

Read-Aloud and Scribing Guidelines for Operational Assessments

2025 PSSA and Keystone Exams



**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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Introduction

The focus of the Read Aloud and Scribing Guidelines is to provide guidelines for “Readers” who read aloud words, phrases, or test items, and for “Scribes” who record student responses for operational assessments in Pennsylvania for the Keystone Exams and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure consistency in the read-aloud and scribing events for students in classrooms throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to maintain fairness for all students.

To further provide consistency, and because reading aloud all test items creates an artificial pace, the online audio version of the test must be considered for students who require a read aloud of all or most of the test items on the Mathematics, Algebra I, Science, and Biology tests, multiple choice Conventions of Standard English items and the Text Dependent Analysis prompt on the ELA PSSA. This allows students optimal independence in moving through the test at their own pace. The student may individually listen to a question being read aloud more than once as needed. If testing online, when a read aloud of ALL Mathematics, Algebra I, Science, or Biology is required, the audio function of the online test must be used. Human readers may not read aloud ALL allowable test items for online testers.

These guidelines must be provided to any Test Administrator (TA) or Proctor who is to administer a Read Aloud or Scribing Accommodation. TAs and Proctors may use these guidelines as a resource during the test administration. TAs and Proctors administering a Read Aloud accommodation may preview assessment materials up to 3 days prior to test administration in a secure location with a signed Confidentiality Agreement. Any notes taken to prepare for Read Aloud must be kept in a secure location with testing materials and must be destroyed after testing.

Test Feature vs. Accommodation

Read Aloud: A full read aloud or audio may be used as an accommodation on the Math and Science PSSA, writing portions of the ELA PSSA, and the Algebra I and Biology Keystones. A full read aloud or audio of the reading portions of the ELA PSSA and the Keystone Literature exam is available as a Unique Accommodation for students who meet specific parameters in the Accommodations Guidelines.

As a test feature, the read aloud of a word, phrase, or test item is allowable for all students on the Math and Science PSSAs and the Algebra I and Biology Keystones. Additionally, all students will have the test directions read aloud. For more information regarding the difference between a test feature and an accommodation, see the [Accommodations Guidelines](#). The current version of this document can be found at: www.education.pa.gov.

For all content areas and subjects, Readers may **not** clarify, elaborate, paraphrase, assist, or cue a student through uneven voice inflection. Read the [Accommodations Guidelines](#) for specific instructions regarding the guidelines for reading aloud to a student or a group of students. Read aloud of any allowable test item should only occur at individual student request unless “Read Aloud All Math, Science, and Writing Items” is specified as a documented accommodation for a non-English speaker or a student with a disability.

Scribing: Scribing involves a scribe writing a response as a student dictates the response. This occurs during the administration of the assessment as students dictate the response orally or by gesturing or pointing to correct responses. This differs from transcribing, which occurs after the assessment is administered. Transcribing occurs when a student uses a device such as a speech-to-text device or a recording device and the test administrator then transfers those responses to the student’s answer booklet. If a student uses a Braille or large-print form, scribing can be used if the student responds orally. Transcribing can be used if the student responds using a Braille writer or Braille notetaker.

The online test engine is compatible with a refreshable Braille device that works with Job Access with Speech (JAWS). This feature eliminates the need for scribing or transcribing for those students using a refreshable Braille device with the online test format.

Scribing is considered an accommodation and is available for students who already use scribing on a day-to-day basis for instruction and assessment. This accommodation is available for a student whose IEP team, Section 504 Services Plan team, or educational team determines that scribing (dictation) is essential for the student to be able to access the test OR for a student who has a current disabling injury. Scribing is allowable for all item types for PSSA Mathematics and Science and Keystone Algebra I, Biology, and Literature. Additionally, scribing is allowable for PSSA English Language Arts (ELA) for multiple-choice questions, evidence-based selected-response questions, and short-answer questions (Grade 3 only). Scribing is only allowable as an accommodation for ELA text-dependent analysis prompts (Grades 4–8) with the submission of the [Unique Accommodations Assurance](#) form.

