Frequently Asked Questions about Achieve3000’s LevelSet™ Assessment

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UNDERSTANDING LEXILES and the LEXILE FRAMEWORK

What is the Lexile Framework?
The Lexile Framework is a scientific approach to reading and text measurement that has become the most widely adopted reading measure in use today. Developed by MetaMetrics, beginning with a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in 1984, Lexile measures are the result of more than 20 years of ongoing research.

The Lexile Framework is unique because it measures text difficulty and reader ability on the same scale. This makes for an exceptionally effective matching of readers to appropriate texts. The Lexile Framework has been aligned to many national and state norm-referenced assessments, including the Common Core. In 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) chose the Lexile Framework as its own measure of text difficulty. For more information go to www.lexile.com/about-lexile/How-to-get-lexile-measures/
Lexile measures are based on the relationship between two well-established predictors of how difficult a text is to comprehend: semantic difficulty and syntactic complexity. In the Lexile system, semantic difficulty is measured using the mean log word frequency, which is the logarithm of the number of times a word from the text appears in each five-million words of a corpus of nearly 600-million words. Syntactic difficulty is a measure of the length of the sentences in a passage. Long sentences are likely to contain more clauses and therefore communicate not only more information and ideas, but also an interrelationship between them. Researchers also speculate that longer sentences require the reader to retain more information in short-term memory. The Lexile equation takes into account both the measurement of word frequency and sentence length, resulting in a measure of reading difficulty expressed as a Lexile. For more information, visit the Metametrics website at http://lexile.com.

Why did Achieve3000 choose the Lexile Framework for Reading?
Achieve3000 chose to use the Lexile Framework after an intensive study of many readability measures. Since the Lexile Framework has been extensively validated by research—including a 15-year study funded by the National Institute of Health—Achieve3000 and the education community are confident in its superior ability to match readers to text.

A key advantage to using the Lexile scales, as opposed to other readability measures, is that the Lexile Framework evaluates both text difficulty and reader ability using the same scale. This means the ability to comprehend and the material being read are evaluated using the same criteria, lending it greater effectiveness in terms of matching readers with appropriate texts.

Is the LevelSet assessment considered a norm-referenced test or a criterion-referenced test?
LevelSet is a criterion-referenced assessment. The test measures mastery of specific reading skills and this facilitates matching appropriately-leveled reading materials to students. In addition, the Multiple-Choice Activities in Achieve3000 are used in a criterion-reference manner, measuring comprehension of the materials.

Since LevelSet is not a norm-referenced assessment, how do I interpret the reading levels shown on reports next to Lexile scores?
Given that Lexile scores are expressed in numbers that may be unfamiliar, Achieve3000 provides an approximate reading level to help orient you. For example, a student may complete LevelSet and receive a score of 6/910L. This suggests his reading abilities are roughly equal to that of a sixth-grade student. Please note that this approximate reading level is not a grade equivalent or norm-referenced score. Rather, it is intended to help you understand, in numbers familiar to them, approximately where on the Lexile scale a student has scored.

How Does Achieve3000 use students' Lexile Levels?
Achieve3000 uses Lexile levels to scientifically match students to an appropriately-leveled passage. Students receive a Lexile measure initially from the LevelSet pre-test assessment. From that point on, their Lexile levels are adjusted on the 1st of each month by the system as they work through the program.

In much the same way as Achieve measures each student’s Lexile level, each reading passage is assigned a discrete Lexile measure, thereby placing students and text on the same Lexile scale.

Achieve3000 then uses this information to match readers to text. When a student logs in, the system automatically finds the content that most closely matches her Lexile level. The student will generally receive an article that is no more than 50 points above her Lexile level. In this way, students read about the same topics as their classmates, but the difficulty level of the passage is tailored to their individual Lexile levels. For example, in a 6th-grade class, Frances has a Lexile level of 960L, while her classmate has a Lexile level of 770L. Their reading selections will be about the same current news event, but the level of the passage presented will be at different Lexile levels. In this way, both students read a “tailor made” article. Content in Achieve3000 Solutions ranges from approximately -600L to over 1350L.
Students in the Beginning Reading (BR) range of 1L-289L will require additional assistance when reading the content. They may get this assistance through use of the audio support or through teacher intervention.

This method leads to an expected 75% comprehension rate—the content is not too difficult to be frustrating, but difficult enough to be challenging and to encourage reading progress. We encourage you to monitor student performance to ensure that students are scoring above 75% on the multiple-choice activities.

