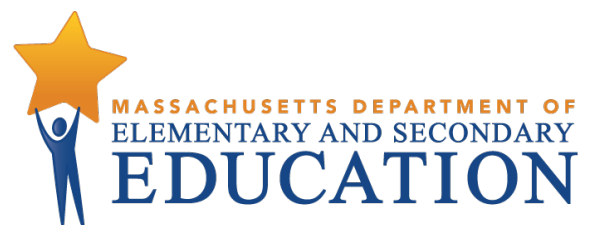


GOOD-TO-KNOW ASSESSMENT GUIDES

ESOL TEACHER EDITION

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UMassAmherst



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Introduction to the Good-to-Know Assessment Guides

The purpose of the Good-to-Know Assessment Guides (hereafter referred to as the Guides) for the ESOL NRS assessments¹ is to facilitate conversations between teachers, administrators, and students about standardized assessment so that students:

1. Gain a greater understanding of the purposes and procedures of these assessments
2. Have a meaningful assessment experience.

The Guides were developed by the Center for Educational Assessment at UMass Amherst (UMass CEA) and the Adult and Community Learning Services Office at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, using an iterative feedback process with the adult education practitioners.

The Guides are intended to:

- Provide basic information on each of the three ESOL NRS tests used in Massachusetts adult education for pre- and post-testing purposes (e.g., what is on the test, how long each test takes, why students are asked to take a particular test)
- Focus on making the testing experience transparent for students and teachers
- Situate the NRS testing experience within a comfortable and relatable context for learners at various levels of English proficiency
- Be student-centered and user-friendly

Although the Guides were designed for learners at various levels of English proficiency, ACLS and UMass CEA recommended that teachers and/or test administrators scaffold the information further for lower-level English learners.

The Good-to-Know Assessment Guides and the Massachusetts ESOL Professional Standards

The target audience of the Guides is adult ESOL learners, but the Guides are also a tool teachers can use to apply the indicators of knowledge described in *Standard 5: Assessment* of the [Massachusetts ESOL Professional Standards \(MA EPS\)](#).

The section below details:

- Connections between the MA EPS and the Guides
- Assessment resources that can be used by ESOL practitioners to support implementation of ESOL Professional Standard 5-Assessment

¹ The NRS ESOL assessments used in Massachusetts are the BEST Plus 2.0, TABE CLAS-E Reading, and TABE CLAS-E Writing.

Connection between the MA EPS and the Good-to-Know Assessment Guides

The MA EPS state that *“Individual programs can use standardized tests to place students in the correct level, inform curriculum planning, and measure the development of language skills. However, while the principal purpose of standardized tests is to provide an objective means of measuring learner progress across programs, **effective ESOL teachers help students see standardized assessments as an opportunity to receive feedback and improve their learning**”* (p. 43). The Guides help learners see standardized assessments as an opportunity to receive feedback and enhance their learning.

Standard 5: Assessment states that, *“The ESOL teacher uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform and evaluate instruction, develop differentiated learning experiences, measure student learning, and promote learner metacognition”* (p. 41), and that learners should be part of the assessment process: *“effective ESOL teachers share assessment results with students to acknowledge progress and identify gaps”* (p. 41). Teachers can leverage the Guides to engage learners in conversations about their standardized assessment results, monitor their own progress, and identify possible gaps in their knowledge.

The Guides provide learners with background information about ESOL NRS assessments and encourage them to ask about and discuss their test results. Even if a particular learner’s teacher is not the test administrator, most program staff should be familiar with the assessments their students are required to take, as described in the MA EPS: *“Effective ESOL teachers are familiar with standardized tests used in their program, even if they are not responsible for administering them, so that they know what skills are being measured and how. They share test results with students, clearly explaining what the scores mean and how the information relates to their continued learning. While standardized assessments are limited in offering specific information (i.e., students and teachers cannot review particular items without compromising test security), students recognize the high-stakes nature of the exams and often want feedback on their performance”* (p. 44).

The MA EPS recognize that *“testing may cause anxiety in some students”* and direct teachers to reframe standardized assessment (as well as assessment in general), *“primarily as a valuable source of information”* (p. 44). One of the ways to promote assessments as a source of information about learning is to have an authentic discussion with learners about the dual purposes of assessment. Such discussions remind learners that standardized assessments provide an opportunity for them to show how much they know while helping their teacher identify other content areas and/or skills they can work on so that students can reach their academic goals.

