

**LevelSet™  
Assessment:  
Frequently Asked  
Questions**

**Lexiles and LevelSet  
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**Understanding Lexiles and the Lexile® Framework**

**What is the Lexile Framework?**

The Lexile Framework is a scientific approach to reading and text measurement that has become the most widely adopted reading measure in use today. Developed by MetaMetrics®, beginning with a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in 1984, Lexile measures are the result of more than 20 years of ongoing research.

The Lexile Framework is unique because it measures text difficulty and reader ability on the same scale. This makes for an exceptionally effective matching of readers to appropriate texts. The Lexile Framework has been aligned to many national and state norm-referenced assessments, including the Common Core. In 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) chose the Lexile Framework as its own measure of text difficulty. For more information, go to [www.lexile.com/about-lexile/How-to-get-lexile-measures/](http://www.lexile.com/about-lexile/How-to-get-lexile-measures/).

Lexile measures are based on the relationship between two well-established predictors of how difficult a text is to comprehend: semantic difficulty and syntactic complexity. In the Lexile system, semantic difficulty is measured using the mean log word frequency, which is the logarithm of the number of times a word from the text appears in each five-million words of a corpus of nearly 600-million words. Syntactic difficulty is a measure of the length of the sentences in a passage. Long sentences are likely to contain more clauses and therefore communicate not only more information and ideas, but also an interrelationship between them. Researchers also speculate that longer sentences require the reader to retain more information in short-term memory. The Lexile equation takes into account both the measurement of word frequency and sentence length, resulting in a measure of reading difficulty expressed as a Lexile. For more information, visit the MetaMetrics website at <http://lexile.com>.

**Why did Achieve3000 choose the Lexile Framework for Reading?**

Achieve3000 chose to use the Lexile Framework for Achieve3000 Literacy after an intensive study of many readability measures. A key advantage to using the Lexile scales, as opposed to other readability measures, is that the Lexile Framework evaluates both text difficulty and reader ability using the same scale. This means the ability to comprehend and the material being read are evaluated using the same criteria, lending it greater effectiveness in terms of matching readers with appropriate texts. Since the Lexile Framework has been extensively validated by research—including a 15-year study funded by the National Institute of Health—Achieve3000 and the education community are confident in its superior ability to match readers to text.

# LevelSet™ Assessment: Frequently Asked Questions

## How Does Achieve3000 use students' Lexile levels?

Achieve3000 Literacy uses Lexile levels to scientifically match students to an appropriately leveled passage. Students receive a Lexile measure initially from the LevelSet Pre-test assessment. From that point on, their Lexile levels are adjusted by the system on the 1st of each month as they work through the program.

In much the same way as Achieve3000 Literacy measures each student's Lexile level, each reading passage is assigned a discrete Lexile measure, thereby placing students and text on the same Lexile scale.

Achieve3000 Literacy then uses this information to match readers to text. When a student logs in, the system automatically finds the content that most closely matches the student's Lexile level. Students read about the same topics as their classmates, but the difficulty level of the passage is tailored to their individual Lexile levels. For example, in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade class, Frances has a Lexile level of 960L, while her classmate has a Lexile level of 770L. Their reading selections will be about the same grade-appropriate topic, but the level of the passage presented will be at different Lexile levels. Both students read a "tailor-made" article.

Students who are identified as Developing Readers may require additional assistance when reading the content. They may get this assistance through use of the audio support or through teacher intervention. This method leads to an expected 75% comprehension rate—the content is not too difficult to be frustrating, but difficult enough to be challenging and to encourage reading progress. We encourage you to monitor student performance to ensure that students are scoring 75% and higher on Activities.

## LevelSet Assessment Specifications

### What type of assessment is LevelSet?

LevelSet is a fixed-form, computer-assisted assessment.

### How many versions are there of the test?

LevelSet is available in both English and Spanish. For each language, there are 11 versions, corresponding to grade levels 2-12.