Qualified teachers, counselors, administrators, and paraprofessionals employed by the LEA may act as scribes. Any person who functions as a scribe for the PSSA or Keystone Exams must complete the [PSSA and Keystone Exams Test Administration online training module](#).

Additionally, any person functioning as a scribe for the PSSA or Keystone Exams must follow the procedures for scribing as described in this manual.

General Read-Aloud Guidelines

Of utmost importance when reading aloud any item or portion thereof is that the validity of the item be maintained. Any portion of an item that might cue the correct answer or provide inappropriate assistance for the test taker must **not** be read aloud.

Answer Choices

- For multiple-choice questions, read the answer choice letter, pause briefly, then read the answer choice. Pause again before reading the next answer choice letter.
- Do **not** say anything prior to the answer choice letter, such as “answer choice” or “option”.

Emphasis in Test Items

- Emphasize words that are underlined or bolded as a part of the question being asked (e.g., not, best, or most) using voice inflection.
- Emphasize titles that are underlined, in quotation marks, or in italics by briefly pausing before and after the emphasis.
- Do **not** emphasize individual words or phrases that are underlined as part of a stimulus or answer choice.

Fill in the Blank

- Read the blank element as “blank” preceded and followed by a pause. For example, “I would like to have either an apple (pause) blank (pause) a banana to eat with my lunch.”
- If the space to be filled in has a number, read it as “blank number x” where x is the number on the line.

PSSA English Language Arts and Keystone Literature Read-Aloud Guidelines

PSSA ELA Grades 3-8, Sections 1 and 3: Conventions of Standard English (Writing) Multiple- Choice Questions

A read-aloud in English is permitted for all Conventions of Standard English multiple-choice questions found in sections 1 and 3 of the English Language Arts assessment at Grades 3–8 as per restrictions specified in the [Accommodations Guidelines](#).

Stimulus Sentences

In some cases, sentences within a larger stimulus will be sequentially numbered for ease of reference for the students. When reading these paragraphs or groups of sentences, do not read or refer to the sentence numbers.

Example:

Read the paragraph.

(1) The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania encourages citizens to plant rain gardens. (2) Rain gardens capture storm water so that the water does not flow into storm drains. (3) Existing low spots or shallow pits lined with gravel make ideal locations for rain gardens. (4) If you use native plants in your rain garden, it will be easy to take care of and might even have attracted birds and butterflies.

Which sentence in the paragraph has an error?

- A. sentence 1
- B. sentence 2
- C. sentence 3
- D. sentence 4

The question above should be read aloud as follows:

“Read the paragraph. (pause) The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania encourages citizens to plant rain gardens. Rain gardens capture storm water so that the water does not flow into storm drains. Existing low spots or shallow pits lined with gravel make ideal locations for rain gardens. If you use native plants in your rain garden, it will be easy to take care of and might even have attracted birds and butterflies. (pause) Which sentence in the paragraph has an error? (pause) A (pause) sentence 1, (pause) B (pause) sentence 2, (pause) C (pause) sentence 3, (pause) D (pause) sentence 4.”

Guidelines for Punctuation Items

- Do not say the name of any punctuation used in test questions.
- For end punctuation, read the sentence with normal inflection.
- Do not add unnatural inflections that may cue a student.
- Do not indicate quotation marks or apostrophes in any manner.
- For commas, briefly pause wherever a comma appears in a sentence.

Example

Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

- Ⓐ He said “My new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”
- Ⓑ “He said My new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”
- Ⓒ He said, “My new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”
- Ⓓ “He said, My new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”

The question above should be read aloud as follows:

“Which sentence is punctuated correctly? (pause) A. (pause) He said my new kitten loves to roll in the grass. (pause) B. (pause) He said my new kitten loves to roll in the grass. (pause) C. (pause) He said (pause) my new kitten loves to roll in the grass. (pause) D. (pause) He said (pause) my new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”

Guidelines for Capitalization Items

- Do **not** provide a verbal indication of capitalization within items.

