



ACCESS & Alternate ACCESS

Missing Domain Scores Due to Disability

When taking the ACCESS for ELLs test, English learners (EL) with disabilities are sometimes unable to participate in all four domain tests (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing) due to the lack of an appropriate accommodation. In these circumstances, the absence of one or more domain scores will prevent the student from receiving an overall composite score, which is needed to evaluate a student's progress toward proficiency and to eventually exit the student from a Language Instruction Education Program (LIEP).

An EL with a disability that precludes the student from taking one or more domains of the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS tests and for whom there are no appropriate accommodations for the affected domain(s) may be exempt from the affected domain(s). IEP teams must review the ACCESS accommodations [checklist](#) along with the administrative considerations and universal tools to verify that none of the allowable accommodations will allow the student to access the language domain on the assessment. The student must, however, be assessed on the remaining domains in which it is possible to assess the student.

This document provides guidance to determine whether a student is eligible for a domain exemption, instructions on how to document the exemption on the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS tests, and resources to calculate overall composite scores for students with missing domain scores including link to a RIDE tool that will calculate an overall composite score and determine whether a student has met the minimum exit criteria to exit from an LIEP.

Guidance criteria for making a determination on domain exemptions:

In order for a student to be exempt from a domain on ACCESS, the student must meet Criteria 1 below and at least one of the criteria for a language domain.

Criteria 1:

- The IEP team has documented on the assessment accommodations page that the student has a documented disability that impacts one or more of the relevant language domains and that there are no available accommodations that will allow the student to participate in that language domain subtest on the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessments.
- The student continues to receive support around their communication needs. Communication goals should be reflected in the Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance, Goals, and any Assistive technology equipment should be described in general, non-specific terms under the "Supplementary Aids/Services; Modifications; Accommodations" section.

In addition to meeting Criteria 1, the student must also meet at least one of the criteria below.

1. **Speaking Domain Exemption.** The student has a documented disability that affects their ability to speak independently and has not yet learned to use a communication system. This exempts the student from the speaking domain until the student has a communication system.
 - IEP teams must include evidence that the lack of speaking is a diagnosed disability (i.e. selective mutism*) and not due to the silent period of language acquisition. It is widely recognized that some ELs will delay speaking in various social settings until they feel more confident in their English skills.
2. **Listening Domain Exemption.** The student has documented deafness or severe hearing impairment and does not use technology to hear (cochlear implant, hearing aid, etc.). This exempts the student from the listening domain only as there are no allowable accommodations that can be provided for the listening domain test unless the student uses technology to hear. Sign systems may not be used during the administration of the listening domain.
3. **Reading Domain Exemption.** The student has a documented disability, such as blindness or severe vision impairment, that affects their ability to read without assistance and the student does not yet read braille or use an assistive technology device or program. This exempts the student from the reading domain until the student learns to read braille and/or uses an assistive technology device or program.
4. **Writing Domain Exemption.** The student has a documented disability that affects their ability to write without assistance and the student does not yet use an assistive technology device or program or a human scribe. This exempts the student from the writing domain until the student uses an assistive technology device or program and/or a scribe.

Documenting domain exemption on the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS Tests:

The untested domain(s) must be designated with a “Do Not Score” code of “SPD” on the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS test. For instructions on recording this code please review the ACCESS Test Administrator Manual. This code should only be used for students with a disability who meet the criteria described above. This code cannot be used for students who miss a domain for any other reason (e.g., absent on day of testing, declined to test, unenrolled from school).

Calculating overall composite scores with less than four domains:

Students who do not attempt all four domains on the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS tests do not receive an overall composite scaled score or overall composite performance level on their Individual Student Reports (ISR). Several methods for calculating an overall scaled score for students with less than four domains were described and recommended by WIDA¹. RIDE developed a tool (**Exit Request - Missing Domain**) that computes an Overall Composite Scale Score based on the “Model 2: Assign the Average Observed Domain Score” method described in WIDA’s report. The tool also determines whether a student meets the minimum exit criteria to exit from an LIEP.

¹ Porter, T., Cook, H. G., & Sahakyan N. (2019). Less than four domains: Creating an overall composite score as an indicator of English language proficiency for English learners with 504 or individualized education plans (WCER Working Paper No. 2019-3). Retrieved from University of Wisconsin–Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research website: <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/publications/working-papers>

Please refer to the **Multilingual Learners (MLL) students' Identification, Screening, Placement and Reclassification** document for EL reclassification criteria. The RIDE provided tool (**Exit Request - Missing Domain**) must be used to determine whether a student is eligible to exit from an LIEP.

* Selective mutism must be formally diagnosed and does not automatically qualify a student for a domain exemption.