



EAL Proficiency Assessment

Comprehensive Guide



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A guide to carrying out the FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Assessment, covering how the test works and best practice advice for in-school and remote testing.

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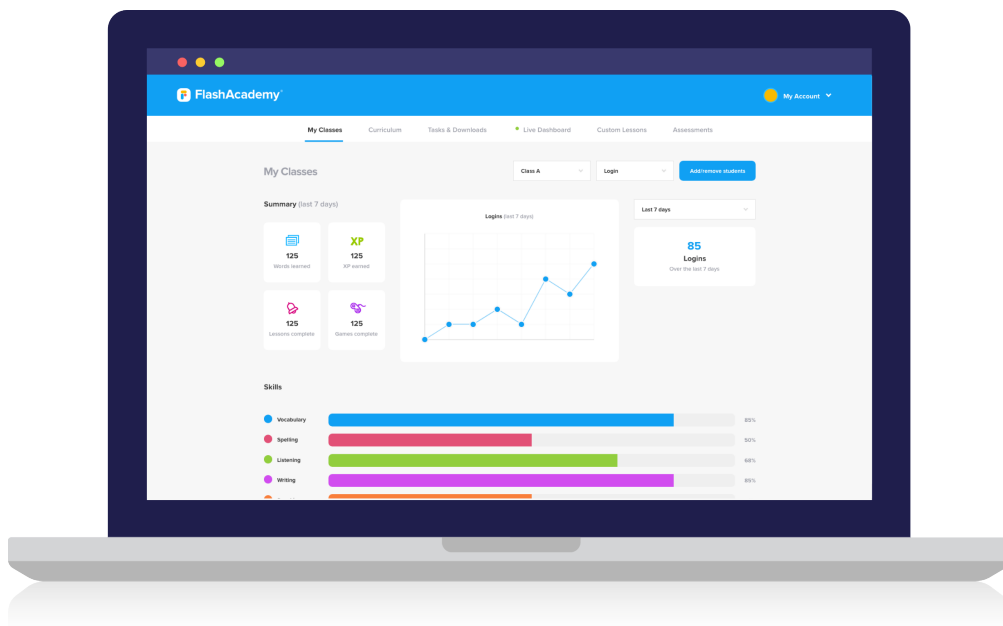
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Introduction

What is it?

The FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Assessment is an adaptive digital assessment to track English language proficiency in pupils with English as an additional language. The assessment can be completed on PC, tablet or smartphone and is used alongside a comprehensive teacher dashboard for progress tracking.



This guide will explain...

...how the assessment works, how to carry out an assessment with pupils and best practice advice for testing.

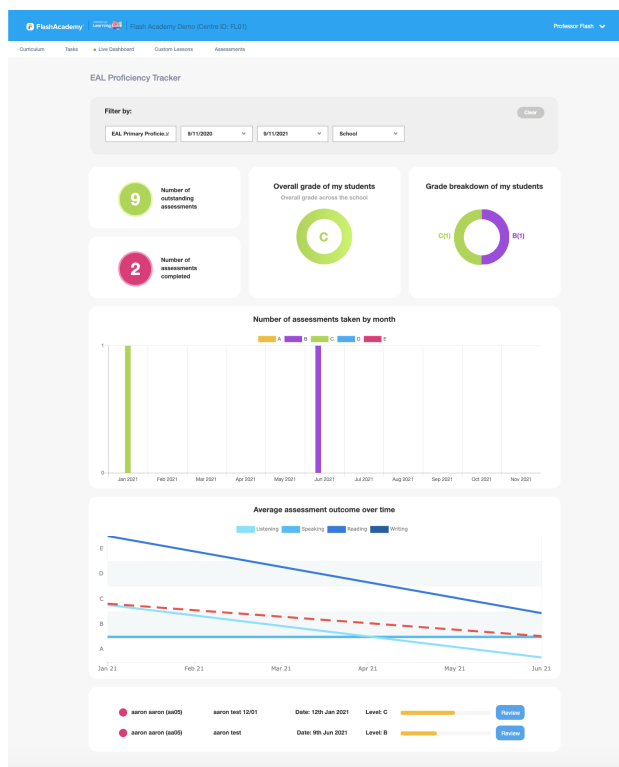
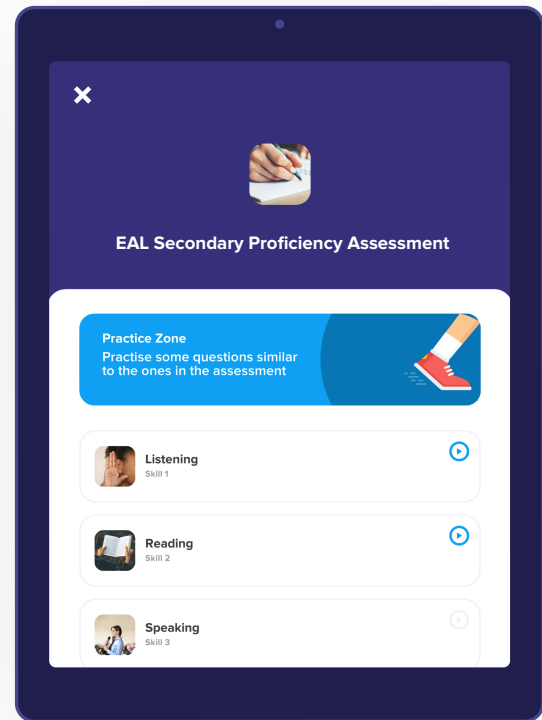
For step-by-step instructions on setting, marking and reviewing tests, please see the accompanying 'Getting Started Guide'.