Example

Which sentence has a mistake in capitalization?

- Ⓐ We enjoyed reading the play *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*.
- Ⓑ Our class loudly sang the song “It’s a Small World” at the show.
- Ⓒ My favorite chapter in the book is called “First Day of Spring.”
- Ⓓ I read the book *Two little Trains* three times already today.

The question above should be read aloud as follows:

“Which sentence has a mistake in capitalization? (pause) A. (pause) We enjoyed reading the play (pause) if you give a mouse a cookie. (pause) B. (pause) Our class loudly sang the song (pause) it’s a small world (pause) at the show. (pause) C. (pause) My favorite chapter in the book is called (pause) first day of spring. (pause) D. (pause) I read the book (pause) two little trains (pause) three times already today.”

Guidelines for Spelling Items

- Speak the word rather than the individual letters in the word.
- Pronounce misspelled words as though they were spelled correctly.

Example

Read the sentence.

Several students were siting under the tree.

Which word in the sentence is **not** spelled correctly?

- A students
- B were
- C siting
- D under

The question above should be read aloud as follows:

“Read the sentence. (pause) Several students were sitting under the tree. (pause) Which word in the sentence is **not** spelled correctly? (pause) A (pause) students, (pause) B (pause) were, (pause) C (pause) sitting, (pause) D (pause) under”

PSSA ELA Grades 4–8, Sections 2-3: Text Dependent Analysis

It is permissible to read aloud the text-dependent analysis prompt (or a word or phrase found from the text-dependent analysis prompt) found at the end of Section 2 and Section 3 of the PSSA English Language Arts assessment for Grades 4–8 on an individual basis at student request, or for a student who has a Full Read Aloud for Math, Science, and Writing Items ONLY. A read-aloud in native language for the Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) prompts in Grades 4-8 sections 2 and 3 of the ELA test is permitted for ELs enrolled in U.S. schools for fewer than 3 years.

Keystone Literature, and PSSA ELA Grades 3–8, Sections 1-3: Reading

A read aloud is not permitted for any passage, associated multiple-choice question (or answer choice), evidence-based selected response question (or answer choice), or short answer/constructed response question found in Sections 1- 3 of the PSSA English Language Arts assessment or any part of the Keystone Literature assessment, **UNLESS** the student has a disability that precludes them from accessing printed text, meets the parameters in the Accommodations Guidelines, and a Unique Accommodations Assurance form has been submitted. See the [Accommodations Guidelines](#) for more information.

For students with a disability that precludes them from accessing printed text and that meet the parameters in the Accommodations Guidelines ONLY:

- Passages must be read verbatim without emphasizing or changing words. The passage should be read clearly and without inflections that could cue the student or provide them clues about the story’s meaning or responses to the questions. Occasionally, a passage may include a chart, table, or diagram. If this is the case, follow the guidelines for reading [Graphs/Tables/Keys](#) or [Diagrams/Figures/Flowcharts](#) in the Science section below.
- Readers may spell any words at the request of the student receiving the accommodation. If a word is a homophone for another word, the Reader may spell the word after reading it if the different meaning could cause confusion.
- Readers should follow the [General Read-Aloud Guidelines](#) above to read aloud the reading passages, multiple choice, evidence-based student response, and short answer/constructed response questions.

PSSA Mathematics/Keystone Algebra I Read-Aloud Guidelines

A read aloud is permitted for both the PSSA Mathematics Tests and the Keystone Algebra I Exams for all multiple-choice questions (and answer choices) and open-ended/constructed-response questions. Students with a documented accommodation for a disability or for a non-English-speaking designation may have the entire assessment read aloud in an appropriate setting; otherwise, they may request a word, phrase, or test item be read aloud on an individual basis. A read-aloud in native language is permitted for PSSA Mathematics Tests and the Keystone Algebra I Exams for ELs enrolled in U.S. schools for fewer than three (3) years.

