



## Frequently Asked Questions about TABE CLAS-E



TABE CLAS-E



## Test Design

### For what target audiences was TABE CLAS–E designed?

TABE Complete Language Assessment System—English™ (TABE CLAS–E™) assessments were designed for state Adult Education programs. They can be used to assess the English language proficiency of adults whose primary language is not English.

### What types of adult education programs can use TABE CLAS–E?

TABE CLAS–E is useful for any program that needs to assess basic English proficiency skills in an adult population, including adult English Language Learner (ELL) programs, correctional education, and alternative educational programs, which may include basic education, vocational, and life skills assessment.

### What skill areas are measured with TABE CLAS–E?

TABE CLAS–E measures language proficiency in Reading, Listening, Writing, and Speaking.

### What English as a Second Language (ESL) proficiency levels, as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS), does TABE CLAS–E cover?

TABE CLAS–E assessments are available for four levels of ability. Test level Proficiency Descriptor NRS ESL levels:

Subtest	Proficiency Descriptor	NRS ESL Levels
1	Beginning ESL	1 & 2
2	Beginning ESL	2 & 3
3	Intermediate ESL	3 & 4
4	Advanced ESL	5 & 6

### What types of materials are available for TABE CLAS–E?

TABE CLAS–E is a complete language proficiency system for assessing adult English Language Learners. It addresses the full continuum of measurement—from placement, to planning, to progress.

- A Locator Test can help examiners determine the appropriate test level for each student. The Locator Test includes an oral interview and additional multiple-choice items representative of the skill areas assessed in the four test levels.
- Pre- and post-tests are available at four different proficiency levels, ensuring that students are testing within the appropriate skill range.



- Examiners can automatically scan, score, and report results quickly and accurately. Tests can also be scored manually by using scoring stencils, the Scoring Tables book, and the Individual Diagnostic Profile.
- The two-volume Teacher's Resource Guide helps connect test results to instruction by offering lesson plans that teachers can use to deliver instruction or provide extra practice for students.
- Staff Development materials, available for individual or group training sessions, show teachers how to interpret and apply test results to enhance classroom instruction. Available in DVD, these materials include information about the assessments, sample test items, and sample score reports.
- To get more information about TABE CLAS–E or to order materials, call Data Recognition Corporation Customer Service at 800.538.9547, or through our website at [www.tabetest.com](http://www.tabetest.com)

### **To what standards is TABE CLAS–E aligned?**

Test developers created the test design after analyzing a cross-section of the foremost ESL standards and adapting the most common and relevant skills. Sources for these standards included:

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines
- Arizona English Language Acquisition for Adults (ELAA) Standards
- California ESL Model Standards for Adult Education Programs
- Common European Framework of Reference
- Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000—ESL for Adults
- Florida Literacy Completion Point (LCP) Performance Record
- Framework of Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL
- National Reporting System (NRS) Educational Functioning Levels for ESL
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Standards for Pre-K–12
- Texas Standardized Curriculum Framework—Adult ESL

### **What types of items are included in TABE CLAS–E?**

The test formats include multiple-choice and constructed-response items that address a wide range of language skills. The content is engaging, culturally relevant, and motivates students to achieve their best. Test items include realistic illustrations, contextualized reading passages, and contexts encountered at home, in the community, and in the workplace.



### **How were the test items developed?**

ESL content specialists developed items, passages, and stimuli according to test design specifications, with the goal of producing a focused assessment that evaluates specific language proficiencies. Every item was reviewed for accuracy, appropriateness of content, context, and difficulty, as well as for relevance to the adult ESL education curricula. Items were then submitted to a diverse group of ESL education professionals for feedback on language, subject matter, and representation of various populations. Rigorous and systematic procedures were followed to reduce ethnic, racial, gender, regional, disability, and age bias.

### **How does Data Recognition Corporation provide high-quality items?**

All items go through numerous reviews and editing cycles to ensure content and level appropriateness, match to objectives, and accuracy of answers. Items were field-tested in a study involving more than 10,000 adult ESL learners. These learners came from a variety of programs which report to the National Reporting System (NRS). These programs included the following: adult basic education (including literacy and), adult postsecondary education, English as a Second Language (ESL), alternative high schools, juvenile and adult correctional facilities, vocational/technical training, Job Corps, and family literacy.

Standardized test administration and scoring procedures were used during this study. Data were analyzed to determine each item's psychometric characteristics, such as difficulty and contribution to score accuracy. Selection of items for the operational forms was based on meeting content specifications while minimizing measurement error.