How are Lexiles reviewed and updated throughout the school year?
If a student has completed at least four Multiple-Choice Activities in a given month, the system has enough information to evaluate the student’s Lexile level to ensure the student is properly placed. The system examines students’ responses on the Multiple-Choice Activities and combines that with information it already knows about the student to yield an updated Lexile score. Sometimes the Lexile stays the same, suggesting the student is properly placed. An increase in Lexile suggests the student gained reading skills. This might result in more difficult content being delivered to the student to match her progressing reading level.

How does the system combine Multiple-Choice Activity performance and past information about the student to arrive at an updated Lexile?
The formula used to update student Lexile levels is known as a Bayesian algorithm. Bayesian methodology is a statistical approach for controlling the level of uncertainty in predicting a student’s score by incorporating the student’s prior scores into an adjustment to the current score. The more confident we are about the prior information, the lower the uncertainty and the smaller is the standard deviation of the prior information (Yen and Fitzpatrick, 2006). The result is that the adjusted score is a more accurate measure of the student’s “true” ability level. Because it is a complex algorithm that relies on statistical probabilities, it may be difficult to understand why the system makes adjustments for some students and not others. As a general rule of thumb, students need to score above 75% on the Activities to increase their Lexile score in any given month.

When I look at the Multiple-Choice Activity report, one of my students has a superscript number next to an Activity score. What does this mean?
Achieve3000 informs teachers when a Multiple-Choice Activity is completed in one of three potentially invalid ways: too fast, too slow, or with a patterned response (e.g., all As). Activities completed in less than two minutes and more than 13 minutes will result in an alert, as will activities completed with a patterned response. Any activity identified as potentially invalid will not count toward the monthly review of students’ Lexiles. You should have a follow-up conversation with students after seeing an alert to ensure best efforts on the Multiple-Choice Activities.

How long will I have each month to review Lexile scores that are suggested to decline and decide how to handle them?
You have one week to review Lexile scores that are suggested to decline. If you do not review and act upon scores that are suggested to decline, the student’s Lexile will remain the same as the previous month.

My students’ Lexile scores from Achieve3000 aren't the same as the Lexiles they have received on other assessments. How do I know which one is correct?
When comparing two tests that are designed to measure reading ability, the tests may result in different scores. There are a few reasons this occurs. Every test has a margin of error, known as measurement error. Error can result from many things, including factors related to the individual students, the testing situation, and many other sources. For example, sometimes a student may know the answers, but she is tired, distracted, or nervous; or, the student may misunderstand the test instructions. Essentially, this means that no test can provide a perfectly accurate measure of student reading. Indeed, because of normal measurement error, it is highly unlikely for a student to receive identical Lexile measures even if he/she takes the same test twice.
You should review all of a student’s reading assessments, rather than focusing on only one measure. This will give a better understanding of a student’s reading ability and can help make instructional decisions.

**LEVELSET ASSESSMENT - ADMINISTRATION**

**When is LevelSet administered?**
LevelSet is administered once at the beginning of the school year (or the first time students log in), and again at the end of the school year. The assessment displays automatically, and students cannot enter the Achieve3000 program until it is completed. Some students will complete a mid-year interim assessment. This includes students with Lexiles below 50L, those whose Lexiles haven’t been updated for four months after completion of 40 activities, and those who are attending schools with monthly Lexile updates disabled. Sites that need a mid-year assessment for federal, state, or grant requirements can request an interim test be given by contacting Customer Support at 877.235.2525.

**What are the dates for LevelSet administration for the 2012–2013 school year?**
- **Pre-Test:** The pre-test is available the first time a student logs in and remains available until the student completes it.
- **Interim Test:** The interim test is administered to the following students:
  - Students who score below 50L on the LevelSet pre-test and have Lexile levels below 50L.
  - Students who have not had a monthly Lexile update for four months and have completed 40 activities. For example, if a student’s Lexile is kept the same for four or more months due to the teacher overriding suggested Lexile decreases, that student should complete an Interim test.
  - Students in schools that have disabled the monthly Lexile updates. Beginning the Sunday after Thanksgiving and up to the second Sunday in February, the system automatically reviews implementation data and schedules the interim test as appropriate. You will receive notification two weeks prior to the Interim test date. You can change the test date by contacting Customer Support at 877.235.2525.
- **Post-Test:** Administration of the Post-Test begins in late spring. Starting this school year, you will be able to select the post-test date that works best with your schedule. For more on this and other important Achieve3000 dates, download our 2012–2013 School Year Calendar.