Conversations with students that reframe standardized assessments as a source of information about student learning help learners understand academic strengths and areas for improvement and supports them to overcome test anxiety².

² Use this [link](#) for more suggestions for talking with learners about assessment results.

Assessment Resources for Implementation of ESOL Professional Standard 5: Assessment

While talking about assessments with learners is the first step to reduce test anxiety, providing learners with test-taking strategies is another way to help learners prepare for the test. Table 1 below contains a non-exhaustive list of resources for test-taking strategies, while Figure 1 presents some tips that might be helpful to work on with learners as they relate to specific NRS assessments.

Table 1. Additional Resources for Test-Taking Strategies

Resource	Link
Tips for Taking TABE	https://tabetest.com/educators/tips-and-tricks-educators-community/
Top 5 Test Prep Tips for Adult Learners	https://blog.edmentum.com/top-5-test-prep-tips-adult-learners
Test Taking Strategies	https://community.lincs.ed.gov/group/108/discussion/test-taking-strategies-0
7 Test-Taking Tips for Adult Students	https://study.com/articles/7_Test-Taking_Tips_for_Adult_Students.html

Figure 1. Strategies to Support Students Before and During the Test (*partially adapted from Hambleton & Jirka, 2004*).

BEFORE THE TEST REMIND LEARNERS TO:

- ✓ **Prepare for the test by using English as much as possible inside and outside of class**
- ✓ **Relax** - It's normal to be nervous before taking a test. Help learners practice taking deep breaths to calm their mind.
- ✓ **Be positive about tests** – Thinking positively can help learners perform at their best. The NRS assessments are not “pass or fail” assessments. Remind learners that the assessment will show their learning and nothing bad will happen to them because of a test score.
- ✓ **Practice strategies for answering multiple-choice questions** – Give your learners the opportunity to practice answering multiple-choice questions. This will help them do their best on any test with multiple-choice questions (i.e., driving test, certification or licensure test, CLAS-E Reading/Writing).

DURING THE TEST REMIND LEARNERS TO:

- ✓ **Be positive about tests** – Positive thoughts can help learners perform their best on test day. The NRS assessments are not “pass or fail” assessments. Remind learners that the assessment will show their learning and nothing bad will happen to them because of their test score.
- ✓ **Listen carefully to instructions** – Be sure your learners can hear the instructions and understand them. If they have any questions, remind them to ask the test administrator.
- ✓ **Understand the question before answering** – Help learners understand that they don't need to rush. Remind them that they might miss an important word if they read the question too fast.

Specific reminders for learners taking the BEST Plus 2.0:

- ✓ **Speak at a normal speed** – The test is not timed. Learners don't need to rush through their answers. Remind them to speak at a speed that is normal for them.

Specific reminders for learners taking the CLAS-E Reading or Writing (or any multiple-choice test):

- ✓ **Use their strategies for answering multiple-choice questions**
 - If a learner feels confident about an answer, it is probably the best one.
 - Changes should be made to their first answer **ONLY** if the learner is certain that the first answer is wrong.
 - If a learner is unsure of an answer, one strategy is to eliminate choices that seem wrong before guessing.
- ✓ **Write their answers on the answer sheet** – If the learner is going to use a separate answer sheet to write their answers, remind them to make sure they write them clearly and in the right place.
- ✓ **Answer easy questions first** – If a learner finds a question that is very hard, remind them to skip it and go back after answering all the easier questions.

Standard 5 of the MA EPS provides teachers with indicators of knowledge and sample applications on page 46. Table 2 below presents each sample application connected to at least one resource for teachers to explore to meet the benchmarks described in the MA EPS.