### **How does TABE CLAS–E link to instruction?**

After a student's level of English proficiency is identified with TABE CLAS–E, teachers can use the Teacher's Resource Guide to tailor instruction. The Teacher's Resource Guide, Volume 2, contains objective-based lessons targeted to match students' needs as indicated by test results. Lessons are organized by proficiency level and skill area, and are designed to strengthen students' language skills.

### **Are there special editions of TABE CLAS–E for people with visual disabilities?**

Yes. Large-print editions of TABE CLAS–E Forms A&B are available from Data Recognition Corporation and may be ordered by calling DRC Customer Service at 800.538.9547.



## Administering the Test

### Who is eligible to administer TABE CLAS–E?

Educators who have a general knowledge of measurement principles and who comply with the assessment standards of the American Psychological Association may administer TABE CLAS–E. These professional standards require TABE administrators to follow specific guidelines, such as keeping tests in a secure place and administering them only as directed.

### Is it easy for teachers to administer TABE CLAS–E?

Yes. TABE CLAS–E includes easy-to-follow Test Directions to help teachers prepare students for the testing experience, plan the testing schedule, and organize their classrooms. This guide includes easy-to-follow, step-by-step instructions and helpful suggestions to assist teachers in administering the test, which helps to ensure that standardized testing procedures are followed.

Note: Teachers do need to prepare in advance to score the Writing Folio and to administer and score the Speaking test.

### How long does it take to administer TABE CLAS–E?

Estimated times for each section are as follows:

- Reading—25 minutes per group
- Listening—20 minutes per group
- Writing—47 minutes per group
- Speaking (optional)—15 minutes per student

### How will I know which of the four test levels of TABE CLAS–E to administer?

For English language learners in Adult Basic Education (ABE) or other programs that include students at various levels of ability, administer the TABE CLAS–E Locator Test first. The results will indicate by skill area which level of TABE CLAS–E to use. If you are using TABE CLAS–E as a screening tool for a program that requires a certain level of ability, select the appropriate level of TABE CLAS–E commensurate with the content difficulty for the program.



### **Can TABE CLAS–E be used by any student whose first language is not English?**

Yes. English language learners may speak a variety of languages at home and come from a diverse range of cultures. In developing TABE CLAS–E, test items were tried out by students who speak a wide variety of languages.

- Assessment Summary Report
- Group List Report
- Rank List Report

### **Can I use TABE CLAS–E for entrance screening or to make placement decisions?**

Yes. TABE CLAS–E is an excellent tool to assist in making placement decisions. TABE CLAS–E enables accurate placement and evaluation of English language learners for ESL programs.

### **Can TABE CLAS–E be used as both a pre-test and a post-test?**

Yes. TABE CLAS–E offers separate forms (Form A and Form B) for pre- and post-testing. You may alternate the order in which these forms are administered.

### **Can the Locator Test be used to determine a student’s NRS level?**

No. The Locator Test is not designed to determine NRS Level. Its only function is to point to the most appropriate TABE CLAS–E testing level, and it should not be used for any other purpose.

### **What should I do if the student doesn’t understand the spoken directions for the Speaking test?**

An examiner may repeat the prompt for an item only once. Repeating a prompt multiple times or stating the prompt in the student’s native language would provide that student an unfair advantage. See the Speaking Scoring Guide for more details.

### **Does a student need to complete the Expository Writing Folio in order to receive a Writing score?**

Yes. The scale score for the Writing test is based on the combined scores from the Writing section in the test book and the scores from the Expository Writing Folio. Valid scores are not available for incomplete tests.

### **How can I help with test security?**

Always keep tests, manuals, and answer sheets secure. Do not allow students to leave the test site with answer sheets or test books. Do not show test items (other than those designated as Sample Items) to students or discuss their answers. Make sure that your staff understands the procedures necessary to maintain test security when they administer and score TABE CLAS–E. If you would like to schedule a training session for your staff members, call Data Recognition Corporation Customer Service at 800.538.9547.



