



Frequently Asked Questions

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) has compiled this list of frequently asked questions to serve as a handy resource for visitors to our website. The FAQs are sorted into the categories outlined below.

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Contact CAL with any questions you may have or to make suggestions for additions to our FAQs.

Questions: Email CAL at aea@cal.org.

Website: www.cal.org/aea

CAL
CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS
www.cal.org

Prospective Users

How do I assess the language proficiency of my students?

Language proficiency or linguistic proficiency is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in a language. There are many different ways to assess language proficiency including through observation, class work or projects, formative assessments, or through standardized assessments.

Formative assessment, formative evaluation, formative feedback, or assessment for learning, including diagnostic testing, is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures conducted by teachers during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment.

A standardized test is a test that is administered and scored in a consistent, or "standard", manner. Standardized tests are designed in such a way that the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent and are administered and scored in a predetermined, standard manner.

BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy are the adult English Language proficiency assessments developed by CAL to meet the needs of language educators and programs serving adult English language learners (ELLs).

What are some factors I need to consider when choosing an assessment?

There are many factors to consider when choosing an assessment. First, you need to determine if a formative assessment (informal classroom assessments) or a standardized assessment (tests that can be used for reporting purposes) is required.

If a standardized assessment is needed, you need to consider the purpose for using the assessment. Will the assessment be used for placement, diagnostics, progress, program evaluation, reporting, or all of the above? If you will be using this assessment to report outcomes, you will need to check with your state's assessment policy to see what tests are approved for that use in your state. You should also consider your learners' goals and your curriculum to select an assessment that best fits those factors.

Other factors to consider when choosing an assessment include: training (time and costs), time needed to administer the test, availability of staff to administer the test, group or individual administration of the test, and cost of materials.

What are BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy?

BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy are the adult English Language proficiency assessments developed by CAL to meet the needs of language educators and programs serving adult English language learners (ELLs). An adult is anyone 16 years or older who is not in secondary school.

BEST Plus 2.0 is a face-to-face adaptive oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult ELLs that measures the full range of proficiency levels represented in adult education programs. The examinee's ability to communicate in English through questions is tied to authentic situations that arise in daily life in the United States such as going to the doctor, getting a job, housing, and community services. BEST Plus 2.0 is administered individually in 5-25 minutes, depending on the examinees proficiency. BEST Plus 2.0 is available as a computer-adaptive version and as a semi-adaptive print-based version. [Learn more about BEST Plus 2.0.](#)

BEST Literacy tests reading and writing skills in authentic situations specifically geared for adult language learners in the U.S. such as reading dates on a calendar, addressing an envelope, and writing a short personal note. BEST Literacy can be administered individually or in groups in one hour or less. The BEST Literacy Test Manual provides test administrators with all the information they need to give and score the test, including a rubric with clear benchmarks for scoring the note-writing task. [Learn more about BEST Literacy.](#)

Who can use BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy?

BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy are designed to assess the English language skills of adult English language learners in the United States who are 16 years and older. These tests provide data regarding their oral proficiency skills (BEST Plus 2.0) or their reading and writing skills (BEST Literacy) in an educational setting. For more information, read the BEST Plus 2.0 Usage Policy located in the on the [BEST Plus 2.0 web page](#) and [BEST Literacy web page](#).

In addition, BEST Plus 2.0 requires that all test administrators complete the [Test Administrator Training Workshop](#) with a certified BEST Plus trainer.

CAL does not require BEST Literacy training; however, BEST Literacy test administrators and scorers must read and review the BEST Literacy Test Manual before and after administering the test. In addition, individual states and programs may have their own training requirements in order to administer BEST Literacy.

Can I use BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy to determine if my employees have sufficient language ability to do their job functions?

No. BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy scores are not currently aligned to any job descriptors such as job functions, duties, or tasks, and should not be used for employment screening purposes or other similar activities that fall outside the purview of educational uses.

However, you can contact CAL to request information on the feasibility and cost of adapting BEST Plus 2.0 for specific purposes or audiences, interpreting BEST Plus 2.0 scores through a system other than those described here, or developing a test to meet your specific needs.

Are BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy approved by the National Reporting System (NRS)?

Yes. BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy are approved for use with the National Reporting System (NRS).

While approval of BEST Plus 2.0 and BEST Literacy is currently scheduled to expire on February 2, 2021, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) has stated that they are committed to ensuring that the field has valid and reliable tests to use to report on student outcomes. We will continue to monitor the Federal Register for updates from OCTAE. CAL is committed to working with OCTAE and our test users to update BEST Plus and Best Literacy as the new NRS levels are released.

How can I purchase these assessments?

BEST Literacy test booklets and the test manual can be purchased online through the CAL Store using a credit card. BEST Plus 2.0 can only be purchased by programs that have trained BEST Plus 2.0 test administrators. Once you have been trained on BEST Plus 2.0, materials can be purchased online through the CAL Store.

Visit the [Resources section](#) of our website to view a complete list of CAL's Adult ESL Assessment Resources with links to the corresponding page on the CAL Store. You can order online at the [CAL Store](#) or call 1-800-551-3709 10:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

How many instructional hours are required between pre- and posttesting?

CAL recommends re-testing students at the end of their period of instruction, with 60 hours minimum (80-100 hours recommended) of instruction prior to re-testing. CAL's recommendations are based on studies of instructional hours and student gains. Programs have diverse service delivery models, and we acknowledge that many are tailoring services to students with limited time for their English learning. Where possible and in service to your learners first, consider the requirements of your grantors, and do your best to follow CAL recommendations.

If your program reports to a state or federal grantor, programs should follow their state assessment policies and NRS Guidelines when re-testing at the end of the instructional period. In instances where a student does not have 60 instructional hours, programs should follow state assessment policies and NRS Guidelines when re-testing at the end of the instructional period.

If a program's period of instruction is more than 60 hours, CAL does not recommend re-testing students at the 60-hour mark; rather, students should be tested at the end of the instructional period to avoid over-testing.

