



BEST Plus 3.0 Test Usage Policy

BEST Plus 3.0 is an individually administered face-to-face scripted oral proficiency assessment that measures adult English language learners' ability to listen and speak in English in authentic situations in the United States. It was developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), a nonprofit organization located in Washington, D.C. The aim of the *BEST Plus 3.0 Test Usage Policy* is to explain the purpose, intended audience, appropriate uses, reasonable accommodations, pretesting and posttesting guidance, training requirements, and score interpretation of *BEST Plus 3.0*. You can also contact us to request information on the feasibility and cost of adapting *BEST Plus 3.0* for specific purposes or audiences, interpreting *BEST Plus 3.0* scores through a system other than those described here, or developing a test to meet your specific needs.

This *Test Usage Policy* is intended to provide general guidance only. CAL reserves the right to modify and update this policy at any time.

Assessment Purpose and Intended Audience

The purpose of *BEST Plus 3.0* is to assess the oral language proficiency (i.e., integrated listening and speaking skills) of adult English language learners. We define oral language proficiency as the underlying competencies that allow learners to perform communicative language functions that integrate both listening and speaking skills. *BEST Plus 3.0* assesses an English learner's ability to understand and use unrehearsed, conversational, everyday language within topic areas generally covered in adult English language courses.

Appropriate Uses

BEST Plus 3.0 is appropriate to use in the following ways:

- **For adults in the United States.** All *BEST Plus 3.0* test tasks and graphics were developed for adult English language learners in the United States. *BEST Plus 3.0* is

not designed for and should not be used with learners outside of the United States or those under the age of 16.

- **For educational purposes.** *BEST Plus 3.0* is intended to be used in educational settings. *BEST Plus 3.0* is designed as a standardized assessment for making placement decisions, instructional planning, and measuring the progress of adult English language learners enrolled in an instructional program in the United States. *BEST Plus 3.0* can also provide supporting evidence of the effectiveness of an instructional program based on pretesting and posttesting results.
- **For measuring speaking and listening skills.** *BEST Plus 3.0* is intended to measure the speaking and listening skills of adult English language learners communicating about conversational and academic content areas such as health, work, family, and recreation.
- **For interpreting learners' proficiency levels.** *BEST Plus 3.0* is aligned with the 2017 [National Reporting System \(NRS\) Educational Functioning Levels \(EFLs\)](#) for English as a Second Language learners. *BEST Plus 3.0* scores are not aligned with any other set of proficiency-level descriptors or other assessments. (See the Score Interpretations section of this policy for more information.)

Educational programs serving adult ELLs in the United States can use *BEST Plus 3.0* scores for placing students into appropriate classes, assessing student performances, planning instruction, evaluating program effectiveness, and complying with accountability reporting requirements.

***BEST Plus 3.0* can be used for the following:**

- **Placement decisions:** To evaluate the extent and nature of students' functional oral skills in English upon entry into a program. This information may be used to place students in appropriate classes.
- **Assessment of student progress:** To determine the progress of individual students in developing functional oral skills in English.
- **Instructional planning:** To plan courses and individualized learning activities based on students' oral skills.
- **Program evaluation:** To provide evidence of the effectiveness of an instructional program when used as a pretest and posttest.
- **Accountability reporting:** To report student progress within an accountability system such as the National Reporting System (NRS) for Adult Education.

Reasonable Accommodations

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 3.0* 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 *BEST Plus 3.0* test administrator cannot show the prompts on the screen or in the test booklet to a person who is hard of hearing or has an auditory processing disorder, nor may a sign language interpreter be used. A permissible accommodation for *BEST Plus 3.0* 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 3.0* 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 description tasks is not a reasonable accommodation for individuals with visual impairments.

Pretesting and Posttesting Guidance

CAL recommends that *BEST Plus 3.0* be given as a posttest after a minimum of **40 hours** or one semester of instruction following pre-testing. Learner- and program-related factors may warrant varying from these recommendations. Considerations can include course schedules, data indicating the point at which students generally leave programs, and knowledge that a particular student will be leaving a program. State or program administrators should consider these factors when writing assessment policies defining when *BEST Plus 3.0* should be given as a posttest. These recommendations are general guidelines that should be adapted for each state's specific situations. For programs receiving federal funding, *BEST Plus 3.0* should be administered as a posttest based on the requirements defined in their state's assessment policy.

In the event of external events such as noise (e.g., a fire alarm), power loss, or illness of the examinee or test administrator, the test should be stopped and the examinee's session

rescheduled for another time. It is strongly advised, however, that programs limit their retesting of students to within the ascribed instructional hours in order to accurately measure gain, limit test exposure, and reduce testing fatigue in students. For example, if students receive more than 40 hours of instruction, CAL does not recommend posttesting students at the 40-hour mark; rather, students should be tested at the end of the instructional period to avoid over-testing.

Initial Training Requirements

To ensure the accurate use and scoring of *BEST Plus 3.0*, all potential test administrators are required to complete CAL-approved training as well as read through the *BEST Plus 3.0 Test Administrator Guide* to become thoroughly familiar with the assessment. There are two training options available:

- Completing a self-access online *BEST Plus 3.0* Test Administrator Training Course
- Attending a workshop conducted by the CAL-approved *BEST Plus 3.0* trainer

As part of the training, each prospective test administrator needs to pass two calibration quizzes to demonstrate their scoring accuracy before they are certified. All newly certified test administrators must agree to follow all *BEST Plus 3.0* administration and scoring procedures exactly as explained in the *BEST Plus 3.0 Test Administrator Guide*.

Please note: Only trainers who have been certified by the Center for Applied Linguistics are authorized to train individuals to become *BEST Plus 3.0* test administrators.

Many factors can affect a test administrator's scoring accuracy, such as length of time between test administrations, lack of confidence in scoring accuracy, and other personal and program-related factors. *BEST Plus 3.0* test administrators should thus periodically recalibrate, or realign, their scoring to the original rubric and benchmarks. To do this, test administrators are encouraged to demonstrate their scoring accuracy by attending a refresher training workshop, engaging in self-study, completing a calibration quiz in the self-access training course, or using the CAL Test Platform's Practice feature. Local assessment policies may include guidelines or requirements for test administrator recalibration. For more information, contact your program's or state's adult education office.

Score Interpretation

BEST Plus 3.0 scores have been aligned with the [2017 National Reporting System \(NRS\) ESL Educational Functioning Levels \(EFLs\)](#). Therefore, the NRS EFL descriptors are the only ones that can be used to interpret *BEST Plus 3.0* scores. (For more detailed information on score

interpretation and NRS alignment, see the *BEST Plus 3.0 Test Administrator Guide*, Part 7). *BEST Plus 3.0* scores are not currently aligned with any other descriptors such as job functions, duties, or tasks, and should not be used for employment screening or other purposes that fall outside the purview of educational uses.

