., by phone at (800) 747-4868, by fax at (217) 398-5798, or by e-mail at wida@metritech.com. This booklet should not be requested to be used for general test administration.

Accommodations in Unusual Circumstances

In the event that a student has an injury, for example, his/her writing hand is broken, the test administrator should do the following:

- Transcribe the student's responses and have the student spell every word (if a student uses a word multiple times, it is not necessary to have the student spell that word every time) and indicate where to provide punctuation and new paragraph breaks.
- Have the student type (if injury allows) his/her responses with spell/grammar check, autoforms, and template wizards turned off in the word processor program.
- After testing is complete, mark on the back of the student's test booklet that he/she used a scribe, and put a note on the front of the booklet that the student has a broken wrist/arm or any other injury that prevented him/her from being able to write.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs™

The Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment is intended to serve the needs of the most significantly disabled ELLs. The test is available for the 1–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12 grade clusters. Participating criteria for Alternate ACCESS for ELLs can be found in the Alternate ACCESS Test Administration Manual and on the WIDA website at the following link <http://www.wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess.aspx>.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is based on newly developed Alternate Model Performance Indicators (AMPIs), which expand the existing WIDA standards in a way that allows students in this population to demonstrate their English language proficiency in all four domains (Listening, Reading, Speaking, Writing).

For further information, including details on how to order the test, please see:

<http://www.wida.us/assessment/alternateaccess.aspx>.

Important Note:

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is a separate test and is only intended for ELLs who participate in their state's alternate content assessments. Students who can be served with the accommodations described previously should continue to take the ACCESS for ELLs assessment.