Is the original BEST Plus still available?

CAL works to make sure that the most reliable and valid assessments are available to the field. The original BEST Plus was discontinued by CAL and replaced by BEST Plus 2.0 as of July 1, 2016. If you are testing for NRS reporting, you must use BEST Plus 2.0 as of July 1, 2016 as the original BEST Plus scores will no longer be accepted. At this time, CAL is making plans for new submissions to OCTAE for both BEST Literacy 2.0 and BEST Plus 3.0.

If your program does not report scores to the NRS, check with your funder as to when you should begin using BEST Plus 2.0; otherwise, CAL recommends you start using BEST Plus 2.0 at your discretion.

I have the original BEST Plus. Can I pretest with the old BEST Plus and posttest with BEST Plus 2.0?

If you are testing for NRS reporting, you cannot pretest with BEST Plus and posttest with BEST Plus 2.0 as the original BEST Plus is no longer accepted for NRS purposes as of June 30, 2016.

If you do not report scores to the NRS, you may be able to pretest with the original BEST Plus and posttest with BEST Plus 2.0 *unless your funding guidelines say otherwise*.

CAL continues to provide access to information about the original BEST Plus. [Learn more](#).

Who can I speak to if I have other questions?

Please contact us by email at aea@cal.org or by phone at 866-845-2378, option 1 (toll free), Monday-Friday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm ET.

Current Users: BEST Plus

BEST Plus 2.0 FAQs

What is BEST Plus 2.0 used to measure?

BEST Plus 2.0 is an individually administered, face-to-face oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult ELLs in the U.S. An adult is anyone 16 years or older who is not in secondary school.

What types of questions are on BEST Plus 2.0?

BEST Plus 2.0 measures the examinee's ability to communicate in English through questions tied to authentic situations that arise in daily life in the United States such as going to the doctor, getting a job, housing, and community services. The question types range from simple picture description questions to questions that require elaborate and organized discourse.

Who can administer BEST Plus 2.0?

BEST Plus 2.0 is administered individually by a trained BEST Plus 2.0 test administrator.

What proficiency levels does BEST Plus 2.0 assess?

BEST Plus 2.0 measures the full range of current proficiency levels from Student Performance Levels (SPLs) 0 through 10 and all six [National Reporting System](#) (NRS) Educational Functioning Levels. For SPL descriptors, see the Quick Links section on the [BEST Plus 2.0 web page](#).

Is training required to administer BEST Plus 2.0?

Yes. All test administrators must complete the six contact-hour test administrator training workshop and be approved by a certified BEST Plus 2.0 trainer prior to administering BEST Plus 2.0. Learn more about [BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Training](#).

How long does BEST Plus 2.0 take to administer?

BEST Plus 2.0 takes 5 to 15 minutes to administer with an average of 6 to 8 minutes depending on the examinee's level of oral proficiency. Higher proficiency speakers (SPL 7-10) usually take longer than speakers with lower proficiency because they are asked more questions and their responses tend to be longer and more complex.

What information is included in the BEST Plus 2.0 score report?

The score report contains the following information:

- BEST Plus 2.0 scale score
- Student Performance Level
- NRS Educational Functioning Level
- Administrative information (student name, registration number, date, time of the test, name of the test administrator, class, site)
- Average subscale score for Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity, and Communication.

All score reports can be viewed through the included score management software.

How is BEST Plus 2.0 administered?

BEST Plus 2.0 is available as either a computer-adaptive version or as a semi-adaptive print-based version. The computer-adaptive version of BEST Plus 2.0 requires one computer for every test administrator. The BEST Plus 2.0 software runs on Windows XP or higher and requires an open USB port for installation. The USB is not required to run the software after installation.

The print-based version also requires at least one computer be available at the time of scoring in order to convert the raw scores from the test booklets into reportable scale scores using the score management software. However, access to a computer is not needed at the time of testing.

What is the difference between the computer-adaptive version and the semi-adaptive print-based versions of BEST Plus 2.0?

The print-based version is administered in the same manner as the computer-adaptive version except the test administrator writes the scores in the test booklet, uses a Picture Cue Book for the picture description questions, and manually enters the scores into the score management software to get a complete score report. All of the test items in the print-based version are drawn from the same item pool as the computer-adaptive version. The primary difference is the print-based is semi-adaptive in that it has three fixed forms (D, E, and F) and three sublevels per form.

How do I decide whether to use the semi-adaptive print-based or computer-based version of BEST Plus 2.0?

The decision to use either the semi-adaptive print-based version, computer-adaptive version, or both should be based on your capacity to administer the test. If your testing site does not have computers available when testing or laptops are too cumbersome to transport from one site to another, then you should consider using the print-based version. Keep in mind that access to a computer is required to convert the semi-adaptive print-based raw scores into scale scores.

Even if you use the computer-adaptive version exclusively, CAL recommends that copies of the print-based version be available as backup to allow for testing under all circumstances.

Do I need a computer to use the semi-adaptive print-based version of BEST Plus 2.0?

Yes. You will need at least one computer to convert the raw scores into scale scores using the score management software.

How can I get started using BEST Plus 2.0?

The first step is to attend a BEST Plus 2.0 test administrator training workshop either through your program, state, or CAL. Once you and your staff have been trained, we can help you order the materials you'll need to get started. Learn more about [BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Training Workshops](#).

What materials do I need to administer BEST Plus 2.0?

In order to administer BEST Plus 2.0, you will need the following:

Materials received at training

- BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide
- BEST Plus Scoring Rubric

Materials to be purchased before testing:

- Computer-adaptive users
 - BEST Plus 2.0 Software USB
 - Computer test administrations
 - Laptop or desktop computer
- Print-based users
 - BEST Plus 2.0 Software USB
 - Semi-adaptive print-based examinee test booklets and corresponding picture cue booklets
 - Computer to score print-based test booklets using the Score management software

Test administrators must have the Test Administrator Guide and Scoring Rubric available during testing.