About

What is the FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Assessment?

The FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Assessment is a computer-adaptive test (CAT) designed to accurately and objectively assess the proficiency levels of EAL pupils as efficiently as possible.

The assessment tests pupils in the four main skill areas of language: reading, writing, speaking and listening and is available in primary and secondary versions.



The assessment can be used as a diagnostic tool to capture initial pupil proficiency levels, as well as a formative assessment tool to track progress over time in order to inform teaching and learning.

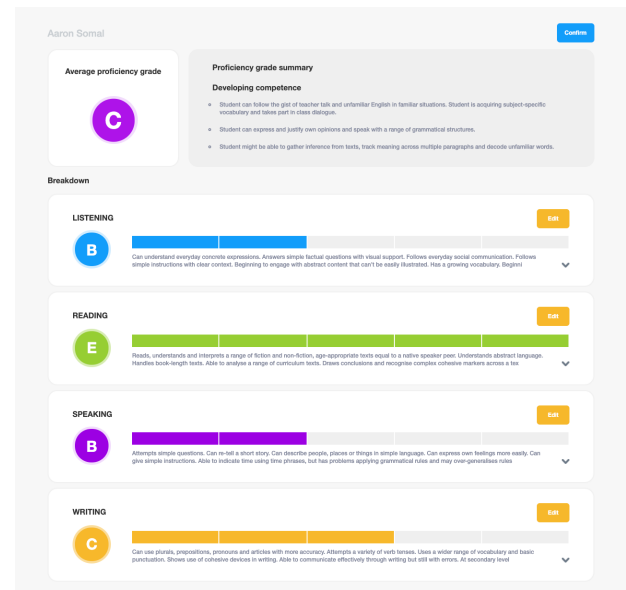
Questions cover general English content and curriculum-focused content, as well as grammatical and linguistic aspects needed to gain fluency. This gives teachers an insight not only into the linguistic capabilities of a pupil but helps to uncover prior learning and highlight gaps in content knowledge.

About

The FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Assessment is a computer-adaptive test, meaning that it becomes progressively harder or easier depending on how the student is performing. The test adapts to the level of the student so that it is tailored to the user and can accurately assess the proficiency level of pupils from beginner to advanced.

The assessment is based on the Department for Education's recommended proficiency bands. Pupils receive a grade from A (new to English) to E (fluent) for each skill tested, as well as a best fit, overall band. Teachers are also supported by the FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Framework with which to track student progress and a Teaching Strategies document to support pupils according to their band.

The FlashAcademy® Teacher Dashboard is used alongside the in-app assessment for teachers to assign and mark assessments, track pupil progress and analyse results. With all pupil data collated in one place, staff are able to easily demonstrate attainment over time, as well as analyse individual, class or whole school data sets.



Reading

Note: band descriptors may not be acquired in the order listed here.