## Types of Reports and Scores

### What types of test reports does TABE CLAS–E offer?

- Individual Student Report
- Item Analysis Report
- Pre/Post Report
- Prescriptive Report

### What scores are available for TABE CLAS–E?

Scores include:

- Number Correct
- Scale Score
- National Reporting System (NRS) English as a Second Language (ESL) Educational Functioning Level
- Student Proficiency Level (SPL)
- Objectives Mastery Score
- Composite Scale Score for Reading/Writing and for Listening/Speaking
- Composite Scale Score for Reading/Listening/Writing
- Composite Scale Score for the total test—Reading/Listening/Writing/Speaking
- Estimated TABE 9&10 Level

### What choices do I have for scoring TABE CLAS–E?

DRC offers two scoring options for TABE CLAS–E:

- Hand-scoring—Scoring stencils allow the test administrator to score the printed assessments locally by hand. Raw scores can be converted to scale scores and NRS ESL levels by using the Scoring Tables book.
- Electronic scoring—Tests can be scored locally. This option allows teachers to administer the printed assessments, scan their answer documents using local scanners, and print reports immediately.



### **Are there Grade Equivalents for TABE CLAS–E scores?**

No. There are several reasons why Grade Equivalents may not be appropriate for adult education. Nonetheless, many find them useful. The scale scores for the Reading and Writing tests which indicate a student’s ability to transition successfully to TABE 9&10 Level M are approximately equivalent to Grade 8. Many experts believe this is an appropriate level; others also believe that Reading readiness may be a more useful indicator than Writing.

### **Why does the Speaking test use Weighted Scale Scores and the others do not?**

The three criteria of Speaking which are tested—Grammar, Meaning, and Appropriateness—were scaled (measured) independently. Each criterion contributes a number of points to the overall speaking score. The scale score for each criterion is then weighted by the proportion of points it contributes to the total (the Speaking test scale score, which is aligned to the NRS ESL Educational Functioning Levels).

### **Why isn’t there an NRS ESL Level for the Composite Scale Score of the complete battery (Rd + Li + Wr + Sp)?**

NRS has provided ESL educational functioning level descriptors for a combined “Speaking and Listening” category and a combined “Basic Reading and Writing” category. Therefore, DRC is able to report NRS ESL levels for these combinations of skill areas. Because NRS does not provide ESL descriptors for a combination of all four skill areas, the complete battery score (Rd + Li + Wr + Sp) cannot be aligned to an NRS ESL level.

### **How does the new TABE CLAS–E relate to TABE 9&10?**

A linking study was conducted to link the TABE CLAS–E assessment to the TABE Form 9 test so that examiners can determine whether their students have sufficient English language proficiency to transition successfully to an adult basic education assessment system.

### **What can I use to predict TABE 9&10 scores?**

TABE CLAS–E Reading and Writing tests, at Level 4, can be used to predict TABE 9&10 Level M scores for Reading and Language, respectively. Note that there is more error associated with these predicted scores than there would be with the actual scores on TABE 9&10 Level M. The best estimates of TABE 9&10 Level M scores are obtained from taking the TABE 9&10 Level M test.





### **When should I start using TABE 9&10 for measuring student progress?**

When deciding if an adult student is adequately proficient in English to transition from an ESL program to an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program, we consider two types of exit criteria, either one of which may be useful in any particular context. When these criteria have been met, consideration of the student for exit or transition is appropriate. However, no exit or transition should be made on the basis of a single test performance in isolation.

#### **Recommended criterion for consideration for exit from ESL instruction**

A student who demonstrates Advanced ESL performance in at least 3 TABE CLAS–E subtests should be considered for exit from ESL instruction to adult basic education instruction.

#### **Alternative ESL Exit Criteria Based on Individual TABE CLAS–E Subtests or Totals**

When individual subtest performances are considered, it is appropriate to use a higher criterion than the Advanced ESL performance level. Under these alternative criteria, we recommend use of the following cut scores for performance on TABE CLAS–E Level 4:

- Reading 588
- Writing 612
- Total Reading and Writing 600
- Listening 607
- Speaking 594
- Total Listening and Speaking 600

The individual cut scores for Reading and Writing are based on the TABE 9&10 linking study, as described above.

### **How can I measure progress if a student scores at NRS ESL Level 6 on the first administration of the TABE CLAS–E test?**

Note that a student can only achieve an NRS ESL Level 6 on a TABE CLAS–E Level 4 test. The language demands in lower level TABE CLAS–E tests are not sufficiently difficult to reach the “Advanced ESL” (NRS ESL Level 6) functioning level. If a student scores at NRS ESL Level 6 upon the first administration of the TABE CLAS–E Level 4 test, but has not reached the exit score, the student may still show gain if they meet the exit criterion on a second administration. However, if the student scores at the exit criterion or above on the first administration, a higher NRS ESL level could not be obtained on the second administration. In such cases, one should consult the relevant policy for transition to an ABE instrument, such as TABE 9&10.