Symbols

Symbols should be read in a way that does **not** cue the correct answer or provide inappropriate assistance for the test taker.

The following symbols are each read as follows:

+ plus	• times or multiplied by
– minus	÷ divided by
× times or multiplied by	= equals or is equal to

For grades 3-5: The symbols $<$ and $>$ would be read as “a symbol”. (e.g., $3 < 7$ would be read as “three symbol seven.”). If $<$ and/or $>$ appear in the answer choices with other symbols, **all** symbols should be read as “a symbol.”

For grades 6-8 and Algebra I: The symbol $<$ should be read as “less than” and the symbol $>$ should be read as “greater than.” (e.g., $3 < 7$ would be read as “three is less than 7”).

Example

A number sentence comparing two expressions is shown below.

$$0.4 + 0.09 + 12.6 \quad \underline{\hspace{1cm}} \quad 0.4 + 0.9 + 12.6$$

Which symbol would go in the blank to correctly complete the number sentence?

- A. +
- B. =
- C. <
- D. >

The question above would be read as follows:

“A number sentence comparing two expressions is shown below. (pause) Zero point four plus zero point zero nine plus twelve point six blank zero point four plus zero point nine plus twelve point six. (pause) Which symbol would go in the blank to correctly complete the number sentence? (pause) A (pause) a symbol, (pause) B (pause) a symbol, (pause) C (pause) a symbol, (pause) D (pause) a symbol.”

For a number or variable followed by a grouping symbol, read the number/variable followed by “times the quantity” (e.g., $3(x + 7)$ would be read as “3 times the quantity x plus 7”).

The symbols \overline{AB} , \overleftrightarrow{AB} , or \overrightarrow{AB} would be read as “segment A B,” “line A B,” or “ray A B.” Pause between speaking the letters.

Exponents should be read as “ x to the n ” for x^n .

Numbers

Numbers should be read in a way that does **not** cue the correct answer or provide inappropriate assistance for the test taker. If the question is assessing a student’s knowledge of place value, read the number using the following examples:

- 2,224—read as “two, comma, two, two, four”
- 10.205—read as “one, zero, point, two, zero, five”

Monetary values should be read as “(dollar amount) dollars and (change amount) cents.” (e.g., \$18.24 would be read as “eighteen dollars and twenty-four cents.”)

For questions where the place value is not relevant, read the numbers in standard form (e.g., 1,234 would be read as one thousand, two hundred thirty-four). Decimal numbers that are not dollar amounts should be read as “(whole number), point, (individual decimal digits).” (e.g., 18.24 would be read as “eighteen, point, two, four”).

For questions where the place value is relevant, decimal numbers should be read as “(individual whole number digits) point (individual decimal digits)” (e.g., 18.24 would be read as “one, eight, point, two, four”). Place value is relevant when students are asked to round, and when students are either given or asked to identify the word form of a number and/or the expanded form of a number. It is also relevant in problems where students are asked to determine which symbol would make a number sentence true.

Fractions, including improper fractions, should be read as “the fraction (numerator) over (denominator)” (e.g., $\frac{3}{4}$ would be read as “the fraction three over four”, $\frac{11}{3}$ would be read as “the fraction eleven over three”).

Mixed numbers should be read as “(whole number) and the fraction (numerator) over (denominator)” (e.g., $2\frac{1}{4}$ would be read as “two and the fraction one over four”).

Negative numbers are scripted as “negative (number).”

Abbreviated scientific units should be described using the full word(s). For example, 3 m should be read as “three meters,” and 9.8 m/s^2 should be read as “nine point eight meters per second squared.”

