

# WIAT-II Frequently Asked Questions



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## Word Reading

**Q: Do I use a stopwatch to identify when a response takes >3" on Word Reading?**

A: No, using a stopwatch may affect the automaticity feature of the test. Instead you can evaluate response time based on an informal technique (e.g., “one Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi”).

**Q: What do I do if a student is unable to read any, or very few, of the words on Word Reading?**

A: The student’s score will be based on the number of points he/she earns once the basal and discontinue rules have been applied. You may then “test the limits” by working backwards from Item 47 through the emerging literacy items related to phonological awareness, the alphabet principle (sound-symbol relationships), and letter identification. This practice allows you to identify strengths as well as weaknesses.

## Reading Comprehension

**Q: If a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student does not pass the reversal items in the Grade 4 item set, which item set should then be administered? When I reverse and administer the Grade 1 item set, the standard score seems high.**

A: This is a unique circumstance. When a 4th grade student reverses to the Grade 1 item set, he or she may receive an inflated score due to the easier items designed for 1<sup>st</sup> grade examinees. On pg. 59 of the updated Examiner's Manual, you will find the discussion and our recommendations on how to address this situation. The Grade 2 item set may be more appropriate in some circumstances.

**Q: What happens if I follow the reverse rule and go back 3 start points, but the student misses the reversal items on the reversed item set? Can I reverse again?**

A: No, you can reverse only once. The student's standard score will be based on his or her performance on the reversed item set. Remember that this score indicates the student's performance in comparison to age- or grade-mates and will typically reveal what he or she cannot do. To determine what the student can do, "test the limits" by administering some of the items from an earlier item set. For example, if a student reversed to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade item set but could not answer any of the items, first calculate his or her score based on the raw score of 0. Then, administer some of the beginning items to determine if he or she can comprehend single words, phrases, or short sentences (Items 1-14).

**Q: Why were item sets used instead of using basal and discontinue rules?**

A: The Reading Comprehension subtest was created using item sets that were designed to assess an adequate sample of the student's reading achievement, while attempting to minimize the number of reading passages required. The improved scoring procedures for the Reading Comprehension subtest take into account the difficulty level of the item sets, so it is not necessary to administer additional items to get a more accurate score. However, the examiner can decide whether to administer more items as a way of "testing the limits" in order to gain further qualitative information (for item analysis, for example). These additional item scores should not be used for normative purposes.

**Q: What are supplemental scores? Why are they in quartiles?**

A: Supplemental scores are additional pieces of information (apart from the standard scores) that can help in determining areas of strength or weakness. Quartiles provide general normative information; these scores are not intended to be used when determining eligibility. However, the use of quartiles for Reading Speed and Reading Comprehension can be very useful when used with the Reading Rate chart found near the end of the record form. The interpretation of the Reading Rate chart can be found in the Examiner's Manual.

The quartile scores can provide useful information to IEP teams as they consider the types of accommodations that may be necessary for students. For example, one common question is whether or not students are in need of additional time for state standardized testing. By evaluating the contrast between a student's performance

testing. By evaluating the contrast between a student's performance on reading speed and accuracy, more appropriate decisions can be made regarding additional time for testing.

**Q: I had to use the reverse rule for a student. Can I still calculate supplemental quartile scores for Target Words and Reading Speed? Why aren't age-based quartile scores available for students younger than age 14?**

A: Quartile scores can be calculated only for examinees who stayed within their grade-appropriate item set. Age-based scores are not available because students of the same age may be in different grades (and administered different item sets) and would thus be reading different sentences.

**Q: Why does the Target Word quartile jump from 2 to 4 with just a 1-point difference in raw score?**

A: If you examine the conversion table for Target Words in Appendix B or E of the scoring supplements, you'll notice there is a ceiling effect. The Reading Comprehension subtest is ecologically valid, assessing reading skills using words that are typically found in students' everyday reading material. Thus, for students who are of average ability, performance on Target Words is high.