ESOL Professional Standard 5-Assessment

The ESOL teacher uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to inform and evaluate instruction, develop differentiated learning experiences, measure student learning, and promote learner metacognition. (ACLS, 2021, p. 46)

Sample Indicator of Knowledge for ESOL Professional Standard 5 (What Effective ESOL Teachers Know):

Standardized assessments objectively track the development of students’ language skills at the beginning and end of a learning cycle, support students’ learning, and serve accountability purposes. (ACLS, 2021, p. 46)

Table 2. Assessment Resources to Support Implementation of ESOL Professional Standard 5: Assessment

<p>SAMPLE APPLICATIONS What Effective ESOL Teachers Do (ACLS, 2021, p. 46)</p>	<p>Assessment Resources</p>
<p>If administering standardized assessments, obtain training and certification, and follow ACLS assessment policies and test publisher guidelines to ensure reliable results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visit the UMass CEA/ACLS Test Help Blog. ○ Find online self-paced and facilitated trainings to become a certified test administrator on the SABES calendar. ○ Review the Massachusetts Adult Education Assessment Policies: Fiscal Year 2022 (ACLS, 2021).
<p>Participate in a program-wide process for tracking and documenting learning gains for each student using pre- and post-tests.</p>	<p>Talk with your program director and/or assessment coordinator about how to get involved in these processes.</p>
<p>Explore the program’s approved standardized assessment tools to understand their structure and content.</p>	<p>Review the Good-to-Know Assessment Guides and follow up with UMass CEA staff with any questions via email at aclstesthelp@umass.edu.</p>
<p>Provide instruction on the skills that are being tested in required ESOL assessments.</p>	<p>See resources from the test publishers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For information regarding the BEST Plus 2.0, visit https://www.cal.org/aea/bp/.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For general information regarding the TABE CLAS-E Reading and Writing, visit https://tabetest.com/students-2/tabe-class-e/. ○ For specific information regarding the objectives and subskills assessed by the TABE CLAS-E, visit http://tabetest.com/PDFs/TABE_CLAS-E_Objective_Structure.pdf.
<p>Teach general test-taking skills and strategies (e.g., selecting digital radio buttons, best-guessing in multiple choice).</p>	<p>See Table 1 and Figure 1</p>
<p>Use standardized assessment data to inform criteria for progression of students from one level to the next.</p>	<p>See the Massachusetts Adult Education Assessment Policies: Fiscal Year 2022 (ACLS, 2021) for specific criteria for student progression across levels.</p>

References

Hambleton, R. K., & Jirka, S. (2004). How to do your best on standardized tests: Some suggestions for adult learners. *Adventures in Assessment, 16*, 5-12.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS). (2021). [Massachusetts Adult Education Assessment Policies: Fiscal Year 2022](#).

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS). (2021). [Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers of Adult Speakers of Other Languages MA ESOL](#).



QR CODES TO ACCESS GUIDES

BEST PLUS



CLAS-E Reading



CLAS-E Writing



CLAS-E Locator



GOOD TO KNOW: Your Guide to the BEST Plus

What is the BEST Plus?

The BEST Plus is a test. It evaluates your English speaking and listening skills. You take the BEST Plus with a teacher.

- The teacher looks at a computer screen. The teacher asks you questions in English.
- You listen to each question. Then, you answer the question in English.



- Sometimes, you look at a picture and the teacher asks you a question about it.



The questions are about daily life, so just talk to your teacher in English the best that you can. Don't worry if you don't know how to answer a question. Ask the teacher to repeat the question or say, "I don't know".

Why do I need to take the BEST Plus?

It helps you and your teacher know how much English you can speak and where you need to improve.

When do I take the BEST Plus?

You take the BEST Plus two or three times a year.

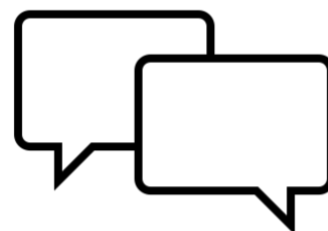
- You take a pre-test when you start English class
- You take a post-test when you end English class.

What does my score mean?

You can't pass or fail the BEST Plus. You can ask your teacher about your score after you take the test.

A test is something you do to show how much you know or how much you can do. You can also call it an evaluation or a measurement.

You take a test to get a driver's license. That test measures your level of driving skill. It is a way to make sure you are a safe driver.



You take a pre-test before you learn something. A pre-test shows you how much already know.

You take a post-test after you learn something. A post-test shows you how much you have learned.

GOOD TO KNOW: Your Guide to the CLAS-E Reading test

What is the CLAS-E Reading test?

The CLAS-E Reading test evaluates your English reading comprehension skills. There are four different CLAS-E Reading tests. You take one of them. Sometimes the teacher needs to give you a test called the Locator before you take the CLAS E Reading test. The Locator helps your teacher decide which reading level test is best for you.

- Check out the [GOOD TO KNOW Guide for the Locator Test](#).



