

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

Reading STEPS for ESL Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. In which instructional areas should agencies plan to use the Reading STEPS series? The Reading 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 Reading STEPS series different from other reading series? Reading 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). Reading 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. Which placement test should agencies use with Reading STEPS? How long is the test? Both the Form 620R Reading STEPS Locator and the Form 619R Reading STEPS Appraisal accurately place students into the correct pretest. The Form 620R Locator is a 20-minute test with 14 questions. The Form 619R Reading STEPS Appraisal is a 30-minute test with 28 questions. Both the Locator and the Appraisal 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.

4. What pre- and post-tests does the Reading 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 test levels. These levels provide necessary placement opportunities to ensure the most accurate diagnostic information to guide reading instruction.

Reading STEPS

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

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

6. Can agencies pretest with other reading series while transitioning to Reading STEPS? No. It is essential that pre- and post-testing always occurs within the same series to ensure test reliability and validity. Agencies cannot pretest students on the current Life and Work Reading series and post-test on the new Reading STEPS series.

7. 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 reading instruction before retesting the student on a Level A test.

8. 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.

9. Do the policies in questions 7 and 8 apply to agencies that must comply with NRS reporting requirements? Yes. Agencies should follow these guidelines to meet NRS reporting requirements.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. What are the Reading STEPS scale score ranges in relation to NRS Levels for ESL?

NRS Reading Educational Functioning Levels for ESL	Reading STEPS Scale Score Ranges
1 Beginning ESL Literacy	183 and below
2 Low Beginning ESL	184-196
3 High Beginning ESL	197-206
4 Low Intermediate ESL	207-216
5 High Intermediate ESL	217-227
6 Advanced ESL	228-238
(Exit Advanced ESL)	239 and above

13. Levels B, C, D, and E do not give a scale score until item 10. 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 reading level reliably.

14. How do agencies get started using Reading STEPS in CASAS eTests? Agencies may edit their existing reading instructional program templates to include the new assessments. They also may contact techsupport@casas.org for assistance with editing or adding new templates with sessions for Reading STEPS.

15. What does Reading STEPS offer for students who require accommodations? Accommodations materials for the Reading STEPS series are currently in development.

16. 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.

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

18. 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>

19. What should agencies do with any reading test materials that are no longer in use after switching to Reading 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.)