### Does LevelSet have alternate forms?

In both English and Spanish, LevelSet has three alternate forms at each grade level that are administered randomly to students.

### How many questions are on the test?

The LevelSet assessment itself has 30 questions. For students taking the test for the very first time in English, they will first complete a 10-item Locator Test to determine which version of the LevelSet assessment they should receive. For students taking the test for the very first time in Spanish, if they answer incorrectly on each of the first 5 items or answer incorrectly on 5 or more of the first 10 items, the test will move to an easier version. Because of this Locator Test or step-down logic, some students may receive up to 40 items.

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## How are students assigned the appropriate level?

New users (i.e., students who do not already have a Lexile measure in the Achieve3000 Literacy system) will complete a Locator Test immediately prior to the Pre-test LevelSet. The Locator Test is an initial gauge of a student's reading ability.

There are three forms of the Locator Test, one to measure reading ability at the elementary school level (grades 2-5), one for the middle school level (grades 6-8), and one for the high school level (grades 9-12). New users will receive the Locator Test form that corresponds to their grade level.

New users' performance on the Locator Test will allow the Achieve3000 Literacy system to assign them to a level of the Pre-test LevelSet that best matches their actual reading ability.

Note that for the Interim, Post-test, and subsequent Pre-tests, the version of assessment will be determined by students' current Lexile level.

## How do I assign LevelSet in Spanish?

If you have a student who needs to take LevelSet in Spanish, you must first assign that student to the Language Scaffolds Full Spanish. The Spanish version of the assessment is then automatically delivered to the student. Note that there is no Locator Test in Spanish. For their very first Spanish Pre-Test, new users receive a level of the LevelSet that corresponds to their grade in school.

However...

- If a teacher assigns Support and/or Language scaffolds, students receive a version that is two grade levels below their class grade.
- If Enrichment scaffolds are assigned, students will receive a version that is one grade level above their class grade.

## How do dual language students take LevelSet?

If you have students who will use Achieve3000 Literacy in both English and Spanish, they will need to take the test once in English and once in Spanish. As you set up your class, be sure to mark the class "DUAL LANGUAGE." When the student first logs in, a drop-down menu will appear for the class in English (default) and the class in Spanish.

Students will need to click the English Class to see LevelSet in English. Students should then click the SpanishClass to take the assessment in Spanish.

## LevelSet Assessment – Administration in School and Remotely

For more information on LevelSet scheduling, review the [classroom](#), [school](#), and [district](#) LevelSet guides.

### When is LevelSet administered?

LevelSet can be administered up to three times a year. Typically, it is administered once at the beginning of the school year (or the first-time students log in) and again at the end of the school year. For the pre-test, the assessment displays automatically, and students cannot use the Achieve3000 Literacy features until it is completed.

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An interim assessment is also available, which is administered mid-year. **By default, the interim assessment is set to off.** It can be turned on for all or sub-groups of students, such as your Developing Readers, and the dates it is available can be modified. Remember when scheduling the interim LevelSet, it should be scheduled at least 8 weeks from the completion of the pre-test to allow students time to make progress

**The LevelSet post-test is scheduled to be administered on the first Monday in May,** unless you have scheduled an alternate date with your Implementation Manager. If scheduling an alternate date, the LevelSet post-test should be scheduled for at least 8 weeks after the interim LevelSet if administered or close to the end of your school year to get an accurate measure of growth for the entire school year.

## **How do I assign LevelSet to my students for the first time?**

You do NOT need to assign the LevelSet pre-test. The assessment is automatically delivered to students when they first log in to Achieve3000 Literacy. The test is only available to students during school hours or the time range you set in the Supervised Student Work Time field in the program.