**Q: I have a 5<sup>th</sup> grader who is reading at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level. Why should I start at the Grade 5 item set when I know she can't read at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level?**

A: As is typical of a regular classroom setting, each Reading Comprehension item set is designed to span a range of reading skills. The Grade 5 item set, for example, has reading passages designed at the Grade 4 reading level, some at Grade 5 reading level, and some at Grade 6 reading level.

For qualitative purposes and error analyses, an examiner may choose to "test the limits" and see how the student performs on items beyond the grade-appropriate item set. This is an acceptable practice, as long as the additional items are not used in calculating the standard score.

**Q: Can I discontinue testing if the student fails an entire reading passage?**

A: If the student scores 0 points on the first reading passage for the grade-appropriate item set, apply the reverse rule and administer the appropriate item set in its entirety. If the failure occurs in a passage later in the item set, encourage the student to continue. Because the difficulty level of items within a passage will vary, continuing administration of the item set may produce some successful responses. The mixed level of difficulty within a single passage was designed to keep the student engaged in the activity. In addition, the

designed to keep the student engaged in the activity. In addition, the items/questions following the Reading Sentences Aloud items might be easier than those following the passages for some students. For example, students who comprehend better when reading materials that are especially brief, or when they are read aloud, may perform significantly better on the Reading Sentences Aloud items.

**Q: Why aren't the reading passages printed on the examiner's manual or in the protocol? It would make scoring of reading errors easier.**

A: Including the reading passages would dramatically increase the size and complexity of the protocol and the stimulus booklet. During standardization, it was extremely rare for students to read these passages aloud. It was decided that it would be more advantageous for examiners to have more extensive scoring examples in the stimulus book than to have a reproduction of the reading passage. If necessary, the examiner can position him/herself so that he/she can observe the passage while the student is reading it.

**Q: With the Reading Comprehension scoring and norming update, is it possible for a student who reverses to an earlier item set (and performs very well) to have a higher standard score than a student who stays in the grade-appropriate item set but performs poorly?**

A: The Reading Comprehension subtest norms were updated in the fall, 2001. The updated norming takes into account the difficulty level of the items within each item set. If a student performs very well, even on a reversed item set, the scaled score will be within the normal range.

The new norms for Reading Comprehension no longer allow you to assume that items below the administered item set would have all been answered correctly, nor that items above the item set (even following the reverse rule) would have all been answered incorrectly. Examining item level performance (for example, through error analysis on the WIAT-II scoring software) can provide more specific information on the student's strengths.

**Q: I am administering Reading Comprehension to a very low functioning student. He has reversed to the appropriate item set but is unable to correctly answer any of the questions in the reversed item set. When can I discontinue and how do I explain a standard score that is based on 0 correct responses?**

It is appropriate to use your professional judgment when a student is obviously unable to perform and test rapport is at risk. Be careful not to discontinue based on the performance on the first passage. Some students will be able to earn points on the Reading Sentences Aloud items that follow passages as these items are brief and are

Aloud items that follow passages as these items are brief and are read aloud.

**Q: If it is clear that a student is not reading the passage (e.g., he is scanning it), should I record the Reading Speed score?**

A: No. Reading Speed should be calculated only when the student is actively engaged in the reading process.

**Q: How should I score the reading comprehension answers when the student provided the answers in a very non-traditional manner? The student spelled a few key words from the passage that were indicative of some correct responses, but that's all that the student could do.**

A: If the student is having trouble with proper names (e.g., Tamiko, Baobab), spelling out or pointing to those words is acceptable. However, this type of response is not acceptable for any other words.

### **Pseudoword Decoding**

**Q: I have a student in Grade 1 who received a raw score of 0 on the Pseudoword Decoding subtest, but still received a standard score of 79. Why doesn't the scale go down to 40?**

A: The scale has a natural floor for the earlier grades because the construct that is being measured in this subtest develops later than other reading-related constructs (Word Reading for example).

When analyzing data for first grade children, it is suggested that the Word Reading subtest will provide the best sample of basic reading skills as it contains the prerequisite skills required for successful performance on the more difficult task of Pseudoword Decoding.