Graphs/Tables/Charts

First read the title. “The title of the [type of graph or table] is [title].”

Number lines: “The title of the number line is [title]. The label below the number line is [label.] The numbers below the number line are [numbers]. The letters above the number line are [letters].”

Line plots: “The title of the line plot is [title]. The label below the line plot is [label]. The numbers below the line plot are [numbers].”

Tally charts: Read the title and headings. Refer to the tally marks as “some tally marks are shown” rather than the number of tally marks shown. For one tally mark, read “one tally mark is shown” and for zero tally marks, read “no tally marks are shown.”

Stem-and-leaf plots: “The title of the stem-and-leaf plot is [title]. The numbers on the stem-and- leaf plot are [read each row from left to right]. Below the stem-and-leaf plot is a key. Key, [number] bar [number] equals [number].”

Double stem-and-leaf plots: “The title of the double stem-and-leaf plot is [title]. The numbers on the double stem-and-leaf plot are [read each row from left to right]. Below the double stem-and- leaf plot is a key. Key, [number] bar [number] equals [number]; [number] bar [number] equals [number].”

Box-and-whisker plots: “The title of the box-and-whisker plot is [title]. The label below the box- and-whisker plot is [label]. The numbers below the box-and-whisker plot are [numbers from left to right].”

Bar graphs: “The title of the bar graph is [title]. The label to the left of the bar graph is [label]. The numbers to the left of the bar graph are [numbers]. The label below the bar graph is [label]. The words below the bars are [bar labels].”

Double bar graphs: “The title of the bar graph is [title]. The label to the left of the bar graph is [label]. The numbers to the left of the bar graph are [numbers]. The label below the graph is [label]. The words below the bars are [bar labels]. Below the bar graph is a key. Key, [label], [label].”

Circle graphs: “The title of the circle graph is [title]. The labels on the circle graph are [read the labels starting at the 12-o’clock position and going around clockwise].”

First quadrant graphs: “The title of the graph is [title]. The label to the left of the graph is [label]. The numbers to the left of the graph are [numbers]. The label below the graph is [label]. The numbers below the graph are [numbers].”

Coordinate grids: **For grade 3-5:** “The title of the (coordinate) (grid/plane)¹ is [title].² The numbers to the left of the coordinate grid are [read numbers on y-axis from bottom to top]. The numbers below the coordinate grid are [read numbers on x-axis from left to right]. The points marked on the grid are labeled [points].³ **For grade 6-8 and Algebra I:** “The title of the (coordinate) (grid/plane)¹ is [title].² The numbers on the y-axis are [read numbers on y-axis from bottom to top]. The numbers on the x-axis are [read numbers on x-axis from left to right]. The points marked on the grid are labeled [points].³

1. Use coordinate grid or coordinate plane based on what is referenced in the first part of the question.
2. If there is no title, replace the first sentence with “A coordinate grid is shown.”
3. Only read the point labels if they are words.

Graphics/Diagrams/Figures/Clocks

The read aloud of most graphics follows this pattern: “The title of the picture (or figure or diagram) is [title].” (Use picture, figure, or diagram based on what is referenced in the first part of the question. Other parts of the picture are only included if measurements or other pertinent information is included.)

An analog clock is referred to as a clock; a digital clock is referred to as a digital clock. If there is **no** title, then read “A (digital) clock is shown,” followed by any labels.

PSSA Science/Keystone Biology Read-Aloud Guidelines

A read aloud is permitted for both the PSSA Science Tests and the Keystone Biology Exam for all multiple-choice questions (and answer choices), open-ended/constructed-response questions, and scenarios. Students may have the entire assessment read aloud or they may request a word, phrase, or test item be read aloud. A read-aloud in native language is permitted for the PSSA Science Tests and the Keystone Biology Exam for ELs enrolled in U.S. schools for fewer than three (3) years.

