

**An English language learner, or ELL, is a student who has extra support learning English in school. There are 4.9 million ELLs in the United States.\***



*\*In 2016, according to the National Center for Education Statistics*

## Identifying a student as an ELL



1. You answered questions about the languages you use at home.



2. A test measured your child's academic English skills in listening, reading, speaking, and writing.



3. Your child can have instruction in English, in addition to other classes.

ELLs take an academic English language test every year. Test information helps teachers plan how best to teach your child. Test scores also help teachers know when your child can stop receiving English language support. You can use test information to advocate for your child at school. Talk with your child's teachers about:

- When you will receive test scores and how to track your child's progress.
- How you can support your child's language learning at home.
- How support changes as your child builds academic English language skills.
- When students stop receiving English language support.

### Questions you can ask

- What are the goals for my child?
- How does learning English fit with other skills my child is learning?
- How do you include students' languages and cultures at school?

**Ask about English language learning at your child's school.**

**Students are tested every year, but you have the right to accept or decline language support.**



WIDA is housed within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.  
© 2020 The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, on behalf of WIDA

# ACCESS for ELLs

## Understanding Your Child's Scores

**ACCESS for ELLs is an English language proficiency test that measures students' academic English language skills.**

- Schools, school districts, and states use ACCESS for ELLs scores as they decide what English language support services to provide.
- Teachers use test scores as they decide how best to teach your child.
- You can use test scores to advocate for your child.



The Individual Student Report shows your child's ACCESS for ELLs scores in eight different categories. Four of these categories are the language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. These four language domain scores are combined to create four additional score types:

- The oral language category is a combination of your child's Listening and Speaking scores.
- The literacy category is a combination of your child's Reading and Writing scores.
- The comprehension category is a combination of your child's Listening and Reading scores. It depends more on the Reading score than on the Listening score.

### ELL

An English language learner, or ELL, is a student who has the opportunity to receive instruction in English, in addition to taking other classes. ELLs are tested every year to help teachers understand their language skills, but you have the right to accept or decline language support.

### Language Domain

Students use listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to learn academic content, share information, and discuss ideas. These are skills that all students work on throughout their education. Language testing measures a student's skills in all four of these domains.

- The overall category is a combination of all four language domain scores. It depends more on the Reading and Writing scores than on the Listening and Speaking scores.

For each of the eight categories on the Individual Student Report, there are two scores:

- Proficiency level scores place your child's current skills within the six WIDA English Language Proficiency Levels. (Proficiency levels are not related to a student's grade level.) The bottom of the Individual Student Report describes the language skills typical of your child's proficiency level.
- Scale scores are precise measures of how your child did on the test. They take into account your child's grade level and the difficulty of the test items your child completed. Teachers use these scores to understand how much your child's English language skills have grown since the last time your child took ACCESS for ELLs.



## Language Proficiency

A language proficiency level is a measurement of where students are in the ongoing process of building language skills. When students reach the highest levels of language proficiency, they no longer need language support services.

## Questions you can ask

- What does this score mean? Who will see this score and how will it be used?
- How do this year's scores compare with previous scores? Is my child making progress in building English language skills? What other information do you use to measure progress?
- Will this score change the instruction or support my child receives? How do you decide when my child stops receiving language support?

School districts use **ACCESS for ELLs** scores to evaluate language support programs, monitor student progress, and as one factor in the decision to exit a student from language support services. ACCESS for ELLs testing allows schools to meet federal and state accountability requirements.



**WIDA**<sup>™</sup>

WIDA is housed within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.  
© 2020 The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, on behalf of WIDA



## Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 1-2

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the **language** needed to:

