

*The CASAS Listening STEPS series has been approved by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) for NRS reporting through July 2030.*

## Listening STEPS for ESL Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**1. In which instructional areas should agencies plan to use the Listening STEPS series?** The Listening STEPS series serves English language programs. Agencies can use the series in any instructional program that focuses on English language instruction.

**2. How is the Listening STEPS series different from other listening series?** Listening STEPS offers tests at five levels, thus enabling the series to cover in greater depth the full range of ability levels in the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) for Adult Education (2016). Listening STEPS measures academic vocabulary and higher-order thinking skills contained in the ELP Standards. Test content continues to be based on CASAS Competencies to maintain relevance for adult learners, including an emphasis on employment-related topics required by WIOA.

**3. How is the Listening STEPS series structured?** Listening STEPS tests contain three test item types: photo prompt questions, comprehension questions, and next-response questions. Test items are multiple-choice with three response choices at each level. Level A requires a test booklet; however, Levels B through E do not. For examples of the test item types, please see the Listening STEPS Test Administration Manual (TAM). Sample listening items are also available at [www.casas.org](http://www.casas.org).

**4. How are Listening STEPS tests administered?** For paper testing, administrators need test booklets (only at Level A), answer sheets, a CD player for students to hear the test questions, and pencils with erasers. Tests at Levels B through E are administered by CD without a test booklet.

For online test administration, students need access using a computer, laptop, Chromebook, or iPad, and headphones.

**5. Which placement test should agencies use with Listening STEPS? How long is the test?** Agencies have two placement test options. Both the Form 620L Listening STEPS Locator and the Form 619L Listening STEPS Appraisal accurately place students into the correct pretest. The Form 620L Locator is a 15-minute test with 14 questions. The Form 619L Listening STEPS Appraisal is a 30-minute test with 28 questions. Both are available in CASAS eTests and as paper tests.

Programs may use the Locator **ONLY** for placement into a pretest. Agencies will not be able to order paper Locators without having ordered paper pre/post-tests from the same series.

Programs should choose the Appraisal if it will be used alone for placement and will not be followed up by a pretest. The Appraisal can **never** be used as a pretest or post-test.

**6. What pre- and post-tests does the Listening STEPS series provide and how long do the tests take?** The series provides two parallel forms of pre- and post-tests at each of five levels. These levels provide necessary placement information and ensure the most accurate diagnostic information to guide English language instruction.

Questions in Level A through D repeat the test item one time. Tests at Level E do not repeat test items, thus allowing a shorter testing time for completion of Level E tests.

## Listening STEPS

Level	Form Numbers	Number of Items	Test Time*
Level A	621L-622L	33	28 minutes
Level B	623L-624L	36	45 minutes
Level C	625L-626L	39	52 minutes
Level D	627L-628L	39	56 minutes
Level E	629L-630L	39	38 minutes

\*Students must be allowed up to the time listed to complete the test, but most students will finish the test in less time. Students may be given additional time as an accommodation under certain circumstances.

**7. Which answer sheets should agencies use with the Listening STEPS Appraisal and the Listening STEPS pre- and post-tests?** To score tests with TOPSpro Enterprise software: TOPSpro Student Test Record. To score tests manually: General Purpose answer sheet.

**8. Can agencies pretest with other listening series while transitioning to Listening STEPS?** No. It is essential that pre- and post-testing always occurs within the same series to ensure test reliability and validity.

**9. If someone scores in the low-end inaccurate range marked with an asterisk (\*), what is the policy for retesting?** Examinees who score at the inaccurate range do not receive a scale score. Those who score in the inaccurate range of a Level B, C, D or E test should take the next lower test form to receive a scale score and NRS level. If a student scores at the inaccurate range on a Level A test, CASAS suggests additional English language instruction before retesting the student on a Level A test.

**10. If someone scores in the high-end conservative-estimate range marked with a diamond (◆), must the person retest or can agencies use the score?**

a. **Pretest:** CASAS recommends but does not require retesting at the next higher level. Agencies may choose to use the diamond score. However, the conservative estimate score may underestimate the student's ability. The student can be retested at the next higher level to receive a more accurate score.

b. **Post-test:** Examinees who score at this range on a post-test may choose to either use the diamond score or retest at the next highest test level.

**11. Do the policies in questions 9 and 10 apply to agencies that must comply with NRS reporting requirements?** Yes. Agencies should follow these guidelines to meet NRS reporting requirements.

**12. What information regarding learning gains meets NRS reporting requirements?** Agencies and states report students' learning gains when students move from one NRS Educational Functioning Level (EFL) to another. The NRS system does not ask for student progress by scale score, only by EFL advancement.

**13. What about agencies that do not report to NRS? How do they calculate learning gains?** These agencies usually monitor students' learning gains by comparing pre- and post-test scale scores. See questions 8 and 9 for more details about testing and retesting policies.

**14. What are the Listening STEPS scale score ranges?**

NRS Educational Functioning Levels for ESL	Listening STEPS Scale Score Ranges
1 Beginning ESL Literacy	181 and below
2 Low Beginning ESL	182-191
3 High Beginning ESL	192-201
4 Low Intermediate ESL	202-211
5 High Intermediate ESL	212-221
6 Advanced ESL	222-231
(Exit Advanced ESL)	232 and above

**15. Level B does not give a scale score until item 13, and Levels C, D, and E do not do so until item 14. Why do students need to answer this number of questions to obtain a scale score?** This ensures that students answer enough questions to assess their listening level reliably.

**16. How do agencies get started using Listening STEPS in CASAS eTests?** Agencies may edit their existing listening instructional program templates to include the new assessments. They also may contact [techsupport@casas.org](mailto:techsupport@casas.org) for assistance with editing or adding new templates with sessions for Listening STEPS.

**17. What can you tell me about your TOPSpro Enterprise system?** TOPSpro Enterprise is CASAS-developed data accountability software that simplifies the testing process by scoring tests automatically, tracking student progress, generating useful reports, collecting demographics, managing data for local, state, and federal accountability, and more. TOPSpro Enterprise can collect test results from online or paper testing. The software exchanges data with more than 35 third-party vendors such as LACES, ASAP, BANNER, WABERS, and others.

**18. Are TOPSpro Enterprise reports available for Listening STEPS?** Test score reports, and CASAS Competency, Task Area, and ELP Content Standard reports will be available.

**19. Is there a chart that shows which CASAS tests have approval for NRS reporting?** Yes. See <https://www.casas.org/training-and-support/wioa-and-nrs-compliance/nrs-approval-of-casas>

**20. What should agencies do with any listening test materials that are no longer in use after the switch to Listening STEPS?** Agencies should never use retired tests for test practice with students. Please dispose of all test materials in the following manner:

- a. Shred test booklets and test support materials.
- b. Notify CASAS using school/agency letterhead with this information:
  - Number of test booklets and test forms shredded
  - Date of shredding
  - Signature of school/agency administrator. (Be sure to retain a copy of the letter for agency records.)