A test is something you do to show how much you know or how much you can do. You can also call it an evaluation or a measurement.

You take a test to get a driver's license. That test measures your level of driving skill. It is a way to make sure you are a safe driver.

What happens during the CLAS-E Reading test?

During the test, the teacher reads the directions to you. Listen carefully and follow the directions. The questions on the CLAS-E Reading test are multiple-choice questions. The questions ask you about something you read or a picture. Answer the questions the best that you can.

Follow these steps to answer each question:

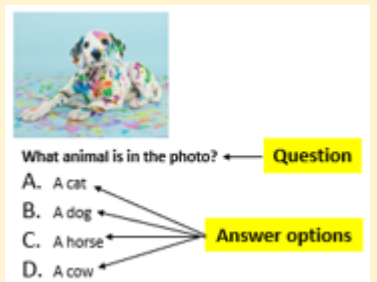
1. Read the question.
2. Read all the answer choices carefully.
3. Choose the right answer. If you are unsure of which answer choice is right, then choose the one that you think is right.

What types of questions are on the CLAS-E Reading test?

The questions are about daily life, so just answer the questions the best that you can.



A multiple-choice question is a question on a test that gives you answer options. You choose the correct answers. See the example below.



How many questions do I have to answer?

If you take the test on paper, there are 25 questions. If you take the test on the computer, there are 30 questions.

GOOD TO KNOW: Your Guide to the CLAS-E Reading test

Why do I need to take the CLAS-E Reading test?

It helps you and your teacher know your reading level and what you need to improve in reading.

When do I take the CLAS-E Reading test?

You take the CLAS-E Reading test two or three times a year.

- You take a pre-test when you start English class
- You take a post-test when you end English class.



How long will the test take?

You can take the paper test or the computer test:

- The paper test is 25 minutes.
- The computer test is 35 minutes.

These times do not include the time before and after the test. Ask your teacher how much time the entire test session will take.

What does the CLAS-E Reading test look like?

- For the paper test: You get a test booklet and an answer sheet.
- For the computer test: You see the questions on the computer screen. You select your answer using the computer mouse.



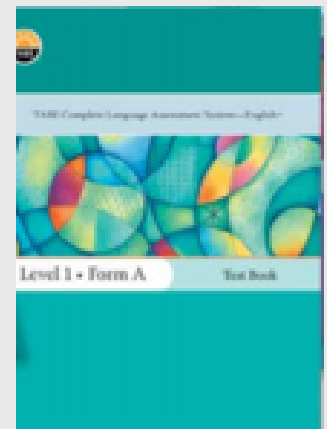
What does my score mean?

You can't pass or fail the CLAS-E Reading test. You and your teacher can talk about your test score after the test.

You take a pre-test before you learn something. A pre-test shows you how much already know.

You take a post-test after you learn something. A post-test shows you how much you have learned.

Test Booklet



Answer Sheet

1. _____	6. _____
2. _____	7. _____
3. _____	8. _____
4. _____	9. _____
5. _____	10. _____

Computer Screen



GOOD TO KNOW: Your Guide to the CLAS-E Writing test

What is the CLAS-E Writing test?

The CLAS-E Writing test evaluates your English writing skills. There are four different CLAS-E Writing tests. You take one of them. Sometimes the teacher needs to give you a test called the Locator before you take the CLAS-E Writing test. The Locator helps your teacher decide which writing level test is best for you.

- Check out the [GOOD TO KNOW Guide for the Locator Test](#).

What happens during the CLAS-E Writing test?

During the test, the teacher reads the directions to you. Listen carefully and follow the directions. The CLAS-E Writing test has two parts. You answer multiple-choice questions for the first part.

Follow these steps to answer each multiple-choice question:

1. Read something or look at a picture.
2. Read the question.
3. Read all the answer choices carefully.
4. Choose the right answer. If you are unsure of which answer choice is right, then choose the one that you think is right.



You write the answer to the questions in the second part of the CLAS-E Writing test. Read everything carefully, then write your answer in English.