Visit the [Resources section](#) of our website to view a complete list of CAL’s Adult ESL Assessment Resources with links to the corresponding page on the CAL Store. You can order online at the [CAL Store](#) or call 1-800-551-3709 10:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

Does BEST Plus 2.0 give a score that says a student is ready to take BEST Literacy?

No. Performance on BEST Plus 2.0 does not predict performance on BEST Literacy. You may need to check with your state’s assessment policy or program director on how each assessment is to be used within your state.

What are appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities?

Laws such as the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and other related federal, state, and local laws were enacted to guarantee equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities, including those in educational programs. Programs administering BEST Plus 2.0 are responsible for providing accessible services and for ensuring that requests for accommodations are considered and handled in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations. Program and test administrators may provide and allow accommodations in test administration procedures or in the testing environment for individuals with disabilities, provided that the accommodations do not compromise the purpose or results of the test. For example, the test administrator cannot show the prompts on the screen or in the test booklet to a person with a hearing impairment nor may a sign language interpreter be used. A permissible accommodation for BEST Plus 2.0 would be the use of hearing aids. Likewise, a test administrator cannot explain the content of a picture cue prompt to a person with a visual impairment. An appropriate accommodation would be the use of a magnifying glass to enlarge the image. BEST Plus 2.0 is not appropriate for use with individuals whose visual impairment prevents them from seeing the picture cue prompts even when enlarged or otherwise enhanced. Skipping picture questions is not a reasonable accommodation for individuals with visual impairments.

BEST Plus 2.0 Training

How can I attend one of the required BEST Plus 2.0 training workshops?

BEST Plus 2.0 training is provided through several state agencies and through CAL. Learn more about [BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Training Workshops](#).

I was trained on the original BEST Plus? Do I need to be retrained?

No. CAL does not require additional training to use BEST Plus 2.0 for those trained on the original BEST Plus. We do recommend, and your state may require, that you attend a scoring refresher workshop or review scoring with the Scoring Refresher Toolkit.

Once I am trained, can I train others in my state or program to administer the test?

No. Test administrators must be trained and approved by CAL to become certified BEST Plus 2.0 trainers.

How can I practice administering BEST Plus 2.0 after attending training without having to buy tests?

You can practice administering BEST Plus 2.0 by using the practice software included with the BEST Plus 2.0 Software USB. The practice software (password is **mexico**) will come pre-populated with a list of students. When asked to activate test administrations, select any quantity and type **12345** as the Activation Code into the red box. The practice software will not save any test data and will not provide a score report.

When new test administrators complete training, CAL credits each program with 10 complimentary computer test administrations per test administrator to use with BEST Plus 2.0 test software to practice administering a real test. We encourage new test administrators to complete this practice within a few weeks of training on people other than students (friends, colleagues, family) and discuss any questions you have with your program administrator, BEST Plus 2.0 trainer, or CAL before testing any students.

Please note these administrations will not be available immediately after training and are added when CAL receives the signed copy of the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Registration form from the trainer, which can take up to 10 business days.

Can I get more help in fine-tuning my scoring?

Yes. The BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Toolkit is available for use by both groups and individual test administrators to practice and refine their scoring skills learned in the initial training workshop. [Learn more about the Scoring Refresher Toolkit](#).

Does CAL provide additional training for BEST Plus 2.0? (i.e. refresher workshops, train-the-trainer workshops, etc.)

The [BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Toolkit](#) is available to states, programs, and BEST Plus trainers to recalibrate their test administrators' scoring abilities. CAL also provides BEST Plus 2.0 scoring refresher and train-the-trainer workshops in addition to other customized training opportunities. Email CAL at aea@cal.org to learn more.

How can I become a BEST Plus 2.0 trainer?

CAL is always interested in working with adult ESL professionals who have teaching and training experience to become BEST Plus 2.0 trainers. For more information, please contact us Monday - Friday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm ET at 1-866-845-BEST (2378) or send an email to aea@cal.org.

Ordering BEST Plus 2.0

How do I order BEST Plus 2.0 test administrations?

You can order online at the [CAL Store](#) or call 1-800-551-3709 10:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time. Visit the [Resources section](#) of our website to view a complete list of CAL's Adult ESL Assessment Resources with links to the corresponding page on the CAL Store.

Quick CAL Store Links:

[BEST Plus 2.0 Computer-Adaptive Test Administrations](#)

[BEST Plus 2.0 Print-based Examinee Test Booklets](#)

What is the difference between purchasing test administrations and activating administrations?

It is helpful to think about purchasing and activating as making withdrawals from your bank account. In order to activate tests (withdraw money) you need to have tests in your program's account (a balance in your bank account). Your program director or coordinator will need to order test administrations (make a deposit) if your balance is low or you have 10 or less administrations available. Please allow one business day for us to process your order and credit tests to your account (clearing the check). Once tests have been credited (deposited) to your program's account, your program director or coordinator will receive a confirmation e-mail and you can begin activating (withdrawing) tests on your computer.

Do I need to order computer administrations to score the semi-adaptive print-based version?

No. CAL will automatically credit your program with the administrations needed to score the semi-adaptive print-based version of the test when your order is shipped.

Remember, it is the program's responsibility to keep track of how many test administrations in your program's balance are for use with the semi-adaptive print-based and how many are for use with the computer-adaptive version. CAL is not responsible if a program uses its print-based administrations to administer the computer-adaptive version of the test.

How do I order Test Administrator Guides for training workshops?

You can order online at the [CAL Store](#) or 1-800-551-3709 10:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

Visit the [Resources section](#) of our website to view a complete list of CAL’s Adult ESL Assessment Resources with links to the corresponding page on the CAL Store.

Quick CAL Store Link: [BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide](#)

How do I order the Scoring Refresher Toolkit and Scoring Refresher Workbooks?