## **What can I do to prepare my students to take LevelSet?**

It is very important for you to adequately prepare students and the testing environment for LevelSet. Students should be well-rested and motivated to try their best. The test environment should be quiet, and computers should be ready and working. These strategies will help ensure that test scores accurately reflect students' reading levels. [Click here](#) to access the document: *How Do I Prepare My Students for LevelSet?*

## **After students have completed the assessment, how do I see the results?**

As soon as the first students in your class complete the LevelSet assessment, you can access results in the DataCenter > Class Overview tab or on the *How Has Lexile Performance Changed Over Time?* report. For more information about interpreting this report, access the demo from the Resource Center.

## **After I click on the link about available LevelSet scores, I see a message about LevelSet scores that need my immediate review. What does this mean?**

We inform teachers if a LevelSet test is completed in a potentially invalid way. There are three reasons a test can be flagged as invalid:

- if it is completed too quickly (in less than five minutes),
- too slowly (in more than 60 minutes), or
- with a patterned-response-type behavior (for example, the student answered A to every question, or alternated A and B).

You can see which students completed a LevelSet test in a potentially invalid way using the *Possibly Invalid LevelSet Administrations* report. Additionally, in the report *How Has Lexile Performance Changed Over Time?*, a footnote will appear next to any potentially invalid LevelSet assessment.

Using the *Possibly Invalid LevelSet Administrations* report, teachers should confirm potentially invalid LevelSet assessments as valid or invalid. We advise teachers to have a conversation with these students to ensure an honest, good-faith effort was made on the test. Teachers should use their professional judgment and knowledge of the student to decide if the assessment was a valid administration or not.

# LevelSet™ Assessment: Frequently Asked Questions

For any assessment confirmed as invalid, teachers may reset or re-administer the assessment. Note that after teachers confirm an assessment as valid or invalid, the footnote will no longer appear on the report *How Has Lexile Performance Changed Over Time?*

You can reduce the number of students with potentially invalid scores by preparing students and the test environment for LevelSet testing. Refer to [How Do I Prepare My Students for LevelSet?](#)

## How often may I re-administer LevelSet?

LevelSet may be re-administered once per student per testing occasion (e.g., Pre-test is one testing occasion).

## May I change a student's Lexile after completion of LevelSet?

Yes. You may change student Lexile score for three weeks following completion of LevelSet. **Note that the LevelSet score itself cannot be changed.** Lexiles should only be changed with good reason; for example, it was discovered that the student did not wear his glasses the day of the test and could not see the items. After the three-week window, changes to Lexiles are **strongly discouraged** and must be completed by contacting Customer Support. As noted above, preparing students and the test environment for the LevelSet assessment will reduce the number of reading-level changes teachers need to complete. Refer to [How Do I Prepare My Students for LevelSet?](#)

## Can LevelSet be taken at home?

Yes, if necessary due to scheduling challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disaster, or othersituations that prevents students from attending school for long periods of time. The testing conditions shouldmirror those in place when the student is testing in school. Students should take the assessment without assistance from anyone, in a quiet environment with minimal distraction, using well-functioning computer equipment and a reliable internet connection. We strongly encourage sending a [letter home to parents](#) and encouraging students to watch the tutorial video (in [English](#) or [Spanish](#)).

## Are LevelSet scores from assessments taken from home valid?

Yes, provided the test taker (student) did not receive any help from another person and took it in an environment with few distractions. To the extent that either of these conditions were not met, a student's Lexile could be a lessaccurate estimate of a student's ability.

## How can I prevent students from taking LevelSet from home?

The simplest way is to ask students not to log in to Achieve3000 Literacy until they have completed the LevelSet pre-test in school. This request should be communicated to both students and parents. Another way is to set the pPre-test date to the first day students will be in school and make sure students log in and take the LevelSet pre-test that day. The LevelSet pre-test date can be set at the district, school, or class level.

Finally, a school could set Supervised Student Work Time (SSWT) to a time when no students would log in – for example, 2-3 a.m. On the day students will be in school, change SSWT to the normal range (such as the school day) before asking students to log in and take LevelSet. SSWT can be set at the district, school, or class level.