Chemical Symbols

Symbols should be read in a way that does not cue the correct answer or provide a hint for the test taker. If a question includes both the name and the symbol of an element or formula of a compound, the symbol/formula may be read as the name in later instances within the test question. If only the symbol/formula appears within a test question, only the symbol/formula should be read (e.g., Cl_2 should be read as “C, L, two,” not as “chlorine gas” or “chlorine”).

Scientific Units

Abbreviated units should be read phonetically. For example, 3 m should be read as “three m,” and 9.8 m/s^2 should be read as “nine point eight m per s squared.”

Graphs/Tables/Keys

For graphs, first read the title of the graph. Then read the label and the numbers on each axis, referring to the horizontal axis as the bottom of the graph and the vertical axis as the left side of the graph. The order will depend upon the content of the graph. Describe the key if there is one.

For data tables, first read the title of the data table, then the column headings from left to right, and then the data from left to right.

Headings with units should be read without an insertion of “in” between the measurement and the unit (e.g., “Distance (feet)” should be read as “Distance feet”).

Data tables should be read left to right by each row.

Science Scenarios

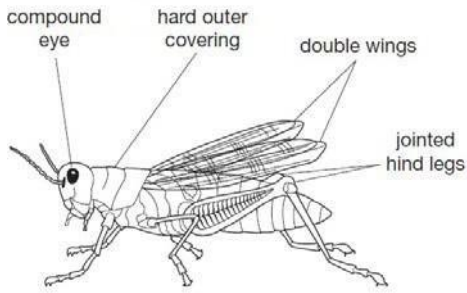
Read the directions above the scenario, and then read the phrase “The title of the scenario is [title].”

If a picture/diagram/data table shown within the scenario is not referenced in the sentence prior to its appearance, use the phrase “A (picture/diagram/data table) is shown. The title of the (picture/diagram/data table) is [title].”

Diagrams/Figures/Flowcharts

Always read the title if there is one. “The title of the (diagram, figure, chart, food web, etc.) is [title].”

Diagrams with labels should be described in a concise format including all text/labels, as in the following example:



side view of grasshopper

“The drawing shows a side view of a grasshopper. The labels from left to right are: compound eye, hard outer covering, double wings, jointed hind legs.”

Food webs should be described by starting at the bottom of the food web and reading all labels and describing the direction of arrows.

Flowcharts:

- Horizontal flowcharts should be read left to right and include a description of the labels and arrow directions.
- Vertical flowcharts should be read in the direction indicated by the arrows and include a description of the labels. If arrows are not present, they should be read top to bottom and include a description of the labels.

Note: A graphic should be referenced by the Reader the same way it is identified in the introduction of the item (or scenario), with the same term used consistently throughout the script. Picture, diagram, and drawing are **not** interchangeable.

General Scribing Guidelines

Scribing is an allowable accommodation for a student who has a physical disability that severely limits or prevents the student's motor process of writing, typing, or recording responses during testing (including pain and/or fracture) or for a student who has a documented disability in the area of written expression which results in significant interference in the student's ability to express knowledge in writing/keyboarding, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so. See the [Accommodations Guidelines](#) for more information about when to use the scribing accommodation.

Interpreters may translate students' non-English oral responses into written English for the Mathematics, Algebra I, Science, and Biology assessments for ELs enrolled in U.S. schools for fewer than three (3) years. Interpreters must not change the meaning of the response or make any corrections in the response.

Interpreters may **not** translate student responses to open-ended items on the ELA PSSA or Keystone Literature Exam from a non-English language into English. Interpreters may **not** translate student responses to the text-dependent analysis prompts of the ELA PSSA test from a non-English language response into English.

A student using scribing due to injury should have medical documentation of the injury. The student must also be using scribing on a day-to-day basis for instruction and assessment. A student who can type should be administered the online test.