Program directors, state professional development coordinators, and BEST Plus 2.0 trainers can order the Scoring Refresher Toolkit online through the [CAL Store](#) or by calling 1-800-551-3709 10:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

Remember: BEST Plus 2.0 test administrators are not eligible to purchase the Scoring Refresher Toolkit. Only program directors, state professional development coordinators, and BEST Plus 2.0 trainers can order Scoring Refresher Toolkit materials.

Quick CAL Store Link: [BEST Plus Scoring Refresher Toolkit](#)

What if my state or my umbrella organization is paying for my tests and my program runs out of test administrations?

If an umbrella organization (e.g. State Department of Education) purchases test administrations for your organization and you run out of administrations, you need to contact the umbrella organization and order additional tests through them. Any subsequent allotments must come from the original umbrella organization.

Activating BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrations

I’ve purchased my tests, how do I activate them on my computer?

Install the BEST Plus 2.0 software onto the computer you will be using for testing. Next, run BEST Plus 2.0 and follow the onscreen instructions for adding test administrations. You can also refer to page 84 in the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide.

What is the password for the maroon icon on the BEST Plus 2.0 software?

The password is **mexico**.

What are Activation Keys and Activation Codes?

Activation Keys (5 letters appearing in the green box) and Activation Codes (5 digits entered by you in the red box) are what allow you to add tests to your computer and help your program keep track of your test usage in its account.

Activation Keys and Activation Codes are only good once and cannot be reused. The Activation Code for the practice software is always **12345**.

How many test administrations should I activate on my computer?

Tests can be activated in sets of 20, 50, 100, 300, or 500. CAL recommends that you activate only as many test administrations as you need to test your students in the immediate future. Because test administrations are saved to the computer, we recommend that you add fewer test administrations more often, so that if something happens to the computer (e.g., it crashes; the laptop is stolen; the hard drive is reformatted), you lose fewer test administrations.

Remember: CAL is not responsible for any unused test administrations activated on a computer that are lost due to computer failure or maintenance.

How do I change the amount of tests I want to activate from the default of 20?

Each Activation Key is only good for a specific quantity: 20, 50, 100, 300, or 500. Check your Activation Screen in BEST Plus 2.0 to see how many tests your Key will activate.

If you need to activate a different quantity, please follow the steps below:

1. Click on the **Change Quantity** button at the bottom of the Registration screen
2. Click **Yes, I want to go to the change quantity screen**
3. On the next screen, select the quantity you wish to activate
4. Click the **Purchase** button.
5. You will then see a new Activation Key on your computer screen.

Enter your new Activation Key to get the corresponding Activation Code for the amount you desire.

I am a recently trained test administrator. How do I activate my 10 complimentary BEST Plus 2.0 administrations?

Once CAL has received your Test Administrator Registration form from the trainer, install the BEST Plus 2.0 software from the USB onto the computer you will be using for testing. Next, run BEST Plus 2.0 and follow the onscreen instructions for adding test administrations. You can also refer to page 84 in the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide.

Please note these administrations will not be available immediately after training and are added when CAL receives the signed copy of the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Registration form from the trainer which can take up to 10 business days.

Can I move the activated test administrations from one computer to another?

Yes. You can move test administrations from one computer to another using the Test Transfer Program on the BEST Plus 2.0 Software USB. Please see Section IV of the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide for instructions. Activated test administrations are saved to the hard drive of the computer on which they were activated. Activated tests cannot be saved to the BEST Plus 2.0 Software USB.

Can I check to see how many unused activated test administrations remain on a particular computer?

Yes. Under the “Activate More Administrations” tab in the score management software, a user can view how many administrations they have used on that computer and how many they have remaining. In addition, any time BEST Plus 2.0 is running, the user may press the CTRL and T keys together to view the number of test administrations remaining.

To find out how many unactivated administrations are left in your program’s account, visit the [Online Test Activation](#) web page and log into your account with your email address, individual password, and program customer number. You can also contact user support Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm ET by phone at 1-866-845-BEST (2378), option 1, or email us at aea@cal.org.

What if my Activation Code doesn't work?

Make sure you are using the BEST Plus 2.0 test software and not the practice software version. Make sure the green box is showing the same Activation Key as when you first requested the Activation Code. If it is not, then you need to request a new Activation Code for the new Activation Key by contacting BEST Plus 2.0 User Support at 1-866-845-2378, option 2, or email us at aea@cal.org.

You do not need to contact BEST Plus 2.0 for the Activation Code when using the practice software. The Activation Code for the practice software is always **12345**.

Can I get my Activation Code online?

Yes. Please go to the [Online Test Activation](#) web page.

What is the Online Test Activation System?

This is a web page that allows you to obtain an Activation Code, view your test administration balance, and see the most recent activation. This [Online Test Activation](#) web page can be accessed at any time.

Do I have to use the Online Test Activation system on the same computer on which I am running BEST Plus 2.0?

No. You can use any computer or smartphone with internet access to log into your account to get your Activation Code.

If your testing computer has Internet access, press Alt and Tab or the Windows Key on your keyboard to minimize BEST Plus 2.0 so you can open your browser without quitting the test software. Once you have received your Activation Code, you can maximize BEST Plus 2.0 by clicking on the program activation bar on the Windows taskbar.

What do I do if my Internet browser won't let me access the Online Test Activation site?

If you are having trouble accessing the site, please contact your local technical support staff to have them check your browser settings.

Why does my user information not "match the database"?

There are several reasons why this might happen:

- We may not have your correct email address on file.
- If you were trained recently, your information may not yet be in our database (it can take up to 10 business days to receive and process the registration forms from a training workshop).
- We may not have your name entered correctly in our database.
- You may not have registered for a password or your password is incorrect.
- You may not have the correct customer number. Please check with your program director.

To resolve any of the issues listed above, please contact user support Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm ET by phone at 1-866-845-2378, option 1, or email us at aea@cal.org.

How do I register for an online password?

Visit the [Online Test Activation](#) web page. Below the sign-in form, click "If you do not have a password, please click here" link. Your 5-character password will be sent to you within a few minutes from no-reply@cal.org and will be in the form of Letter # Letter # Letter (ex. A2A2A). Remember, this password is different from the password you need for the BEST Plus 2.0 practice software (**mexico**). It is unique to each individual test administrator.