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## Interpreting LevelSet Scores

### Is the LevelSet assessment considered a norm-referenced test or a criterion-referenced test?

LevelSet is both a norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment. As a norm-referenced assessment, scores on the LevelSet can be compared to MetaMetrics' National Lexile Norms to determine how a student performed compared to other students of the same grade. For more information, go to <https://hub.lexile.com/lexile-grade-level-charts>. As a criterion-referenced assessment, scores on the LevelSet can inform on whether a student is at a certain level of reading proficiency. Specifically, LevelSet scores can be used to determine if a student is on track for College and Career Readiness. For more information, see below.

### How should I interpret Lexile scores?

Achieve3000 Literacy follows MetaMetrics recommendations regarding interpretation of Lexile scores: Students' Lexiles should be compared to the Lexile bands for being on track for College and Career for the students' grade.

The chart on the following page shows the College and Career Readiness bands used within Achieve3000 Literacy. These bands were developed by MetaMetrics and are based on the current 'stretch' Lexile bands put forth by the Common Core. To use the chart, look for the row corresponding to the grade level and find the column corresponding to the student's current Lexile. This will tell you how the student is progressing toward the college and career readiness goal.

For example, Sonya is a 4<sup>th</sup>-grade student and has a Lexile of 700L. Looking at the Lexile bands within the grade 4 row, we can see that Sonya is approaching being on track for college and career readiness.

College and Career Readiness				
Grade	Not On Track		On Track	
	Falls Far Below	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
1	BR115L and Below	BR110L - 185L	190L - 530L	535L and Above
2	150L and Below	155L - 415L	420L - 650L	655L and Above
3	265L and Below	270L - 515L	520L - 820L	825L and Above
4	385L and Below	390L - 735L	740L - 940L	945L and Above
5	500L and Below	505L - 825L	830L - 1010L	1015L and Above
6	555L and Below	560L - 920L	925L - 1070L	1075L and Above
7	625L and Below	630L - 965L	970L - 1120L	1125L and Above
8	660L and Below	665L - 1005L	1010L - 1185L	1190L and Above
9	775L and Below	780L - 1045L	1050L - 1260L	1265L and Above
10	830L and Below	835L - 1075L	1080L - 1335L	1340L and Above
11/12	950L and Below	955L - 1180L	1185L - 1385L	1390L and Above

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## What are the two numbers in parentheses after students' LevelSet Lexile scores?

Achieve3000 Literacy provides two normative values to help interpret students' LevelSet Lexile scores. These values are visible on the *How Has Lexile Performance Changed Over Time?* report and include a Percentile Rank and a Normal Curve Equivalent. Both values provide information about how students are reading compared to their same-grade peers.

Percentile ranks range from 1 to 99. The percentile rank of a score indicates the percentage of scores below or equal to that score. Imagine 100 students standing in a line according to their test score with the student with the lowest score receiving a rank of 1 and the student with the highest score receiving a rank of 99. The 68<sup>th</sup> student in the line would have a percentile rank of 68 and be at the 68<sup>th</sup> percentile.

The Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) is a way to express a student's test score based on where it falls along the normal curve distribution. A distribution of scores is shown by a graph or mathematical function that summarizes how frequently individual scores occur in a large group of students (i.e. population). In a normal distribution, scores are assumed to follow a pattern of the curve shown in *Figure 1*, with a few students scoring in the very low range (left side of the curve) and a few students scoring in the very high range (right side of the curve). Most scores fall in the middle of the score range, which causes the hill shape of the curve. The mean score is associated with the highest point on the curve and falls in the middle of the range. NCE scores range from 1 to 99 with the middle score at 50.

In contrast to the Percentile Rank, the points along the NCE scale are equal interval, which means that the distance between two points along the scale is the same regardless of where the two points fall on the scale. For example, the distance between 10 and 20 is the same as the distance between 50 and 60. Because the NCE scale is an interval scale, it can be used for statistical work such as computing means, operations not possible with Percentile Ranks.