Band	Band Descriptors
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has minimal or no literacy in English May be literate in home language Awareness of left-to-right reading May be beginning to develop recognition of some words, letters and symbols Starting to develop early reading skills, e.g. CVC words Able to match pictures with taught words Can read familiar words out loud Starting to understand short, familiar texts
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises high frequency words or decodes unfamiliar words Can read simple sentences or a short text Can say main points or answer what/who questions on a text Understands basic punctuation and reads using cues from punctuation Understands explicit messages from a text Understands pronoun use in texts Joins in with reading familiar texts aloud in class Beginning to navigate curriculum content
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can select relevant information to answer questions Can answer how/why questions Can make some inferences from a text Can identify key features of text types Able to decipher unfamiliar words from context Able to read short texts aloud with improving intonation Able to track meaning across sentences and passages Can understand fictional texts but may struggle with humour or implied meaning Can follow curriculum-related texts and find relevant information in curriculum materials Able to understand a wider range of grammar, such as different tenses, question forms, verb structures and prefixes and suffixes
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can compare opinions on a text Able to distinguish fact and opinion Can identify text purpose Can predict text content Understands a wider range of curriculum vocabulary Employs a range of reading strategies like scanning, and adjusts speed and focus depending on purpose Can interpret meaning beyond literal Understands certain idioms and literary devices Can read curriculum content without rehearsal Can show awareness of a range of modals, conditionals, figurative speech and the passive voice
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads, understands and interprets a range of fiction and non-fiction, age appropriate texts equal to a native speaker peer Able to analyse a range of curriculum texts Draws conclusions and recognises complex cohesive markers across a text Understands abstract language Handles book-length texts

What do I need?

To carry out the assessment, students will need:



Internet-enabled smartphone, tablet or PC. For best accessibility we recommend a PC for use of a keyboard or a tablet to optimise screen size.



Internal or external device microphone



Internal or external device speakers



Headphones (optional)



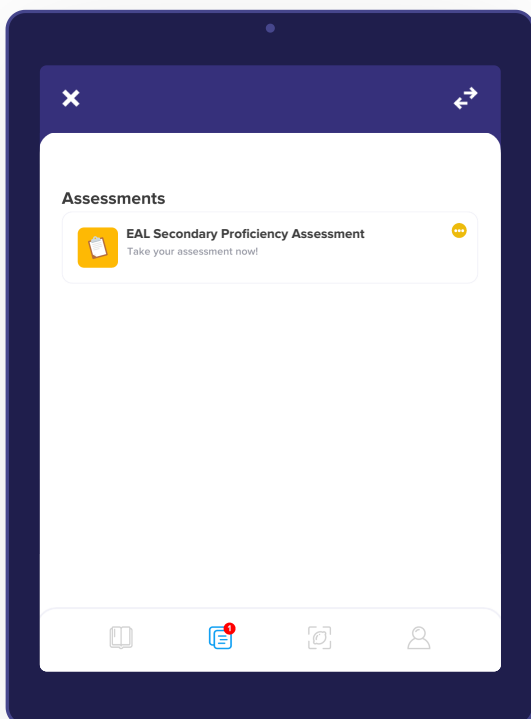
A quiet space for students to listen and speak with minimal distractions

For further information on technical requirements, please see our Technical Guide (<https://flashacademy.com/app/uploads/2020/10/Technical-Guide-V2.3.pdf>) to the FlashAcademy® platform.

How does it work?

Teachers assign assessments to students through the FlashAcademy® Teacher Dashboard (<https://edu.flashacademy.com>). For step-by-step instructions on setting tests, see the 'Getting Started Guide' document.

The assessment will appear in the pupil's FlashAcademy® app under 'Assignments' on whatever device they log in on. From here, students can enter the Practice section of the test to become familiar with the interface or click Start to begin the test.



The assessment takes around 30–40 minutes to complete. As the test is adaptive, time taken can vary between students depending on level and pupil performance.

Students begin by completing the reading and listening skill sections. The skills can be completed separately and saved. Reading and listening questions become harder or easier depending on how the student is performing. Once the algorithm has determined a proficiency band for each skill, the section will end. Students then complete the writing and speaking skill sections. These questions progress from easy to hard and the level of difficulty covered is linked to student performance in reading and listening to avoid giving pupils questions beyond their capabilities. Again, these skills can be taken individually and saved to allow pupils to complete the assessment at their own pace.

The test ends and the data is immediately sent to the Teacher Dashboard, where teachers can view results, mark and review performance. The student is not shown their results in the app.



For step-by-step instructions on assigning assessments, see the 'Getting Started Guide'.

How does it work?