What should I do if I registered for an online password, but I have not received it?

Check your spam filter, junk email folder, or with your network administrator and make sure no-reply@cal.org is on your safe sender list. If you continue to have problems, contact user support Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm ET by phone at 866-845-BEST (2378), option 1, or email us at aea@cal.org.

What does "Server Error in '/BESTPlus/BPOnlineActivation'Application" error mean?

The software that runs the Online Test Activation program does not recognize apostrophes, accent marks, or other special characters. Please try typing your name without them. (e.g., O'Connor as OConnor, José as Jose). If you continue to have problems, please contact user support Monday - Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm ET by phone at 866-845-2378, option 1, or email us at aea@cal.org.

How do I change my online password?

Visit the [Online Test Activation](#) web page. Below the sign-in box, click the link "To change your password, please click here."

How can I retrieve my online password if I forget it?

Visit the [Online Test Activation](#) web page. Below the sign-in box, click the link "If you do not know your password, please click here." Your password will be sent to you within a few minutes from no-reply@cal.org.

The amount of tests in my program's account is different from what I want to activate. How do I change the amount of tests I want to activate?

Each Activation Key is only good for a specific quantity: 20, 50, 100, 300, or 500. Check your Activation Screen in BEST Plus 2.0 to see how many tests your Activation Key will activate. If you need to activate a different quantity, see Section IV of your BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide or refer to “How do I change the amount of tests I want to activate from the default of 20” within these FAQs.

My program’s balance shows I have less than 20 administrations remaining. What do I need to do if I need to activate more?

Your program must purchase additional test administrations before you can activate more tests. You can order online at the [CAL Store](#) or call 1-800-551-3709 10:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time. Visit the [Resources section](#) of our website to view a complete list of CAL’s Adult ESL Assessment Resources with links to the corresponding page on the CAL Store.

Quick CAL Store Links:

[BEST Plus 2.0 Computer-Adaptive Test Administrations](#)

[BEST Plus 2.0 Print-based Examinee Test Booklets](#)

I made a mistake and submitted the wrong Activation Key. How can I fix my test balance?

Once you have entered your Activation Key and click "Activate," the Activation Key is recorded and the amount of test administrations activated is deducted from your program’s balance. If you believe you have made a mistake, contact user support Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm ET Eastern Time by phone at 1-866-845-2378, option 1, or email us at aea@cal.org.

BEST Plus 2.0 Computer-Adaptive Version

What is the password for the BEST Plus 2.0 Test software?

The password is **mexico** for both the practice and test versions of the software.

Why is Donna Moss listed as the test administrator?

You are using the practice version of the software which included this name as a placeholder. When you use the real test software, the computer will remember the name of the last person to administer a test.

What do I use for a student's registration number?

The registration number is whatever your program uses to track students. The registration number may consist only of letters and/or numbers and should be limited to nine characters (with no spaces between characters). At least one character must be entered into this field or the software will not allow the test to continue. Punctuation marks such as slashes (/) cannot be used. In addition, programs should not use birthdays, Social Security numbers, or similar personal information for data security reasons.

Do I have to use the same registration number every time I test that student?

No. You should follow the system your program has in place for tracking students.

What do I use for class and site?

These fields are optional and can be skipped but may be helpful in tracking your students if you test at multiple sites or offer more than one class.

After the “Do you work” question, a screen appears asking if the examinee has a job. What do I do?

The “Do you work?” item is presented during the warm-up questions. Do not read this prompt aloud to examinees. After you have scored the examinee’s response to the question, click “Yes” or “No” to indicate whether or not the examinee works. If the answer is No, the test software will not present any more questions related to the examinee’s employment; however, examinees may be asked questions about getting a job.

When I click on 0 in Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity or Communication, why does it automatically score 0 for everything?

This happens because a score of 0 in any part of the rubric means all parts of the rubric must also be scored 0.

What do I do when I get the “Scoring Problem” screen?

You likely forgot to click on a score below the question. Finish scoring the response and click “Next Question” to continue. For guidance on skipping questions, refer to “When should a test question be skipped?” within these FAQs.

When will the test end?

The test will end when the examinee has reached his or her proficiency level or after 25 questions. To finish the computer-adaptive version, click “Score Test” to view the score report.

BEST Plus 2.0 Print-Based Version**What materials do I need to administer the semi-adaptive print-based version of BEST Plus 2.0?**

There are three forms of the semi-adaptive print-based version of BEST Plus 2.0: D, E, and F. You will need one form for the pretest and a different form for the posttest (e.g. use Form D as the pretest, then use E or F as the posttest).

Testing materials for each form consist of the following:

- BEST Plus 2.0 Test Examinee Test Booklet (consumable)
- Corresponding BEST Plus 2.0 Picture Cue Book (reusable)
- BEST Plus 2.0 Scoring Rubric
- BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide

In addition, you will also need the following:

- 2 pencils
- A computer to score print-based test booklets using the score management software installed from the BEST Plus 2.0 Software USB.
- Small calculator (optional)

- Clipboard to hold test booklets (optional)

Test administrators must have the Test Administrator Guide and Scoring Rubric available during testing.

Do I need to order computer administrations to score the semi-adaptive print-based version of BEST Plus 2.0?

No. Your program is automatically credited with 20 test administrations per packet. Print-based test administrations are activated in the same manner as the computer administrations. Each program manages their test administrations through the BEST Plus 2.0 Score Management Software locally. CAL is not responsible for managing these within a program.

Do I need to order the BEST Plus 2.0 Picture Cue Book?

Yes. The Picture Cue Books are required in order to administer the semi-adaptive print-based version of the test as some items require a picture stimulus. Programs need to order sufficient quantities of each form (D, E, or F) of the Picture Cue Books for every test administrator who is testing at the same time. The Picture Cue Books are reusable.