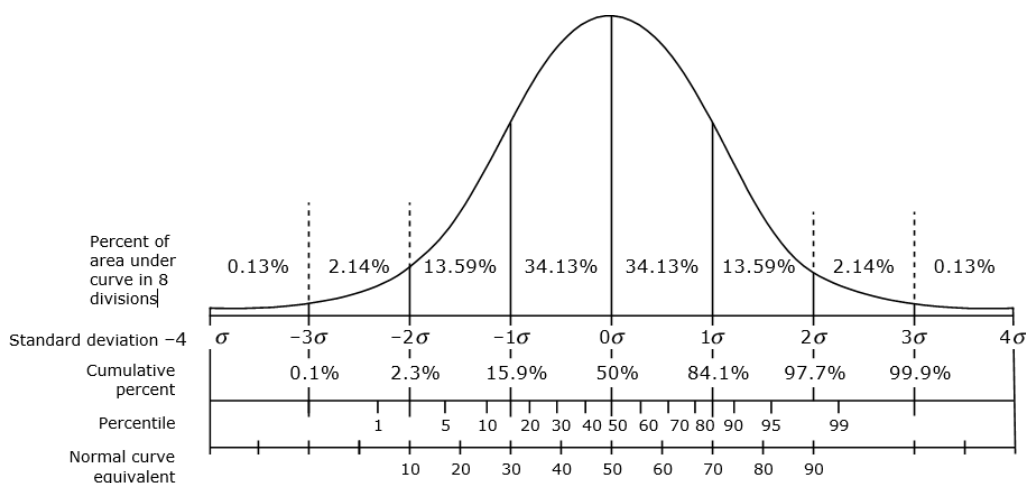


Figure 1: Normal Curve and Associated Scores

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## **Some of my students' Lexile scores have a BR in front of them. What does that mean?**

Beginning Reader (BR) is a code given to readers and text that are below 0L on the Lexile scale. In some cases, a BR code is followed by a number and L (e.g., BR150L). A Lexile reader measure of BR150L indicates that the Lexile measure of the reader is 150 units below 0L. The smaller the number following the BR code, the more advanced the reader is. For example, a BR150L reader is more advanced than a BR200L reader.

**One or more of my students has a yellow icon next to his or her name on reports. What does that mean?** In Achieve3000 Literacy, Developing Readers are identified based on their performance on LevelSet and on the multiple-choice questions in the Respond step. Students receiving the Language and/or Support scaffolds are identified as Developing Readers if their Lexile score from LevelSet or monthly auto-adjustment falls to 150L or lower. Students not receiving the Language and/or Support scaffolds are identified as Developing Readers if their Lexile score from LevelSet or monthly auto-adjustment falls below 50L. Their score suggests they need sustained practice at their current reading level and may need assistance completing the multiple-choice Activities. For this reason, the Lexile levels of these students will remain at their current levels until they complete another LevelSet assessment. An Interim LevelSet assessment will be available for scheduling about mid-way through the academic year to measure their reading progress and update these students' Lexile measures in the program. Developing Readers are identified in Achieve3000 Literacy reports with a yellow triangle.

Sometimes, students categorized as Developing Readers did not take the LevelSet assessment seriously and have a score much lower than their true reading abilities. If the system has identified test results as being potentially invalid, you will see a superscript next to their LevelSet score on the report *How Has Lexile Performance Changed Over Time?* For more information, you should consult the report titled *Possibly Invalid LevelSet Administrations*. This report can be found by expanding the menu on the left-hand side of the Teacher's Edition home page, then selecting *Reports > Assessment Tools*. You have the option of re-administering the assessment from within this report. For more information about addressing invalid LevelSet assessment results, please consult the Achieve3000 Literacy Resource Center.

