

*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 will serve English language programs. Agencies will be able to 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 the academic vocabulary and higher-order thinking skills contained in the 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. With a test booklet only at Level A, the remainder of the series (Levels B through E) does not require any reading. 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 Level 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?** Both the Form 619L Listening STEPS Appraisal and the Form 620L Listening STEPS Locator accurately place students into the correct pretest. The Form 619L Listening STEPS Appraisal is a 30-minute test available through CASAS eTests and as a paper test. The Form 620L Listening STEPS Locator is a 15-minute test available only through CASAS eTests. The Locator is not available as a paper test.

Programs should choose the Appraisal if it will be used alone for placement and will not be followed up by a pretest.

**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 question one time. Tests at Level E do not repeat test questions, thus allowing a shorter testing time, if necessary, for completion of Level E tests.

## Listening STEPS

Level	Form Numbers	Number of Items	Test Time
Level A	621L-622L	33	30 minutes
Level B	623L-624L	36	50 minutes
Level C	625L-626L	36	75 minutes
Level D	627L-628L	36	75 minutes
Level E	629L-630L	36	75 minutes

**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?** Conservative estimate scores may be used for pre- and post-testing. Retesting is not required. Some programs may wish to retest students at the next test level to see if they might score higher.

**11. Do the policies in questions 9 and 10 apply to agencies that must comply with NRS reporting requirements?** Yes. Agencies should follow these same 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 (Exit Advanced ESL)	222-231 232 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 update multiple sessions sharing the templates. 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, 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: a. Number of test booklets and test forms shredded b. Date of shredding c. Signature of school/agency administrator. (Be sure to retain a copy of the letter for agency records.)