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 - Reaching
LISTENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow modeled, one-step oral directions (e.g., “Find a pencil.”)</li> <li>Identify pictures of everyday objects as stated orally (e.g., in books)</li> <li>Point to real-life objects reflective of content-related vocabulary or oral statements</li> <li>Mimic gestures or movement associated with statements (e.g., “This is my left hand.”)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match oral reading of stories to illustrations</li> <li>Carry out two- to three-step oral commands (e.g., “Take out your science book. Now turn to page 25.”)</li> <li>Sequence a series of oral statements using real objects or pictures</li> <li>Locate objects described orally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow modeled multi-step oral directions</li> <li>Sequence pictures of stories read aloud (e.g., beginning, middle, and end)</li> <li>Match people with jobs or objects with functions based on oral descriptions</li> <li>Classify objects according to descriptive oral statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare/contrast objects according to physical attributes (e.g., size, shape, color) based on oral information</li> <li>Find details in illustrated, narrative, or expository text read aloud</li> <li>Identify illustrated activities from oral descriptions</li> <li>Locate objects, figures, places based on visuals and detailed oral descriptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use context clues to gain meaning from grade-level text read orally</li> <li>Apply ideas from oral discussions to new situations</li> <li>Interpret information from oral reading of narrative or expository text</li> <li>Identify ideas/concepts expressed with grade-level content-specific language</li> </ul>	
SPEAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeat simple words, phrases, and memorized chunks of language</li> <li>Respond to visually-supported (e.g., calendar) questions of academic content with one word or phrase</li> <li>Identify and name everyday objects</li> <li>Participate in whole group chants and songs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use first language to fill in gaps in oral English (code switch)</li> <li>Repeat facts or statements</li> <li>Describe what people do from action pictures (e.g., jobs of community workers)</li> <li>Compare real-life objects (e.g., “smaller,” “biggest”)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask questions of a social nature</li> <li>Express feelings (e.g., “I’m happy because...”)</li> <li>Retell simple stories from picture cues</li> <li>Sort and explain grouping of objects (e.g., sink v. float)</li> <li>Make predictions or hypotheses</li> <li>Distinguish features of content-based phenomena (e.g., caterpillar, butterfly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask questions for social and academic purposes</li> <li>Participate in class discussions on familiar social and academic topics</li> <li>Retell stories with details</li> <li>Sequence stories with transitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use academic vocabulary in class discussions</li> <li>Express and support ideas with examples</li> <li>Give oral presentations on content-based topics approaching grade level</li> <li>Initiate conversation with peers and teachers</li> </ul>	

The Can Do Descriptors work in conjunction with the WIDA Performance Definitions of the English language proficiency standards. The Performance Definitions use three criteria (1. linguistic complexity; 2. vocabulary usage; and 3. language control) to describe the increasing quality and quantity of students’ language processing and use across the levels of language proficiency.

## Can Do Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 1-2

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the **language** needed to:

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 - Reaching
READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify symbols, icons, and environmental print</li> <li>Connect print to visuals</li> <li>Match real-life familiar objects to labels</li> <li>Follow directions using diagrams or pictures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Search for pictures associated with word patterns</li> <li>Identify and interpret pre-taught labeled diagrams</li> <li>Match voice to print by pointing to icons, letters, or illustrated words</li> <li>Sort words into word families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make text-to-self connections with prompting</li> <li>Select titles to match a series of pictures</li> <li>Sort illustrated content words into categories</li> <li>Match phrases and sentences to pictures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put words in order to form sentences</li> <li>Identify basic elements of fictional stories (e.g., title, setting, characters)</li> <li>Follow sentence-level directions</li> <li>Distinguish between general and specific language (e.g., flower v. rose) in context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin using features of non-fiction text to aid comprehension</li> <li>Use learning strategies (e.g., context clues)</li> <li>Identify main ideas</li> <li>Match figurative language to illustrations (e.g., “as big as a house”)</li> </ul>	
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy written language</li> <li>Use first language (L1, when L1 is a medium of instruction) to help form words in English</li> <li>Communicate through drawings</li> <li>Label familiar objects or pictures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information using graphic organizers</li> <li>Generate lists of words/phrases from banks or walls</li> <li>Complete modeled sentence starters (e.g., “I like ____.”)</li> <li>Describe people, places, or objects from illustrated examples and models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in prewriting strategies (e.g., use of graphic organizers)</li> <li>Form simple sentences using word/phrase banks</li> <li>Participate in interactive journal writing</li> <li>Give content-based information using visuals or graphics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce original sentences</li> <li>Create messages for social purposes (e.g., get well cards)</li> <li>Compose journal entries about personal experiences</li> <li>Use classroom resources (e.g., picture dictionaries) to compose sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a related series of sentences in response to prompts</li> <li>Produce content-related sentences</li> <li>Compose stories</li> <li>Explain processes or procedures using connected sentences</li> </ul>	

The Can Do Descriptors work in conjunction with the WIDA Performance Definitions of the English language proficiency standards. The Performance Definitions use three criteria (1. linguistic complexity; 2. vocabulary usage; and 3. language control) to describe the increasing quality and quantity of students’ language processing and use across the levels of language proficiency.