Follow these steps to answer each writing question:

1. Read the question.
2. Write your answer carefully.
3. Read your answers again. You can make changes if you want.

The writing questions ask you to do different things:

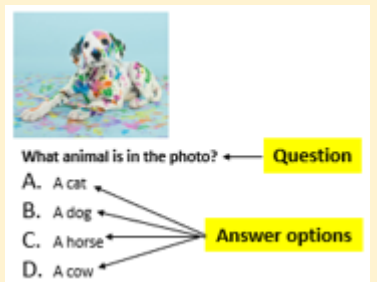
- Read something, then answer a question about what you read.
- Look at a picture, then write a sentence or two about the picture.
- Write a letter to someone.

A test is something you do to show how much you know or how much you can do. You can also call it an evaluation or a measurement.

You take a test to get a driver's license. That test measures your level of driving skill. It is a way to make sure you are a safe driver.



A multiple-choice question is a question on a test that gives you answer options. You choose the correct answers. See the example below.



GOOD TO KNOW: Your Guide to the CLAS-E Writing test

What types of questions are on the CLAS-E Writing test?

The questions are about daily life, so just answer the questions the best that you can.

How many questions do I have to answer?

There are 20 multiple-choice questions and 5 questions that you answer by writing something.

Why do I need to take the CLAS-E Writing test?

It helps you and your teacher know your writing level.

When do I take the CLAS-E Writing test?

You take the CLAS-E Writing test two times a year.

- You take a pre-test when you start English class.
- You take a post-test when you end English class.



What does the CLAS-E Writing test look like?

There are two ways to take the test. Some programs use the paper test, and some use the computer test.

- You get a test booklet and an answer sheet to take the paper test.
- The question appears on the computer screen. You choose your answer on the screen using the mouse or you type your answer using the keyboard.

How long will the test take?

You can take the paper test or the computer test:

- The paper test is 47 minutes.
- The computer test is 55 minutes.

These times do not include the time before and after the test. Ask your teacher how much time the entire test session will take.

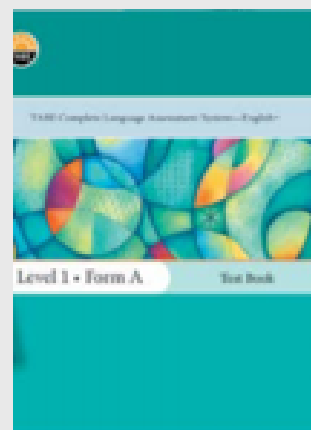
What does my score mean?

You can't pass or fail the CLAS-E Writing test. Ask your teacher about your score after you take the test.

You take a pre-test before you learn something. A pre-test shows you how much already know.

You take a post-test after you learn something. A post-test shows you how much you have learned.

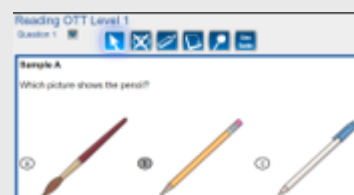
Test Booklet



Answer Sheet

1. _____	6. _____
2. _____	7. _____
3. _____	8. _____
4. _____	9. _____
5. _____	10. _____

Computer Screen



GOOD TO KNOW: Your Guide to the CLAS-E Locator Test

What is the CLAS-E Locator test?

- Sometimes, the teacher needs to give you a Locator test before you take the CLAS-E Reading or Writing test.

Why do I take the Locator test?

- It helps the teacher to decide which CLAS-E Reading or Writing test is best for you.
- You get the best measurement of your reading or writing skills when you take the test that is best for you.



How long is the Locator test?

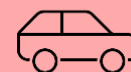
- There are 15 multiple-choice questions.
- You have 15 minutes to answer the questions.

What happens after I take the Locator test?

- Your teacher will decide on a level of CLAS-E Reading or Writing test for you.
- Sometimes your answers on the CLAS-E Reading or Writing test will show that the level you took was too easy or too difficult. Then, your teacher will ask you to take a different level of the test.
- It is important that the test is at the best level for you.
- A test that is at the best level for you helps you and your teacher know the level of your reading or writing skills when you start taking English classes.
- When you take the post-test, the test helps you see the change in your reading and writing skills.

A test is something you do to show how much you know or how much you can do. You can also call it an evaluation or a measurement.

You take a test to get a driver's license. That test measures your level of driving skill. It is a way to make sure you are a safe driver.



A measurement tells you how much of something you have. You might be most familiar with measurements of a person's height or weight. You measure height in centimeters or inches and weight in kilograms or pounds.



A score is a measurement of your reading or writing skills. The score tells you the amount or level of your reading or writing skills. Your score will change as you practice more reading or writing in English.