Do I need a computer to administer the semi-adaptive print-based version of BEST Plus 2.0?

No. You only need a computer to convert the raw scores into scale scores using the Score management software on the BEST Plus 2.0 USB.

Note that only scale scores can be used to compare student gains, whether a program is reporting scores or not.

Is there an additional cost for the BEST Plus 2.0 score management software?

No. The Score management software is included on the BEST Plus 2.0 Software USB.

Do the students write in the BEST Plus 2.0 examinee test booklets?

No. The examinees do not write in the test booklets and are not to be shown any of the test questions. Examinees are only to be shown the photos in the Picture Cue Books when prompted.

Can I reuse the BEST Plus 2.0 examinee test booklets?

No. Each test booklet is consumable and cannot be photocopied or reused. Test administrators mark examinee's scores in the booklet and tally the raw scores. Picture Cue Books are reusable.

Is there a scale score conversion table for print-based raw scores?

No. Because each question is weighted differently based on the difficulty of the test item and on the examinee's score on each component of the rubric, simple conversion tables are not feasible. However, the test algorithm used by the score management software can easily take all these factors into account to provide an accurate score. To receive a scale score, print-based scores from the examinee test booklet must be entered into the score management software installed from the BEST Plus 2.0 USB.

A test administrator marked a score of 0 for Listening Comprehension in the test booklet but did not mark zeros for Language Complexity and Communication. The score management software will not let me enter these scores and marks everything 0 when I try. What should I do?

This happens because a score of 0 in any part of the rubric means all parts of the rubric must also be scored 0 on that item. Check with the test administrator to see if he or she made a mistake when circling their scores and correct accordingly. If scoring zeroes was a mistake or scoring zeroes is repeated throughout the test, the student will need to be retested with a different form on the print-based (or with the computer-adaptive version) to obtain a valid scale score. CAL also recommends reviewing the scoring rubric and procedures with the test administrator in question before he or she is allowed to resume testing.

BEST Plus 2.0 General Questions

When should a test question be skipped?

The option to skip a question should be used only in rare circumstances. For example, if a question causes a student extreme distress or is inappropriate for a specific student, the question can be skipped by not scoring and clicking on "Next question". When the "Finish scoring" question comes up, click on, "Skip this question and go on the next one" and continue after the student has regained composure. Skipping one question will not affect the final score and skipping should only be done sparingly.

However, it is important to remember two things. First, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions and prompts so do not skip a question simply because you think a student might not participate in a particular activity. For example, students who do not drive should still be presented with items that pertain to driving. One of the questions may be, "Do you like driving in [Washington]?" The examinee can answer, "I don't drive" and the response can still be scored. The next question may ask about driving conditions, which the examinee could answer based on his or her experience as a passenger.

Second, if you are using the semi-adaptive print-based version of BEST Plus 2.0, you have a limited number of questions available. Skipping more than one question on the print-based test will lead to inaccurate scores.

If an examinee answers the question correctly in a language other than English, what score do I give?

In order to standardize scoring procedures and be fair to all examinees, a score of 0 is to be given for an examinee response in a language other than English. Examinees can be prompted once with "English, please" to remind them to respond in English. If they respond in English, that response should be scored appropriately (and if as they had not responded in another language).

What if the examinee doesn't know what is going on in a picture cue?

Score the examinee according to what language they are able to produce. They don't have to be able to name the exact action going on in the picture or mention anything about the topic. Simple descriptions or lists of items in the picture will suffice. The picture cue questions are designed only to elicit words, phrases, and simple sentences (e.g. Subject-Verb-Object).

If the examinee doesn't understand the prompt "Tell me about this picture," can I say "What do you see in the picture"?

No. A question may be repeated once but it should not be rephrased in any way. If a student still does not understand the prompt after one repetition, score all areas "0" and move on to the next question. Rephrasing the question changes the difficulty of the item and can invalidate your results.

If an examinee scores a 0 in Listening Comprehension, can I still give a non-zero score for Language Complexity and Communication?

No. A score of 0 in Listening Comprehension is given a score of 0 in Language Complexity and Communication. The computer-adaptive version does this automatically. Test administrators using the semi-adaptive print-based version must circle 0 for each component of the rubric in the test booklet.

Can I end the test myself if I think it has gone on long enough?

No. It invalidates the test if you end it prematurely. The computer-adaptive version will end automatically, but you must read all of the test questions in the appropriate level of the print-based test booklet.

The levels for the NRS and SPLs do not match; what should I do?

The information on the score reports is correct. Score reports for BEST Plus 2.0 now include both the [Student Performance Level \(SPL\)](#) and the [NRS Educational Functioning Level](#). Previously with the original BEST Plus, only the SPL was listed on the score report. These levels are two distinct sets of measures that BEST Plus 2.0 scores are aligned to that programs can use to help inform instruction.

It is important to note, however, that the SPLs and the NRS levels do not correlate to each other and that the NRS score ranges have been updated for BEST Plus 2.0. SPLs and the NRS EFLs each have separate score ranges as well as separate descriptors of what a student can do at each level. The score ranges for the SPLs have not changed for BEST Plus 2.0 and are the same as the original BEST Plus.

The SPLs for listening and speaking range from 0 (no English) to 10 (that of a native speaker) while the NRS only has six levels with an exit score of 565 or higher (equivalent to SPL 7 or higher). CAL uses the full name of the NRS levels on the score report rather than a numerical equivalent to avoid confusion with the SPLs. Please see pages 42-43 and 46-52 of the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide for more information.

How can I go back and view score reports?

You can always view, save, and print score reports using the score management software, under the "Manage Students" tab.

What is the BEST Plus 2.0 Score management software?

The BEST Plus 2.0 score management software allows users to manage their BEST Plus 2.0 data and enter the raw scores from the print-based version.

What is the password for the score management software?

The password is **mexico**.

Can I filter the names in the student list?

Yes. For more information on using filters, see Section IV of the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide.

I want to move some of my score data to another computer. Should I use the "Export Scores" or "Export Record(s)" function? What is the difference?