**Q: How do I know when the student is pronouncing the pseudowords properly?**

A: There is a pronunciation guide on the record form. Furthermore, the WIAT-II kit contains the Pseudoword audiotape that lets you hear the correct pronunciations. Listen to the tape before you administer the test; however, do not let the examinee hear the audiotape.

### **Reading Skills**

**Q: Which subtest is a good indicator of a basic reading deficiency?**

A: A low score in EITHER Word Reading or Pseudoword Decoding is indicative of a Basic Reading deficit. This is based on

Decoding is indicative of a Basic Reading deficit. This is based on the research model of testing reading at all levels of language. Please see related information regarding the comparison of Pseudoword Decoding and Word Reading for students in Grade 1.

**Q: Can I provide a student a place marker for the Word Reading and Pseudoword Decoding subtests?**

A: You may provide these accommodations only to “test the limits” after the test has been administered under standard conditions (which do not use these aids). Students may use their fingers to help keep their place during standard testing.

## **Math Reasoning**

**Q: Can the student use a calculator on Math Reasoning?**

A: You must first follow standardized procedures when administering the subtest. Then, you may “test the limits” by allowing the student to work some problems using a calculator. This qualitative information may help you determine if using a calculator might be an appropriate modification for a student when the learning task is not dependent on calculation.

## **Spelling**

**Q: When scoring the spelling subtest do letter reversals indicate an incorrect response?**

A: Letter reversals for young children (up to Grade 1) can still be counted as correct, provided the reversed/inverted letters cannot be confused with another letter (e.g., b vs. d). Thus, a reversed letter "c" would be correct, whereas a "b" written in place of a "d" would not be. There is some degree of examiner judgment required in order to assess the child's spelling ability. If the child clearly knows how to spell the word but can't write the letters correctly, the examiner should use clinical judgment and perhaps query the child for clarification.

**Q: If children misspell either their first or last name are they still given credit for that item?**

A: The directions state that the child must print his/her first and last name. The first and last name should be spelled correctly (with the first letter of the name capitalized), with the rare exception of extremely long or unusually spelled names.

## Alphabet Writing

**Q: Why do the scaled scores I calculate for Written Expression seem inflated for Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students?**

A: Examiners can sometimes be too lenient when scoring the alphabet writing task. It is imperative that examiners strictly adhere to the scoring rules in the supplement to obtain a representative score for this subtest.

**Q: If a child skips a letter in writing the alphabet, do the subsequent letters still receive credit?**

A: Those letters should receive 1 point as long as the subsequent letters are correctly formed and are in correct sequence.. For example, "b, c, e, g, h" receives 5 points, because all letters are in the correct *sequence* of the alphabet. If the child wrote, "b, e, i, g, h," the child would get 4 points for b, e, and g, and h, provided the letters were written correctly.

## Written Expression

**Q: When entering scores in the scoring assistant, do I enter the quartile score or the raw score?**

A: Always enter the raw score. The computer program will make all necessary conversions. This is true for all subtests.

**Q: Can we give credit if a child writes “pizza” as a round object even though that is the sample item given in the directions?**

A: No, do not give credit for the sample item.

**Q: Can we give credit for round objects that are questionable?**

A: Things that are typically round should be given credit. However, if there is a question about an item, you should query the child to ensure the child means a round object.

**Q: Why do the scoring rubrics only include a few of the types of errors that can occur? How do we indicate errors that are not included in the scoring rubrics?**

A: We had experts in the area of writing instruction and assessment advise us during the Written Expression subtest development. The scoring rubrics were based on information gathered from the standardization sample, and were based on criteria that were most discriminating between high-performing and low-performing students. Because some grammatical errors were common among all

students. Because some grammatical errors were common among all students (and did not distinguish between high- and low-performing students), these errors were not included in the scoring rubrics.