## **My students' Lexile scores from Achieve3000 Literacy aren't the same as the Lexiles they have received on other assessments. How do I know which one is correct?**

When comparing two tests that are designed to measure reading ability, the tests may result in different scores. There are a few reasons this occurs. Every test has a margin of error, known as *measurement error*. Error can result from many things, including factors related to the individual students, the testing situation, and many other sources. For example, sometimes students may know the answers, but they are tired, distracted, or nervous; or students may misunderstand the test instructions. Essentially, this means that no test can provide a perfectly accurate measure of student reading. **Indeed, because of normal measurement error, it is highly unlikely for students to receive identical Lexile measures even if they take the same test twice.**

You should review all scores from a student's reading assessments, rather than focusing on only one measure. This will give a better understanding of a student's reading ability and can help to make instructional decisions.



# LevelSet™ Assessment: Frequently Asked Questions

## Measuring Ongoing Lexile Performance

### How are Lexiles reviewed and updated throughout the school year?

Student Lexile levels are reviewed by the system at the end of each month, with the exception of those students who have been identified as Developing Readers. The student needs to complete at least four sets of multiple-choice questions in the Respond step of lessons since the last time her Lexile was updated. This provides the system has enough information to evaluate the student's Lexile level to ensure the student is properly placed. The system examines students' responses on these multiple-choice questions and combines that with information it already knows about the student to yield an updated Lexile score. Sometimes the Lexile score stays the same, suggesting the student is properly placed. An increase in Lexile suggests the student has gained reading skills. This might result in more difficult content being delivered to the student to match the progressing reading level.


Students identified as Developing Readers remain at their initial Lexile levels to provide sustained practice with that level of text. Once a Developing Reader scores above the cut-point (150L for students assigned to Support and/or Language scaffolds or 50L for all other students) on a LevelSet Assessment, monthly adjustments will begin from that point forward.

### How does the system combine Respond step performance and past information about the student to arrive at an updated Lexile?

The formula used to update student Lexile levels in between LevelSet assessments is known as a Bayesian Algorithm. Bayesian methodology is a statistical approach for controlling the level of uncertainty in predicting a student's score by incorporating the student's prior scores into an adjustment to the current score. The more confident we are about the prior information, the lower the uncertainty and the smaller is the standard deviation of the prior information (Yen and Fitzpatrick, 2006). The result is that the adjusted score is a more accurate measure of the student's "true" ability level. Because it is a complex algorithm that relies on statistical probabilities, it may be difficult to understand why the system makes adjustments for some students and not others. As a general rule of thumb, students need to score routinely above 75% on the Lexile-level Activities to increase their Lexile score in any given month.

### When I look at the Activity report, one of my students has a superscript number next to a score. What does this mean?

Achieve3000 Literacy informs teachers when sets of multiple-choice questions are completed in one of three potentially invalid ways: too fast, too slow, or with a patterned response (e.g., all A's). Sets for which students answer less than 75% correct on the items and are completed in either less than two minutes, more than 13 minutes, or with a patterned response will result in an alert. Students assigned to Support and/or Language Scaffolds receive double time (26 minutes) before a set of multiple-choice questions is considered invalid. **Any set identified as potentially invalid will not count toward the monthly review of students' Lexiles.** You should have a follow-up conversation with students after seeing an alert to ensure best efforts on the multiple-choice questions.



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**How long will I have each month to review Lexile scores that are suggested to decline and decide how to handle them?**

You have one week to review Lexile scores that are suggested to decline. If you do not review and act on scores that are suggested to decline, the student's Lexile will remain the same as the previous month.

Additionally, there will be a superscript next to the student's Lexile on the report *How Has Lexile Performance Changed Over Time?* and the student's Lexile will not be eligible for a Lexile adjustment for four weeks and the completion of eight sets of multiple-choice questions from the Respond step.

**Reference**

Yen, W.M. & Fitzpatrick, A.R. (2006). "Item Response Theory." In R.L. Brennan (Ed.), *Educational Measurement* (Fourth Edition, pp. 111-154). Sponsored jointly by National Council on Measurement in Education and American Council on Education. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.