Which function you should use depends on what you intend to do with the data after the transfer. If you wish to work with student data outside the BEST Plus 2.0 program (e.g., to create a program-wide spreadsheet), you must export the score reports using the "Export Scores" button. This will export the score reports in a format that can be opened as a text document, a spreadsheet file (such as Excel), or in your own data management program (such as Access). If you are transferring student information from one BEST Plus 2.0-enabled computer to another so you can test, then you should use "Export Student Record(s)". Please note that the database file (*.mdb) created using the "Export Student Record(s)" button is a protected file and cannot be opened directly.

For more information on using filters to export score data, see Section IV of the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide.

How can I get technical support?

You can contact user support Monday - Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Eastern Time by phone at 866-845-2378, option 1, or email us at aea@cal.org.

What are the minimum system requirements for using BEST Plus 2.0 on my computer?

BEST Plus 2.0 requires, at a minimum, the following software and hardware:

- BEST Plus 2.0 software USB
- USB port
- Mouse or touchpad
- PC, laptop, tablet with a Windows operating system
- 16 MB RAM
- 800 x 600 pixels with 256 colors
- Microsoft Windows XP or higher

In addition, BEST Plus 2.0 must be installed while logged in as an administrator. Administrator rights are not required to run the software.

Can BEST Plus 2.0 be run on a network?

Yes. A network version of BEST Plus 2.0 is available at an additional cost. Contact user support Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Eastern Time by phone at 866-845-2378, option 1, or email us at aea@cal.org.

How can I transfer the test administrations that I have on one PC to another PC?

The Test Transfer Program is included on BEST 2.0 USB. For more information, please see Section IV of the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide.

How can I back up my student data?

You can use the Backup function in the score management software. For more information, please see Section IV of the BEST Plus 2.0 Test Administrator Guide.

If my computer crashes or my hard drive is reformatted, will I lose saved score data or test administrations?

You will have to consult with your technical support staff to determine if your computer or files from your computer prior to the crash or reformat can be saved. It is important to back up your data regularly to a secure location (network drive, USB drive, etc.) by using the backup function in the score management software to avoid losing data saved to your computer's hard drive.

Unused test administrations that are lost to such circumstances and that cannot be transferred using the Test Transfer Program may be reinstated **once per calendar year** for your program. To request a reinstatement of lost tests, write a short e-mail stating exactly what happened (why you lost the tests or why the computer is no longer available) and how many test administrations were lost and send it to aea@cal.org. Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Once this e-mail is received and approved, user support will contact you to confirm that your program has been given the one-time credit for lost tests, rounded to the nearest ten. A new Activation Code can be obtained at that time.

What happens if the computer crashes while I am giving the test? Will I have to start the test over again?

Yes. Any test score data at the time will not be saved. You will have to re-administer the test. You should not lose a test administration if your computer crashes before a score report is generated.

What if we are using protection software such as Deep Freeze or Clean Slate? Will that affect the BEST Plus 2.0 software?

BEST Plus 2.0 cannot be used while protection software programs are running. These programs prevent the BEST Plus 2.0 test program from saving student records or test administrations to the hard drive. We recommend that your local technical support staff contact the makers of the protection software you are using to find out how you may be able to save to the hard drive while the protection software is running.

BEST Plus 2.0 does not require the Internet to function. If possible, you can use computers not connected to the Internet that do not need protection software like Deep Freeze or Clean Slate. You may want to consider the network version of BEST Plus 2.0 which saves all data to a centralized network location managed by your program if are not able to work around the protection software. For more information about the network version of BEST Plus 2.0, please contact 1-866-845-2378 or email us at aea@cal.org.

What if the computer screen is too large or too small?

Consult your local technical support staff to help you make any changes to the display settings on the computer you are using to administer BEST Plus 2.0.

I can't get the score reports to print; what should I do?

Contact your local technical support to make sure your printer and your computer are configured properly. If you still cannot get your score reports to print, you can go to the score management software, Manage Students tab, select the student you want to print, and select View Score Report. Select the report you want to print and click the Save button. This will allow you to save the report to a disk, flash drive, or network folder as a document that can be opened and printed on another computer.

I get an "rtfprint.u32 error"/error message when I try to print; what should I do?

This error arises because of a conflict between the software and a user's printer settings. Unfortunately, because there are so many variations between a user's settings, printer specifications, network settings, and other factors, CAL and our developer have not been able to recreate the issue and thus been unable to provide a solution.

To print score reports, you can go to the score management software, Manage Students tab, select the student you want to print, and select View Score Report. Select the report you want to print and click the Save button. This will allow you to save the report to a disk, flash drive, or network folder as a document that can be opened and printed on another computer.

How can I open the scores.mdb file? The file is password protected.

The scores.mdb file (the MS Access file created when backing up data or when using the "Export Record(s)" button) should not be opened under any circumstances. It is password protected to ensure the security of the information stored in it. Use the "Export Scores" function to create a file containing your test data that can be opened outside of BEST Plus 2.0.

Why do spaces seem to appear between names on my student list? When I go to click on a student below a space, the wrong name comes up.

This is due to too many characters appearing in the Registration Number field. Run the Score management software and from the Manage Students tab select the student's name from the list, click on Edit Student Info, and change the Registration Number so that it is not more than 9 to 13 characters long (size depends on your computer's available memory and spaces count as characters).

When I test new students, why don't their records appear in my list of previously captured test scores?

This is due to your computer not having enough memory to display all the data at one time. Run the Score management software and from the Manage Students tab, click on Filter and search for the missing students' names. To find out more information about "Filters," please see Section III-3 of the Score Management Software User Guide located in your BEST Plus 2.0 SUB. Also, try deleting old students who are no longer in your program from the Manage Students tab.

I tested a student using the wrong name. How do change it to the correct name?

You can correct a wrong name through the score management software. Select the student from the student list and click Edit Student Info. This will allow you to edit the Test Session Info to update a student's name, test administrator, and date/time the test was administered.