## Interpreting the Scores

### Why are there two forms for each test?

Items that comprise a test are a sample of all those possible in a specified skill area. A second set of items can be selected for an alternate form. If the items are highly similar in content, the forms can be considered comparable. One advantage of having two forms is to demonstrate that the tests provide reliable scores. Another advantage is measuring gain from the beginning to the end of a course (pre/post) with two tests, rather than the same test.

### Why not simply use number or percent correct?

Number-correct scores (raw scores) tend to overestimate differences in ability among students around the middle of the raw score distribution and underestimate differences in ability at the low and high ends of this distribution. In short, the intervals between raw scores are not equal. Item response theory (IRT) transforms raw scores to a scale that does have equal intervals. The net result is that different test forms can be designed to be equivalent measures of the same skill area, whereas matching the average percent correct cannot ensure this.

### What does a scale score of 517 on a test mean?

Estimates of ability are initially obtained on a scale from -4.00 to +4.00, for example, with an average of 0. Scores are then transformed to numbers that do away with negatives and are large enough to meaningfully express variation in ability. Therefore, these transformed or scale scores are often expressed as three-digit numbers, e.g., 200 to 800. However, a scale score on one test (e.g., Reading) cannot be meaningfully compared, directly, with the same score on another test (e.g., Writing). A score of 517 may be above average on one test and average on another test. Valid comparisons can be made between individuals taking the same form or an individual taking equivalent forms at different times (e.g., pre/post comparisons).

### How can an examinee obtain a scale score of 517 on a 25-item test?

As noted in the preceding answer, a raw score that is transformed to a scale score is usually expressed in triple digits and thus falls within a correspondingly larger range of ability.

### Why is there such a large difference in scale scores for examinees with all items correct and examinees who missed only one item?

Examinees who answer all items correctly receive the highest obtainable scale score (HOSS). The scale score immediately below the HOSS may be much lower. This large difference is not related to an item, per se, but represents the scarcity of items that can differentiate between abilities at the high end of the scale, where there is less precision (higher error). A one-item difference elsewhere on the scale would display less of a scale score difference.



### **How can an examinee have different scale scores with the same number correct on equivalent test forms?**

Two equivalent forms will not yield identical scale scores, except at the extremes. This is even more evident when there are a limited number of reported levels (points possible). The dissimilarities in raw score statistics are compensated for in the conversion to scale scores. The answer to Q34 explains why an equal number correct on two forms does not mean equal ability levels.

### **What is meant by error associated with test scores?**

DRC reports the standard error for each estimate of ability across the full range of scores. Tests with multiple-choice items allow an examinee to guess the correct answer. IRT models may include guessing as a parameter and predict the extent to which an examinee may guess correctly. Raw scores falling at or below the performance level predicted by chance receive the same lowest obtainable scale score (LOSS). The LOSS, like the HOSS, has less precision (higher error) because of the difficulty of establishing how low the ability is. It should be noted that comparisons of groups (e.g., schools, students by gender) involve much smaller levels of error (i.e., they are more stable) because variation at the level of the individual is averaged over the group.

### **How can an examinee be at an NRS ESL proficiency level of 6, based on the average of scale scores in two skill areas, yet the scores on the two skill areas are at NRS ESL proficiency levels of 6 and 4?**

NRS ESL levels are not averaged. It is the average (composite) scale score which determines the NRS ESL proficiency level. As noted in the answer to Q37, HOSS scores may be extreme enough to pull the average of the two scale scores to an NRS ESL level that is at the same level as the test with the HOSS, even though the score on the second test is much lower.

### **How can growth be measured?**

There are a number of ways to assess ability (standardized tests, teacher-designed tests, project and homework portfolios, teacher evaluations, etc.). However, standardized tests provide the best way to assess growth in ability. Changes in scale scores on equivalent forms taken at the beginning and end of a course are the most direct evidence, though growth may be defined in other ways.

### **Why do some students not show gain on a post-test?**

Experienced teachers will often recognize when a student has not made sufficient progress in a course. On the other hand, teachers may witness improvement that is not reflected in test scores. This can happen for several reasons, one of which includes measurement error. When groups are used for analysis, one often sees significant improvement in the group as a whole, even though not all students will show improvement.



## Questions about Purchasing TABE CLAS–E

**How can I obtain more information about TABE CLAS–E to share with my colleagues?**

For additional information or to place an order online, visit the website at [www.tabetest.com](http://www.tabetest.com).

**What number can I call to speak with someone about TABE CLAS–E before I place an order?**

You may contact Data Recognition Corporation Customer Service at 800.538.9547.

