

ACCESS for ELLs 2.0

Online Speaking Guidance Grades 6 – 12

This document provides guidance to educators on how to help students show their best skills on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Speaking test. This assessment is a measure of a student's ability to produce spoken academic English, not conversational language. The Speaking test focuses on communication and comprehensibility.

About the Speaking Test

Students respond to speaking tasks, as the virtual Test Administrator, Ms. Lee, guides them through sets of questions designed to elicit language at progressively higher target proficiency levels. Students record their responses by speaking into a microphone.

First, students listen to the model student respond to a task at a targeted proficiency level. Then, they respond to a similar task at that same proficiency level, using the model student's response as an example.

The speaking tasks are developed to obtain responses at Proficiency Levels 1, 3, and 5. Expectations for each level are as follows:

- Students produce single words, chunks of language or short phrases in response to a Proficiency Level 1 (P1) task.
- Students produce sentences that are generally comprehensible and incorporate general and some specific language in response to a Proficiency Level 3 (P3) task.
- Students produce task-specific vocabulary in cohesive extended discourse in response to a Proficiency Level 5 (P5) task.

There is no uniform response time for speaking tasks. The length of time a student has to respond to a question varies based on the task, grade band, and proficiency level. When scoring student responses, students are not penalized for running out of time and not finishing their thought. Student responses do not need to be factually accurate to score well. Some tasks on the Speaking test elicit relatively short responses. Students can score well for short but strong responses containing clear delivery and appropriate word choice.

Sample items give students the opportunity to experience producing spoken language as they will on the test. Sample items are available at <https://wbte.drccdirect.com/WIDA/portals/wida> .



Responses are scored based on fluency, vocabulary, and discourse. Students can score well even with factual inaccuracies and minor grammatical errors.

Nothing can replace the opportunity to practice good spoken language during instruction.

Preparing Students for the Speaking Test

- For shy, new, or younger students, sit next to them in a one-on-one testing session and have them “talk to you” while speaking into the microphone.
- Prompt students to talk about the big picture (graphic) if they forget the question.
- Role play with students wearing headsets with microphones, so they can become familiar with this technology.
- Rehearse pausing before hitting the record button. Point out that students have thinking time before they record. Encourage them to start recording when they are confident that they have a response ready.
- Practice parallel responses from models that are linguistically strong, noting length and structure of the sentences. Point out they will follow Nina’s model response on the test.
- Reinforce the idea that when students take their full turn to talk, it gives them the opportunity to demonstrate their vocabulary and ability to connect ideas.

Planning for Testing Day

- Create a testing environment with enough distance between students to provide privacy when students are speaking.
- Plan for a low student/Test Administrator ratio. WIDA recommends no more than 3 – 5 students per Test Administrator. Newcomers and/or students at a beginning proficiency level may need to be assessed one-on-one.
- Provide reminders, such as those listed below, to students shortly before testing.

Reminders for Students

1. Stop, breathe in and out, and think about what you will say before you hit the record button. Then speak clearly and do not whisper.
2. Take your full turn to talk.
3. Follow Nina’s example to know how long to talk and the types of words and sentences you should use.
4. Use modifiers, conjunctions, and prepositional phrases to extend what you are saying.
5. Make your speaking show your complex thoughts.
6. Use the pictures to help guide your response.
7. Have you thought of everything you can say about this?
8. Do not hit stop until you are sure you have finished.

It is okay for kids to leave a gap in their response as they think of extra things to say—but once they hit stop, that’s it, they’re done. It is better to have a gap in the recording than to just record a very short utterance.

What is okay for Students to do?

Yes, they can pause to think before hitting record.

Yes, they can write notes to themselves while listening to the prompt.

Yes, they can ask for help on how to use the technology.

No, they should not script their answers.

The following might be a good way to help your students remember what to do during the speaking test.



TALK about ACCESS

Take a minute to compose your answer before you select the record button.

Adverbs, adjectives, and conjunctions add variety to your sentences.

Listen to Nina and use her as an example of how much to say, and how to say it.

Keep talking, use your entire turn to show your complex ideas.