Due to its adaptive nature and with a pool of thousands of questions, each test taken is unique, meaning that tests can be repeated regularly by a pupil and will be different each time. It also means that in a class of mixed-ability pupils, each assessment is tailored to the test-taker. This structure allows the assessment to be taken by pupils of any level of proficiency, from new-to-English to fluent and can be repeated over time to track progression. The test is designed to encourage pupils by giving them questions at an appropriate level that they can answer, rather than discourage them with tasks far beyond their current ability.

With a friendly user interface and questions with image and audio support, the test is devised to be easy to navigate for pupils aged 7 and above. The format of the primary and secondary assessments are the same. However, content covered differs between the two tests in order to account for age-related differences in language acquisition and curriculum demands.

The test is designed to feel less intimidating than a formal exam or one-to-one interview, with pupils testing out their language in a low-stakes, safe environment in a gamified app setting, encouraging them to perform to the best of their ability.

How is it marked?

Once a pupil has completed the in-app assessment, results can be found on the Teacher Dashboard, under Assessments > My assessments.

The FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Assessment provides results using the A–E proficiency band system, as recommended by the DfE. A downloadable version of the FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Framework can be found on the Assessments page of the Teacher Dashboard.

Beginning with listening and reading, pupil questions and answers are recorded to the left and the automatically assigned proficiency band can be seen to the right. Teachers can view which questions the pupil got correct or incorrect and compare with the built-in framework for easy reference. Students are automatically awarded a grade in the middle of the band; however, teachers can drill this down to a low or high grade. This allows greater granularity of results and can show pupil progress even within a proficiency band.

Due to the freer nature of the speaking and writing sections of the test, which have a focus on productive rather than receptive skills, these sections are manually marked by the teacher. This is done as efficiently as possible, with all pupil answers recorded for easy comparison with the framework. Teachers are able to listen to recordings of the pupil speaking and read the text they have written.

Questions are not marked individually, but an overall, best fit grade is assigned per skill based on the level descriptors shown in the framework.

The screenshot displays the 'Assessments' page for a listening section. On the left, a list of questions is shown with their status (correct/incorrect) and a suggested grade band (e.g., B-C, C-D). The right-hand sidebar provides a detailed framework for the 'Grade B: Developing Competence' band, listing specific skills and descriptors for that level.

The screenshot displays the 'Assessments' page for a writing section. The main content area shows a question with a student's handwritten answer. The right-hand sidebar provides a detailed framework for the 'Grade B: Developing Competence' band, listing specific skills and descriptors for that level.

How is it marked?

Teachers have the option to amend all assigned grades, allowing them to take into account pupil backgrounds and supplementary classroom observations – indeed the EAL Proficiency Framework contains observation sections so that teachers can consider external factors when reviewing results.

Once all sections have been confirmed, teachers will see a Proficiency Grade Summary page which shows a breakdown of bands for each skill and an overall best fit grade. This can be printed out to stick in students' books or for class records. Teaching strategies are provided on this page in relation to grades awarded for each skill. These can be used by all classroom teachers to support pupils in their language learning. There is also a list of recommended FlashAcademy lessons at the bottom to support pupils in reaching the next overall grade. The 'Additional comments' box can be used by staff to record observations and other notes on pupil background to keep a broader record of the pupil's profile. These can be shared with relevant teachers to update them on the pupil's current ability or be referred to in the future to review pupil progress.

In addition, an EAL Pupil Profile document can be downloaded from the Teacher Dashboard and be used in conjunction with the digital assessment to note further personal details on the student for school records.

The screenshot displays the 'Proficiency grade summary' page for a student named James. The overall grade is C. The page is divided into sections for each skill: LISTENING (C), READING (E), SPEAKING (A), and WRITING (A). Each skill section includes a 'Description' of the grade level, 'Teaching strategies' to support the student, and a 'Teacher comments' box. At the bottom, there are 'Recommended FlashAcademy lessons' and an 'Additional comments' box for staff to record observations.



Results can be analysed in the 'Review performance' section of the Teacher Dashboard. For more information on generating assessment reports, see the 'Getting Started Guide' or the 'Best practice usage: Results' section on page 14 of this document.

Best practice usage

Assessment

The FlashAcademy® EAL Proficiency Assessment has been designed to be easy to navigate for pupils, time efficient and convenient to take. As such, it can be carried out remotely or in-person, and with minimal teacher input. The following recommendations, however, have been created to ensure a smooth deployment and give pupils the best chance of performing to their ability, particularly for their first time taking the test.