In the absence of injury, scribing must be used only by a student who already uses scribing on a day-to-day basis for instruction and assessment and whose IEP team, Section 504 Services Plan team, or educational team determines that scribing is essential for the student to access the test. IEP and 504 Services Plan teams should consider the following before listing the accommodation in the student's IEP/504 plan or MTSS documentation:

- Is the student's inability to express in writing documented in evaluation summaries from locally administered diagnostic assessments?
- Does the student receive appropriate ongoing, intensive instruction and/or interventions to learn written expression?

Before using a human scribe the LEA/school team must consider one of the following:

Mixed-Mode Version

- Use this accommodation if the student can independently respond to selected-response questions by pressing A, B, C, or D on a keyboard, and can handwrite the constructed response in the booklet, but cannot type an extended response on a keyboard.
- The student should use the Mixed-Mode accommodation to write each constructed response in the provided answer booklet.
- No scribing or transcribing is required for this option.
- Refer to the [Accommodations Guidelines](#) for details regarding the Mixed-Mode response.

Paper Version

- Use the scribing accommodation if the student cannot independently bubble the answer sheet.
- The student may point to, state, or mark the answer choice in the paper test booklet. The test administrator/scribe marks the answer sheet.

OR

- Use the transcribing accommodation if the student can type the extended response on a keyboard. The test administrator/scribe transcribes on the answer sheet.

Online Version

- Use this version if the student can independently respond to selected-response questions by pressing A, B, C, or D on a keyboard. PDE recommends that the student participate in the online version to allow the student as much independence as possible.
- If using the scribing accommodation, the test administrator/scribe types the student's dictated responses directly into the online test.
- The online version of the test may be used for an individual or small group of students even if the rest of the population is testing paper/pencil. The Online Training Tools can be used to determine if the online test is accessible to the student without the scribing accommodation.

The following guidelines must be followed whenever scribing is used:

- The student must be tested in a separate one-to-one setting.
- The scribe must NOT give any help that might suggest the correct answer to a question.
- The scribe must not communicate that the student should "check" an answer or has answered an item correctly or incorrectly.
- The scribe must NOT edit or alter student work in any way and must record exactly what the student has dictated.
- The scribe may ask the student to restate words or parts of the answer as needed to ensure a correct transcription of the student's response. The scribe must be careful to ensure that such requests are not communicated in any way that would indicate to the student that they should revise or correct the response.
- The scribe may respond to procedural questions asked by the student (e.g., If the student asks, "Do I have to use the entire space to answer the question?" the scribe can indicate "no.")
- The scribe may not answer questions related to the content (e.g., "Can you tell me what this word means?" or "Is this the right way to set up the problem?").
- The student reviews and edits what the scribe has written. The scribe may ask "Are you finished?" or "Is there anything you want to add, delete, or change?"

For more information, see "Transcribe," "Scribing," and "Assistance with Selecting Response" in the [Accommodations Guidelines](#).

PSSA English Language Arts Scribing Guidelines

Multiple-choice (grades 3-8), Evidence-based Selected-responses (grades 3-8), and Short-answer Questions (grade 3)

The student dictates responses using the same manner that is used during instruction and assessment, which may include pointing to answer choices or using “a, b, c, d” cards, and dictating open-ended responses. The scribe may not question or correct student answer choices or coach the student on the meaning or spelling of words.

Text-Dependent Analysis Prompts (grades 4-8)

This accommodation is intended for those students with a severe disability or an injury that precludes them from responding to instructional and assessment materials through typical means, such as handwriting directly into the test/answer booklet or typing the response for transcription into the test/answer booklet by the School Assessment Coordinator or designee.

The district and school are responsible for making the determination that the student is only able to respond to the PSSA text-dependent analysis (TDA) prompt by dictating responses to the School Assessment Coordinator (SAC), test administrator, or designee.

The SAC must complete and submit the [Unique Accommodation Assurance](#) form for the Text Dependent Analysis for the Grades 4-8 ELA PSSA only.

