



? Response options to Listening items are often presented as written text. Are the student's reading skills also being tested?

The Listening items are designed to test students' listening skills in grade-level appropriate, academic contexts. Items targeting lower grade or proficiency levels often have answer choices presented as graphics rather than text to eliminate any need for students to read as well as listen. Items designed for higher grade or proficiency levels typically have answer choices presented as text, most often limited to single words or short phrases. On the one hand, understanding these response options does require minimal reading skill. On the other hand, confining a listening test to answer choices presented as graphics would make it impossible to test higher-order listening skills, such as the ability to synthesize details and draw inferences. For that reason, the ACCESS for ELLs Listening tests do include text answer choices. However, we prioritize keeping those response options short and simple to minimize the reading load for students.

? Why isn't the test question presented as written text?

To minimize the reading load for students taking the Listening test, the questions are not presented as text for the students to read. This approach helps reinforce the focus on students' listening comprehension. Students must listen to the information presented in each item (the stimulus) and then process a question they hear. If the students understand both the stimulus and the question, they have everything they need to identify the correct response option and demonstrate that they can answer the question based solely on their listening abilities.

? Some of the Listening items are very long. Is this a test of the student's memory?

The Listening items are not designed to test students' short term or working memory. They are also not designed to test content knowledge. Because ACCESS for ELLs assesses only English language proficiency and not previous learning, the Listening items present all of the information a student needs to answer the question.

To help ensure that students can use their listening skills to strategically process information and aren't attempting to memorize the words they hear, some long items targeting the higher proficiency levels include a question preview. For example, the item might begin with, "I'm going to ask you...." With this format, the student hears the question first and knows what to listen for as information is presented.

In addition, the longer items use verbal cues like emphasis and repetition to make the pieces of the stimulus that will be tested particularly salient to the listener. Students at a high proficiency level presented with long stimuli are given an authentic listening experience in which focusing on the most relevant parts of what they hear will provide the information they need to choose the correct answer.

Why do students have only one opportunity to listen?*

The Listening items are designed to assess students' understanding of the salient, or most important, information included in the audio students hear. Students are not expected to remember trivial detail in order to do well on the assessment. In other words, the Listening items are designed to assess a student's ability to process key information, in real time, provided in naturally delivered language – exactly the task students must do continuously in their schools and classrooms. In the classroom, students may ask for repetitions or clarifications when they have not fully understood something. However, it would not be appropriate to do so after everything they hear. As such, WIDA believes a single listening opportunity provides the most authentic assessment of a student's skills.

Several decisions have been made in the design of the Listening test to ensure students have an optimal opportunity to show their skills with only a single chance to hear the audio prompt. These decisions include:

- Providing orientation images and audio.
The orientation information gives students context for the items that follow. Giving students a chance to focus on a topic before any question is asked sets them up to do their best thinking. WIDA believes this approach eliminates the need for a strategy some other tests employ: a first-listen opportunity purely for orientation followed by a second-listen opportunity to concentrate on the question.
- Providing three items per topic.
Each orientation is followed by three items that are thematically related. This approach minimizes the cognitive demand placed on students when they switch from topic to topic with each item.
- Providing one Listening item at a time.
Student listen to the audio information, then answer a single question about the information they just heard. Other tests allows students to listen to audio information multiple times because multiple questions are asked about the content presented.
- Providing a self-paced test (ACCESS for ELLs Online only).
Students move from screen to screen in the online test when they are ready. Students have the opportunity to wait after the orientation or after any item and move on to the next item only when they are prepared to listen again.

**By default, Listening items are played only once. Students assigned a particular accommodation may be able to listen to items multiple times.*