When carrying out the assessment for the first time with students we recommend the following steps:

1

Introduce

Introduce the assessment and set expectations.

2

Practise

Pupils do Practice area questions. Teacher monitors and supports.

3

Test

Pupils do the assessment. Teacher may monitor and give support.



Best practice usage

1

Introduce

Explain to students that they are going to carry out a short test so the teacher can understand their level of English. Reassure pupils that it is nothing to worry about and they cannot fail the test. Encourage students to see it as an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do. Explain that the test will take around 30 minutes but will be different for each person because everyone gets different questions. Go through further technical and educational instructions as listed overleaf. You may wish to project or screenshare an assessment on the board so that pupils become familiar with the process before the next step. (This may be useful for low literacy or younger pupils.)

2

Practise

Monitor to ensure students are watching the videos and are able to navigate the interface to answer questions. Check that student audio and speakers are working and adjust if needed. Repeat section if necessary.

3

Test

Teachers can provide support during the actual assessment if students are struggling with navigation or technical issues. However, if students are finding the content of the questions difficult, do not give answers. This is the assessment algorithm ascertaining the level of the student and subsequent questions will be easier if they get the question wrong. If help is given with the content of questions, it may result in an inaccurate or skewed proficiency band being given. It may be helpful for teachers to monitor to check students are attempting questions, answering with intent and not rushing through the assessment.

Best practice usage

Technical instructions

- Make sure pupils are in a quiet room or have headphones that allow them to hear the audio clearly.
- Make sure speakers and microphone are working on the device. You can check this in the Practice section of the test. Ensure that audio and microphone permissions are enabled in the device settings.
- Ensure that volume is turned up.
- Encourage pupils to speak clearly into the microphone when answering speaking questions. They can listen back to the recording to check it is clear and can re-record if they wish.
- Students can pause the assessment and save their progress at any time. They can also complete one skill, save their progress and go back to the other skills at a later time or date.

Best practice usage

Educational instructions

- Do not allow use of dictionaries or external materials.
- Do not allow pupils to ask others for help with answers.
- Let students know that others may finish before or after them. They should not be concerned as everyone has different questions so should go at their own pace.
- Encourage students to read and listen to the questions carefully.
- Inform pupils that they cannot cheat as everyone is given different questions.
- Reassure students that it is not a pass/fail test, but that it is instead a tool for measuring continuous learning.
- Encourage pupils to try their best and show off their skills. While they do not need to revise for the test, they should try to answer the questions as best they can in order to get an accurate result. The more students write or say in the test, the better they can be assessed and supported.
- If a student does not know the answer to a question, encourage them to make their best guess or if the option appears, to press skip. (The skip function appears on certain questions.)
- Younger pupils or new-to-English pupils may find it beneficial to take the 4 skills at different times to space out their testing and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Best practice usage

Results

To get the most out of the assessment and pupil results, we make the following recommendations:

Carry out the test periodically to show pupil progress. As it is an adaptive assessment, repeated tests will always be unique.

Use student's assessment answers to identify areas for improvement in order to tailor learning and provide targeted academic support that focuses on the areas pupils need most support.



Take external factors into account. A wide range of factors can affect student performance in an assessment, and we encourage teachers to take into account pupil background and in-class performance to make an informed decision on student proficiency levels. Teachers are able to amend pupil grades at any stage on the Teacher Dashboard.

Use the EAL Pupil Profile document to record broader information about a pupil's background. This can be used during an initial interview with the pupil and/or their guardian.

Use the test alongside own observations. We would recommend asking pupils to do reading or writing in their own language outside of the test to give an idea of home language literacy level.

Best practice usage

Decide what you wish to share with pupils. The Proficiency Grade Summary page can be printed out (with notes and teaching strategies cut off) for students to give them ownership over their learning and visibility of their own progress.

Teachers may wish to show students their progression over time through allowing them to see their previous assessment answers compared to now. Letting pupils listen to how they spoke a year ago compared to now can be incredibly motivating.

Share the Teaching Strategies document with a pupil's curriculum teachers so targeted support can be provided that is appropriate to their level.

Use the 'Review performance' section of the Assessment zone to easily generate reports on student data to compare different cohorts of pupils in order to track progress and identify those struggling.

All past assessments are saved for future reference, meaning that teachers always have a record of pupil work to evidence attainment, demonstrate progress between assessments and show to pupils, SLT or parents.