How can I find out more about the development of BEST Plus 2.0?

CAL has a technical report available for BEST Plus 2.0 available for download as a PDF on our [website](#).

Current Users: BEST Literacy

BEST Literacy FAQs

What is BEST Literacy used to measure?

BEST Literacy tests reading and writing skills in authentic situations specifically geared for adult English language learners in the United States.

What types of questions are on BEST Literacy?

Test items include reading dates on a calendar, addressing an envelope, writing a check, reading a schedule, writing personal information, reading articles and other documents, and writing a short personal note.

What proficiency levels does BEST Literacy assess?

BEST Literacy measures reading and writing skills and correlates to Student Performance Levels (SPL) 0 to 8 and the [National Reporting System](#) (NRS) Educational Function Levels from Beginning ESL Literacy to Advanced ESL. See this link for [SPL Descriptors](#).

Is training required to administer BEST Literacy?

CAL does not require BEST Literacy training; however, BEST Literacy test administrators and scorers must read and review the BEST Literacy Test Manual before and after administering the test. Individual states and programs may have their own training requirements in order to administer BEST Literacy. Please check your state's or funder's assessment policy for more information about using BEST Literacy.

What technology do I need to use BEST Literacy?

BEST Literacy does not require the use of computers.

How do I get started using BEST Literacy?

To get started using BEST Literacy, you will need to know how many students you will be pre- and posttesting to determine the number of test packets to order. Test booklets and corresponding scoring sheets are sold in packets of 20 per form (B, C, and D).

You will also need to order enough copies of the Test Manual for your test administrators and scorers to read and review before and after testing. Next, you will want to contact your state's or funder's professional development office or coordinator to find out if the state requires BEST Literacy training.

BEST Literacy materials can be purchased online through the [CAL Store](#) or by calling 1-800-551-3709 from 10:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

Quick CAL Store Links:

Order the [BEST Literacy Test Manual](#).

Order [BEST Literacy Examinee Test Booklets](#)

Do students write in the BEST Literacy test booklets?

Yes. The students will write their answers in the test booklets. Test booklets are consumable and cannot be photocopied or reused.

Where do I find the BEST Literacy score sheets?

A total of 20 corresponding score sheets are included with each shrink-wrapped packet of 20 test booklets.

BEST Literacy General Questions

How do I score BEST Literacy?

BEST Literacy is scored using the corresponding scoring sheets enclosed with each packet of test booklets (Forms B, C, and D). The note-writing tasks are scored using the rubric found on page 22 of the BEST Literacy Test Manual.

Where can I find more information on scoring BEST Literacy?

A comprehensive list of example examinee responses for the reading and writing tasks can be found in the BEST Literacy Test Manual. In addition, benchmark samples for the note-writing tasks, including a complete set of writing samples for one task, can be found on pages 24 – 36 of the manual. These benchmark samples and the rubric can be used as a scoring calibration activity with your test scorers to improve scoring reliability. Additionally, you can use samples of your own students' work to do a scoring calibration activity.

Some states or programs require BEST Literacy training or offer BEST Literacy workshops. For more information, please contact your state's professional development coordinator or adult learning resource center.

Which form of BEST Literacy should be used for the pretest and which for the posttest?

BEST Literacy is available in three parallel forms: B, C, and D. Any of these forms can be used as a pretest as long as a different form is used for the posttest. For example, you can use form B as the pretest and either form C or D as the posttest.

What is the difference between BEST Literacy Forms B, C, and D?

BEST Literacy Forms B, C, and D contain different test questions to minimize test memorization and to provide comparable results between pretests and posttests. Each form is comparable once raw scores have been converted to scale scores. Raw scores must be converted to scale scores using the conversion charts in the BEST Literacy Test Manual. Only scale scores are a true representation of an examinee's proficiency level and are comparable across each form.

Which score should I use for reporting, the raw score or the scale score?

Only scale scores can be used for reporting as they are comparable across each form of BEST Literacy and have been standardized to the SPL and the NRS level descriptors.

How do I convert the raw scores into scale scores?

Conversion charts can be found in Appendix A of the BEST Literacy Test Manual.

What do I do if a student pretests into the Advanced NRS level or SPL 8 using BEST Literacy?

If an examinee pretests into the Advanced NRS level or SPL8, a different ESL assessment that measures higher reading and writing skills more accurately should be used. Any examinee who falls into this category at the time of pretesting should be re-tested with another appropriate reading and writing adult ESL assessment.

Does BEST Literacy give a score that says a student is ready to take BEST Plus 2.0?

No. Performance on BEST Literacy does not predict performance on BEST Plus 2.0. You may need to check with your state's assessment policy on how each assessment is to be used within your state.

What are appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities?

Laws such as the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and other related federal, state, and local laws were enacted to guarantee equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities, including those in educational programs. Programs administering BEST Literacy are responsible for providing accessible services and for ensuring that requests for accommodations are considered and handled in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations. Program and test administrators may provide and allow accommodations in test administration procedures or in the testing environment for individuals with disabilities, provided that the accommodations do not compromise the purpose or results of the test.

Permissible accommodations related to test administration procedures for BEST Literacy include the use of eyeglasses or magnifying glasses, earplugs, color overlays, or rulers. Testing environment accommodations might include frequent breaks or individual administrations. It is not an appropriate accommodation for someone to read the test questions to an examinee with sight impairment, as BEST Literacy is a test of reading, not listening.

For more information regarding test accommodations for students with disabilities, please see the BEST Literacy Test Manual.

How can I purchase BEST Literacy?

BEST Literacy materials can be purchased online through the [CAL Store](#) or by calling 1-800-551-3709 10:00 – 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

Order the [BEST Literacy Test Manual](#).

Order [BEST Literacy Examinee Test Booklets](#)

How can I find out more about the development of BEST Literacy?

CAL has a technical report available for BEST Literacy available for download as a PDF on our [website](#).

Questions: Email CAL at aea@cal.org.

Website: www.cal.org/aea

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