**How do I assign LevelSet to my students for the first time?**
You do NOT need to assign LevelSet. The assessment is automatically delivered to students when they first log in to Achieve3000. The test is only available to students during school hours or the time range you set.

**What can I do to prepare my students to take LevelSet?**
It is very important for you to adequately prepare students and the testing environment for LevelSet. Students should be well-rested and motivated to try their best. The test environment should be quiet, and computers should be ready and working. These tactics will help ensure test scores accurately reflect student reading levels.

**How many questions are on the test?**
Achieve3000 provides five versions of LevelSet in both English and Spanish. Each version has 30 questions. To ensure students complete test items that are appropriate for their reading levels, the system will adapt to an easier version of the test if several successive items are missed. Most students will receive 30 questions, but some students may receive less (or more) depending on how they answer the questions.

For the Post-Test, all students will receive the test according to their current Lexile Level (rather than grade level).
How can I give a student a different version of the test?
If you believe that your student would benefit from being administered a different version of the test (for example, an easier version for a student reading far below grade level), you can manually set the test version for individual students by editing the student Academic Profile. For example, if you have a 10th-grade student reading at a 3rd-grade reading level, you may want to administer an easier version of LevelSet to avoid a frustrating test experience for the student. You can change the LevelSet Grade Level to the 1–4 version, so she will not receive the level 9–12 assessment when logging in for the first time. To make this adjustment, go to:
- ADMIN > User Administration > Edit student and teacher information.
- Select the student you wish to reset.
- Scroll to the bottom of the screen and select LevelSet Grade Level.
- Any changes made to a student profile must be submitted (saved) for them to take place.

How do I assign LevelSet in Spanish?
If you have a student who will take LevelSet in Spanish, you must assign that student to the Language Edition -- Full Spanish. The Spanish version of the assessment is then automatically delivered to the student.

How do dual language students take LevelSet?
If you have students who will use Achieve3000 in both English and Spanish, they will need to take the test once in English and once in Spanish. As you set up your class, be sure to mark the class “DUAL LANGUAGE.” When the student first logs in, a drop-down menu will appear for the class in English (default) and the class in Spanish. Students will need to click the English class to see LevelSet in English. Students should then click the Spanish Class to take the assessment in Spanish.

After students have completed the assessment, how do I see the results?
As soon as one student in any of your classes finishes LevelSet, the top left bulletin board on the Teacher’s Edition Home page will display the following message: “LevelSet scores are available!” This message will remain available as long as any student in any of your classes has taken LevelSet within the past three weeks. This message is a reminder to check your students’ LevelSet scores and act upon any that don’t match what you know about students’ reading abilities.

After I click on the link about available LevelSet scores, I see a message about LevelSet scores that need my immediate review. What does this mean?
We inform teachers if a LevelSet test is completed in a potentially invalid way. There are three reasons a test can be flagged as invalid: if it is completed too quickly (in less than five minutes), too slowly (in more than 60 minutes), or with a patterned-response-type behavior (for example, the student answered A to every question, or alternated A and B). You can see which students completed a LevelSet test in a potentially invalid way using the Possibly Invalid LevelSet Administrations report. You should have a conversation with these students to ensure an honest good-faith effort was made on the test. If you believe the score to be invalid, you may request a LevelSet re-administration by contacting Customer Support. You can reduce the number of students with potentially invalid scores by preparing students and the test environment for LevelSet testing. Please refer to these resources located in the Lexiles and LevelSet Learning Path:
- How Do I Prepare My Students for LevelSet?
- LevelSet Administration Guide: A Tool for Helping Your Students to Do their Best on LevelSet

How often may I re-administer LevelSet?
LevelSet may be re-administered once per student per testing occasion (e.g., Pre-Test is one testing occasion).

May I change a student’s Lexile/reading level after completion of LevelSet?
Yes. You may change student Lexile/reading levels for three weeks following completion of LevelSet. Please note that the LevelSet score itself cannot be changed. Lexile/reading levels should only be...
changed with good reason; for example, it was discovered that the student did not wear his glasses the day of the test and could not see the items. After the three-week window, changes to reading levels must be completed by contacting Customer Support. As noted above, preparing students and the test environment for the LevelSet assessment will reduce the number of reading-level changes teachers need to complete. Please refer to these resources located in the Lexiles and LevelSet Learning Path:

- How Do I Prepare My Students for LevelSet?
- LevelSet Administration Guide: A Tool for Helping Your Students to Do their Best on LevelSet

Reference