**Q: I am administering Written Expression to a very low functioning student who will not be able to write an essay. Can I administer the PK-6 items instead?**

A: The student's standard score for Written Expression is based on his or her performance on the assigned grade-appropriate items. You should attempt to administer the Grades 7-16 items. Some students will be able to earn points on Word Fluency and Sentences even when they cannot write a persuasive essay. Once you have scored the subtest based on the grade-appropriate items, you may "test the limits" by administering the paragraph item and evaluating performance qualitatively.

**Q: The student wrote the paragraph/essay in all capital letters; how do I score that?**

A: There is no penalty for unnecessary capitalization. Capitalization errors are counted only when capitalization is missing from a proper noun, the first word of a sentence, or the personal pronoun *I*.

## Oral Expression

**Q: For the Word Fluency items, should I give the student credit for stating the sample items?**

A: The student's verbatim use of words that were part of the prompt should not be credited as correct. For Word Fluency B, a variation of the prompt (e.g., ride a horse) can be credited.

**Q: Must I record responses on Visual Passage Retell and Giving Directions verbatim?**

No. When you first begin to administer WIAT II, you may wish to tape record responses for later scoring until you become comfortable with the scoring rules. Once you learn the scoring procedure, you should be able to score responses as the student provides them. On occasion, when testing a student with a significant language problem, you may want to record his or her response verbatim. Space is provided on the record form.

## Age Equivalent Versus Grade Equivalent

**Q: How can you have two subtests with the same standard score, but one grade equivalent is 2 grades higher than the other?**

**grade equivalent is 2 grades higher than the other?**

A: Age and Grade equivalencies have different patterns depending upon the academic and developmental progression of the subtest. It is entirely possible that two subtests with the same standard score can yield very different age/grade equivalencies. What you will notice in reviewing the grade and age equivalence tables is that the progression of scores varies by each subtest.

Examiners are cautioned about the use of age and grade equivalents in Chapter 7 of the Examiner's Manual.

**Q: According to Table D.4, my Grade 7.5 student has a grade equivalent of 3.0 on Pseudoword Decoding. Does this mean that the student decodes nonsense words at the level of a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader?**

A: No, because a grade equivalent simply indicates how someone else in that grade would perform on the items given. There is a section in Chapter 7 of the Examiner's Manual that details some of the limitations of grade and age equivalents.

**Q: Why are there no age or grade equivalents provided for the composite scores?**

A: Grade equivalent and Age equivalent scores are not provided for composites because as standard scores, they have already been equated by grade/age. When the composite or subtest scaled scores are normed they are based on age/grade norms, and therefore cannot have an attached age/grade equivalent. Hence, the raw scores must be used to determine age/grade equivalents.

The original WIAT has composite age/grade equivalents because the composites are based on the sums of subtest raw scores.

**Q: What is the difference between Grade equivalent scores and Standard Scores?**

A: In essence, grade equivalents and standard scores are based on different scales and different comparisons: grade equivalents tell you the grade at which the score obtained is an average one; the standard score tells you how the student compares to his or her peers. You'll also notice in Table D.4 of the normative supplement that for each subtest, the developmental and academic progression varies considerably. For example, a raw score of 43 in Pseudoword Decoding yields a grade equivalent of 6:0, yet three more raw score points yields a grade equivalent of 8:2. On other subtests, raw scores can vary by as much as 3 points and still yield the same grade equivalent. In general, grade and age equivalents work best when the construct being described increases with grade/age at a rapid

the construct being described increases with grade/age at a rapid pace. When the progression plateaus, a one-point difference in raw scores can yield very different grade equivalents. For the most part, grade equivalent scores and standard scores should fall on the same side of the score distributions (i.e., students with grade equivalent scores below actual grade level typically have a standard score below 100; students with grade equivalent scores above actual grade level typically have a standard score above 100).

With that in mind, the grade equivalent scores related to the standard scores are accurate.

