

BEST Plus FAQ Slideshow

Adult ESL Assessments
Center for Applied Linguistics



What is BEST Plus?

- ❖ *BEST Plus*, developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), is an **individually administered, face-to-face, scripted interview** available in both computer-adaptive and print formats. It is designed to assess the oral English proficiency of adult English language learners who need to use English to function in day-to-day life in the United States. *BEST Plus* integrates current knowledge in the assessment of speaking and listening skills with the latest research on second language acquisition. It is a performance-based test of oral language proficiency in English.



How does BEST Plus work?

- ❖ *BEST Plus* begins with warm-up items intended to make the examinee feel comfortable conversing with the test administrator. The examinees are then administered questions drawn from several thematic sets of questions. *BEST Plus* uses a holistic assessment method that evaluates the overall quality of each response. Each examinee response is scored in three categories: **Listening Comprehension**, **Language Complexity**, and **Communication**. Each scoring category allows for a range of scores according to the quality of the examinee's response.



What thematic content areas are covered in BEST Plus?

- ❖ Personal identification
- ❖ Health
- ❖ Family/Parenting
- ❖ Consumerism
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Recreation/Entertainment
- ❖ Getting a job
- ❖ On the job
- ❖ Civics
- ❖ Community services
- ❖ Transportation/Directions
- ❖ Weather/Seasons
- ❖ Education



What types of questions are on BEST Plus?

- ❖ Photo description
- ❖ Entry item
- ❖ Yes/No
- ❖ Choice
- ❖ Personal expansion
- ❖ General expansion
- ❖ Elaboration



How are BEST Plus scores interpreted?

- ❖ *BEST Plus* scores are aligned with **Student Performance Level (SPL) descriptors**, which range from 0 to 10. Adults served through federally funded adult ESL programs usually have between an SPL 0 and 6 in oral communication. Being familiar with these descriptors will help teachers understand their students' abilities and target their instruction appropriately. (See the Oral Proficiency section of this module for more information.)



Is there a curriculum used with **BEST Plus**?

- ❖ *BEST Plus* is not correlated to any textbooks or curricula. As an adaptive assessment of oral proficiency, there is really no way to “teach to” *BEST Plus*. However, teachers should consider the different **content areas** that *BEST Plus* questions are drawn from as well as the different **question types**. The content areas are representative of typical life skills content covered in many adult ESL textbooks and curricula. The different question types, ranging from easier to more difficult, allow students of any proficiency level to demonstrate their ability to converse in English—even at the lowest levels. All of the content areas and question types in *BEST Plus* can be found in conversations that native and nonnative English-speaking adults would likely encounter while speaking English in non-instructional settings, such as at the workplace or in the community.



How can *BEST Plus* be aligned with classroom instruction?

- ❖ When thinking about how to **align classroom instruction with standardized assessment**, teachers should consider what students need to know and be able to, what is being measured by the test, what content areas are covered, what the test items are like, how the test scores are interpreted, and what preparation is needed.



Other questions about BEST Plus

- ❖ What do students need to know and be able to do when taking *BEST Plus*?
 - Answer conversational questions on a variety of life skills topics that adults need to be able to communicate orally in English.
- ❖ How are students' responses scored on *BEST Plus*?
 - Each item is scored on three holistic scales: Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity, and Communication.
- ❖ How are *BEST Plus* scores interpreted and used to inform instruction?
 - *BEST Plus* scores are aligned with Student Performance Levels (SPLs) and can also be interpreted within the six educational functioning levels of the National Reporting System for Adult Education (www.nrsweb.org).
- ❖ How can students prepare for *BEST Plus*?
 - The best way to prepare students for *BEST Plus* is to give them many opportunities to practice content-rich, conversational English both inside and outside of the classroom. See the **Instruction** section for specific ideas in teaching speaking and listening.



❖ For a short video demonstration of *BEST Plus*,
please visit
<http://www.cal.org/aea/assets/playerNew-2.html>



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