Forms must be submitted to PDE no later than **six (6) WEEKS** prior to the start of the testing window. If a recent injury requires scribing for the TDA prompt, this form is submitted as soon as possible prior to student testing.

PDE may request the supporting documentation as needed for monitoring or as part of a testing irregularity investigation.

Scribe/Interpreter must sign the Test Security Certification form (located in the Handbook for Assessment Coordinators). All LEA/school scribes must follow the [Read-Aloud and Scribing Guidelines for Operational Assessments](#) posted on the PDE website and on eDIRECT.

In addition to the general guidelines, the following scribing guidelines must also be followed for text-dependent analysis prompts:

- The student must be given the same opportunity to plan and draft an essay as any other student participating in the assessment. This means that the scribe may write an outline or plan as directed by the student. The scribe must write the words of the student exactly as dictated during the entire test administration.
- The scribe must write the student response verbatim, have the student review the response for punctuation, capitalization, spelling, word choice, and spelling, revise the response as directed by the student, and transcribe the final student-approved essay with no changes.
- The scribe must write all words as dictated. The student does not spell every word aloud. It is unreasonable for students to spell every word. However, the scribe must orally confirm the spelling of frequently confused words (e.g., there, they're, and their; two, to, and too).
- The scribe should not use capitalization or punctuation in the student's response, except in cases as noted in the following bullets. The student must proofread the response to add punctuation and capitalization. (This can be done all at once upon completion of the response or as the student dictates the response, based on the preference of the student. Proofreading must be conducted in such a way as to not interfere with the student's construction of the response.) The scribe must make all student-requested changes, even if they are incorrect.
- The scribe can automatically capitalize the first word of any paragraph. (The student must indicate paragraph breaks. The student can do this by saying, for example, "The cat ran. New paragraph. The rabbit hopped." If the student does not indicate paragraph breaks during the writing of the essay, they can go back and add them later. The scribe must not add capitalization unless the student indicates a new paragraph.)
- The scribe should capitalize the first letter in the beginning of a sentence if the student has indicated punctuation ending the previous sentence. For example, if the student said, "The cat ran period. The cat jumped period." the scribe would write "The cat ran. The cat jumped." However, if the student said, "The cat ran. The cat jumped." the scribe would write "The cat ran the cat jumped".
- The student must confirm the final response and indicate when they are ready to move on to the next item.

Keystone Literature Scribing Guidelines

The student dictates responses using the same manner that is used during instruction and assessment, which may include pointing to answer choices or using “a, b, c, d” cards, and dictating open-ended responses. The scribe may not question or correct student answer choices or coach the student on the meaning or spelling of words. No Unique Assurance Form submission is needed for the Keystone Literature Exam.

PSSA Mathematics/Keystone Algebra I Scribing Guidelines

The student dictates responses using the same manner that is used during instruction and assessment, which may include pointing to answer choices or using “a, b, c, d” cards, and dictating open-ended responses. The scribe may not question or correct student answer choices or coach the student on the meaning or spelling of words. No Unique Assurance Form submission is needed for the PSSA Math or Keystone Algebra I Exam.

PSSA Science/Keystone Biology Scribing Guidelines

The student dictates responses using the same manner that is used during instruction and assessment, which may include pointing to answer choices or using “a, b, c, d” cards, and dictating open-ended responses. The scribe may not question or correct student answer choices or coach the student on the meaning or spelling of words. No Unique Assurance Form submission is needed for the PSSA Science or Keystone Biology Exam.

References

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (2015). PARCC Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual 2015 – 2016, Fourth Edition. PARCC, Inc. Washington, DC: PARCC Assessment Consortia.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (2015). Scribing Protocol for Smarter Balanced Assessments.

WIDA Consortium (2015). ACCESS for ELLs 2.0: [Frequently Asked Questions on Accommodations, Accessibility Tools, and Test Administration Procedures](#).