## **Age or Grade-based Scores**

### **Q: Should I use age-based or grade-based scoring?**

A: The examiner must decide which score is appropriate for his/her purposes. If the purpose is to determine ability-achievement discrepancy, age-based scores are recommended as "best practice." If the purpose is to compare the student's scores with those of peers in the same grade, grade-based scores should be used. We do not recommend one score over another. We provide both sets of scores because some school districts prefer one over the other. It is best practice to discuss decision-making with the examiner's supervisor or school district diagnostic personnel, as districts have their own criteria for what types of scores are appropriate to report.

### **Q: Why are some grade norms and age norms very discrepant?**

A: This is a common occurrence, as a single age spans 2 grade levels. For example the 8-year-old sample includes children from both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades. In addition, grade norms include children of the same instruction level, but of differing ages. This discrepancy is present in the original WIAT partly because of increased variance in performance that can allow the discrepancy to be larger (particularly with younger children/earlier grades).

### **Q: Why do I have to use age norms for a 4-year-old and can't use the grade norms for Pre-Kindergarten?**

A: Norms go down to age 4 and "grade" Pre-Kindergarten because the WIAT-II provides age norms for 4-year-olds and for Pre-kindergarteners who are aged 5. There are no grade-based norms for Pre-Kindergarten students aged 4 because there were insufficient numbers of 4-year-olds in the standardization sample that were enrolled in a class with a pre-kinder curriculum (most were in day-care or preschool, but not specifically pre-kinder).

## General Questions

**Q: Why is the maximum score included for all ages when it is unlikely that some students (particularly the younger ones) could receive raw scores that high?**

A: The upper limit was included for those instances in which a student is academically gifted and/or young for grade.

**Q: How can standard scores be generated for raw scores of 0 on the WIAT-II subtests? How does this affect the Composite score?**

A: The reason for providing standard scores for raw scores of 0 are to provide anchor points for the distribution. As for composite scores, it is extremely rare that a student would score 0 on all the subtests that comprise the composite score. Also, keep in mind that the composite scores are calculated based upon the sum of the subtest standard scores that make up the composite. With the exception of Pseudoword Decoding for the very young student, there is sufficient floor in all of the subtests where a raw score of 0 is reflected by a low standard score.

**Q: Why are the point differences between predicted achievement and actual achievement that are needed for statistical significance so much smaller with the WIAT-II as compared to the original WIAT?**

A: Some of the difference in tabled values is the result of improved reliability of some of the WIAT-II subtests (the better the reliability of the subtest, the smaller the difference required to reach statistical significance). However, the majority of the difference is attributable to a change in one aspect of the statistical formula used to calculate statistically significant differences between predicted and actual achievement scores.

The change in formula is discussed in the WIAT-II Updated Examiner's Manual on page 157, where it is stated: "Users of the WIAT will note the similarity of formulas presented here but also that the calculations of extreme discrepancies (The Psychological Corporation, 1992, p. 188) are no longer included, in favor of the more widely used standard error of the residual."

"Calculation" or recognition of a "severe" discrepancy must still be based on statistical, as well as clinical significance. Base rate information, as included in the WIAT-II Manual and Scoring Assistants, help to document the rarity of discrepancies. When a discrepancy is reviewed for eligibility for special education services, all local and state special education regulations should also be considered

considered.

**Q: What is Item Response Theory (IRT) and why was Reading Comprehension changed to use it?**

A: IRT allowed us to weigh each item in the grade level for difficulty. The difficult items for Grade 1 are the easy items for Grade 2. IRT was a statistical method that allowed us to represent these differences and ensure that scores were not being underestimated for the lower functioning students.

**Q: Why is there no space for raw scores on the summary page?**

A: This was discussed in the preliminary design phase of the protocol. It was decided that placing an area for raw scores on the summary page would increase the likelihood that the previous WIAT procedure, summing the raw scores from each of the contributing subtests to calculate the composite score, would be followed rather than the new WIAT-II procedure, summing the standard scores of the subtests to calculate the composite scores. The raw scores appear on the Total Raw Score Conversion Worksheet. The record form booklet is designed in such a way that the back page opens so as to present the Total Raw Score Conversion Worksheet beside the Summary Report page. Then, it is a simple step to convert raw scores to grade or age scaled scores.

