

WDE FAQ

WY-TOPP English Language Arts (ELA) Texts updated 8/15/2021

What is the Difference Between Passages, Texts, and Stimuli?

Stimuli can come in a variety of formats, from written text to audio passages. Stimuli represent any material that students engage with in order to answer the questions. On the WY-TOPP assessment, we label all stimuli as “passages.” For instance, “Passage 1” might be a text and “Passage 2” might be an audio passage.

What Type of Text Genres May Be Used in the WY-TOPP ELA Assessment?

WY-TOPP includes the full range of genres called for in the Wyoming ELA Content and Performance Standards, including informational texts, literary texts, historical/scientific texts, literary nonfiction texts, etc., with a greater emphasis on content-rich informational texts at the upper grades.

What Type of Text Genres May Be Used in the Writing Section of the WY-TOPP Assessment?

The writing portion of WY-TOPP presents students with informational texts that support either an informative or an argumentative/opinion essay.

How Many Texts Will a Student Read for a Given Passage Set in the ELA and Writing Sections of the WY-TOPP Assessment?

On the reading portion of the WY-TOPP assessment, students will typically read passages that include one-to-three unique texts. On the writing portion of the WY-TOPP assessment, students will read two to four passages as a basis for their writing.

What Does “Text Complexity” Mean?

Text complexity refers to the extent to which a text requires critical reading and higher order thinking skills. On the WY-TOPP assessment, text complexity is measured using both quantitative readability scores (e.g., Lexile® measures) as well as qualitative features, such as Levels of Meaning (i.e., Is the theme/main idea subtle or explicitly stated?), Structure (i.e., Does the plot/sequence advance chronologically or are there flashbacks/foreshadowing/shifts?), and Language (i.e., Are there simple, common words or academic, domain-specific vocabulary?).

What Are the Complexities of the Texts Within the ELA and Writing Sections of the WY-TOPP Assessment?

Texts on the WY-TOPP assessment are categorized as “low,” “medium,” and “high” complexity. The WY-TOPP passage pool currently represents a range of text complexities.

Which Qualitative Measures Are Used to Determine Appropriate Text Complexity Within The ELA And Writing Sections of the WY-TOPP Assessment?

When evaluating qualitative features, the important categories considered are Levels of Meaning, Structure, and Language.

Which Quantitative Measures Are Used to Determine Appropriate Text Complexity Within the ELA and Writing Sections of the WY-TOPP Assessment?

Lexile® is used as the quantitative measure; however, content experts also make an overall judgment about each passage based on a combination of both qualitative and quantitative features. The table below shows the general Lexile® ranges for each grade.

Grade	Lexile	Grade	Lexile	Grade	Lexile
Third	450 – 900	Sixth	955 – 1200	Ninth	1080 – 1400
Fourth	770 – 1050	Seventh	955 – 1200	Tenth	1080 – 1400
Fifth	770 – 1050	Eighth	955 – 1200	Eleventh	1215 – 1450

How Much Prior Knowledge Should Students Have Before Reading the WY-TOPP ELA and Writing Texts?

Prior knowledge is not required for the ELA or writing texts. In fact, so that it is fair to all students, part of the passage review includes making sure that no special background knowledge is needed to understand the text.

What is the Approximate Word Count for the ELA and Writing WY-TOPP Texts?

We use the following maximum word counts as a general guide.

Grade	Word Count	Grade	Word Count	Grade	Word Count
Third	650	Sixth	950	Ninth	1100
Fourth	750	Seventh	950	Tenth	1100
Fifth	750	Eighth	950	Eleventh	1100

Kindergarten through grade 2 assessments have audio embedded in the items where audio should be provided for all students. Since text-to-speech (TTS) is an optional support, embedding within each item is intentional in order to provide audio support for all students where appropriate, based upon the standard being measured. An example of where audio is not provided due to the standards being measured is the Grade 2 Reading Informational and Reading Literature items, which do not have audio associated. Additionally, there are some items within the grade 1 and 2 assessments that will have audio for answer choices and some that do not, again due to purposeful item design. If TTS is enabled in TIDE, this will not carry over to the early grade assessments.

What Are Some Possible Strategies for Preparing Students to Read Similar Texts Found in the ELA and Writing Sections of the WY-TOPP Assessment?

It would be helpful to provide students a variety of texts to read which offer opportunities for deeper analysis and discussion and provide details/evidence appropriate to support conclusions.