

STUDENT GUIDE TO GRADUATION



To receive a Texas high school diploma, you must complete all the necessary coursework for graduation and pass all parts of the exit level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (also called TAKS).

The exit level TAKS includes four subject areas: English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The test is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, which is the curriculum that your teachers use every day in the classroom.

The first time you will take the exit level TAKS is in the spring of your 11th-grade year. If you pass all parts of the test on your first try, you will have fulfilled your testing requirement for graduation. However, if you do not pass one or more subject-area tests, you will have several opportunities to retake those tests.

The English Language Arts TAKS test includes English III and writing. The ELA test has been developed to accurately measure how well you read and write.



How will the material be tested?

The 11th grade exit level English Language Arts test is a combination reading and writing exam, covering six objectives. Your score is based on how well you do on both parts of the test. On the test you will answer multiple-choice and short answer questions based on two published reading selections and a visual representation, write a composition on a specific topic, and answer multiple-choice revising and editing questions based on passages that resemble student writing.

Your score on the composition section represents how well you respond in writing to a specific prompt. Scores range from 1 to 4. The meaning of each score is listed below:

- A score of 1 = *an ineffective response*
- A score of 2 = *a somewhat effective response*
- A score of 3 = *a generally effective response*
- A score of 4 = *a highly effective response*

To pass the English Language Arts test, you must score at least a 2 on the composition.

What tools can you use on the test?

You may use both an English language dictionary and a thesaurus on the reading and composition sections of the test, but not on the revising and editing section. You may use a dictionary or thesaurus that your school provides, or you may use your own.

What courses should you take to be prepared?

You should have successfully completed English I and II, and you should either be enrolled in or have completed English III before taking the exit level ELA.

Assessment of the mathematics skills at the exit level covers both Algebra I and geometry. The test has been developed to assess how well you understand algebra and geometry and how well you can apply this understanding to the real world.



How will the material be tested?

The exit level mathematics test covers ten objectives. On this test you will answer both multiple-choice questions and open-ended griddable questions. Any item requiring the ruler on the mathematics chart or the use of pi, estimation, or reasonableness will be assessed only in multiple-choice format.

You will use an answer grid like the one at right for all griddable questions. This grid has eight columns, including three decimal places: tenths, hundredths, and thousandths. If, for example, the answer to a griddable question was 105.67, you would fill in the grid as shown.

	1	0	5	.	6	7	
0	0	●	0		0	0	0
1	●	1	1		1	1	1
2	2	2	2		2	2	2
3	3	3	3		3	3	3
4	4	4	4		4	4	4
5	5	5	●		5	5	5
6	6	6	6		●	6	6
7	7	7	7		7	●	7
8	8	8	8		8	8	8
9	9	9	9		9	9	9

What tools can you use on the test?

A mathematics chart will be provided with measurement conversions on the front and formulas on the back. There are also two rulers on the front of the mathematics chart: the ruler on the left edge is given in metric form and the ruler on the right edge is in customary form.

For the exit level mathematics test, you must have a graphing calculator during the entire test administration. You may use any graphing calculator except one with a computer-style keypad (known as QWERTY) or one that includes a computer algebra system (CAS). You may not use a handheld minicomputer, a digital personal assistant, or a laptop computer.

What courses should you take to be prepared?

To satisfy graduation requirements, you must take both Algebra I and geometry. Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, all incoming freshmen must be enrolled under the Recommended High School Plan. Under the Recommended plan, Algebra II is the third mathematics credit necessary for graduation. Taking Algebra II will further strengthen your mathematics skills.

To view the TEKS for Algebra I and Geometry, go to www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter111/ch111c.html#111.32 and www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter111/ch111c.html#111.34

Knowledge of science on TAKS includes biology, chemistry and physics concepts. The test emphasizes process skills, since they are essential to scientific investigation, and science content.



How will the material be tested?

The exit level science test covers five objectives. On the test you will answer both multiple-choice and open-ended griddable questions. Some multiple-choice items will be written as part of a cluster. Cluster items will integrate knowledge from two or more TAKS science objectives. In addition, a limited number of items will be griddable, requiring you to bubble responses on grids that are the same as those used on the 11th grade TAKS mathematics test.

Other multiple-choice or griddable items will assess your understanding of how to choose and work with the tools, equipment, and materials you have used in laboratory work and field experiences. You will interpret illustrations; determine linear measurements; and read masses from balances, volumes from graduated cylinders, and temperatures from thermometers.

What tools can you use on the test?

A standard Periodic Table, a 20-centimeter metric ruler, and a formula chart will be provided with the test. In addition, students must have access to a four-function, scientific, or graphing calculator.

What courses should you take to be prepared?

To satisfy the minimum high school graduation requirement, you must take at least two years of science. One course you must take is biology. For the other course, you can choose to take either Integrated Physics and Chemistry (IPC) or a separate chemistry or physics course. Although IPC will expose you to the physics and chemistry TEKS assessed on the 11th grade science test, taking separate chemistry and physics courses will provide you with a more solid science foundation. Whatever path you choose, however, taking three years of science instead of two is the best preparation for the exit level TAKS science test. Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, all incoming freshmen will be required to take three full years of science.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Social studies TAKS assesses how well you understand important topics in early American history, United States history, and world studies, which includes both world history and world geography. It also assesses how well you can apply critical-thinking skills to these topics.



How will the material be tested?

The 11th grade exit level social studies test covers five objectives: major historical issues and events, geographic influences on history, economic and social influences on history, political influences on history, and critical-thinking skills. On this test you will answer a series of multiple-choice questions. Many of these questions, especially those that assess your ability to use critical-thinking skills to analyze social studies information, will be linked to a map, chart, graph, or short excerpt from a historical document.

What tools can you use on the test?

Unlike the other sections of the exit-level test, there are no additional tools needed for this section.

What courses should you take?

To satisfy your social studies course requirements in high school, you must take three years of social studies courses, including U.S. History Since Reconstruction, World History or World Geography, and Government/Economics (normally taken in 12th grade). Since the exit level social studies test includes items assessing concepts shared by world history and world geography, you should consider taking both of these courses to ensure that you are well prepared for this test. Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, all incoming freshmen will be automatically enrolled in the Recommended High School Graduation Plan, unless they opt to follow one of the two other state graduation plans. The Recommended High School Graduation Plan requires students to take World History Studies, World Geography, U.S. History Since Reconstruction, and U.S. Government and Economics.

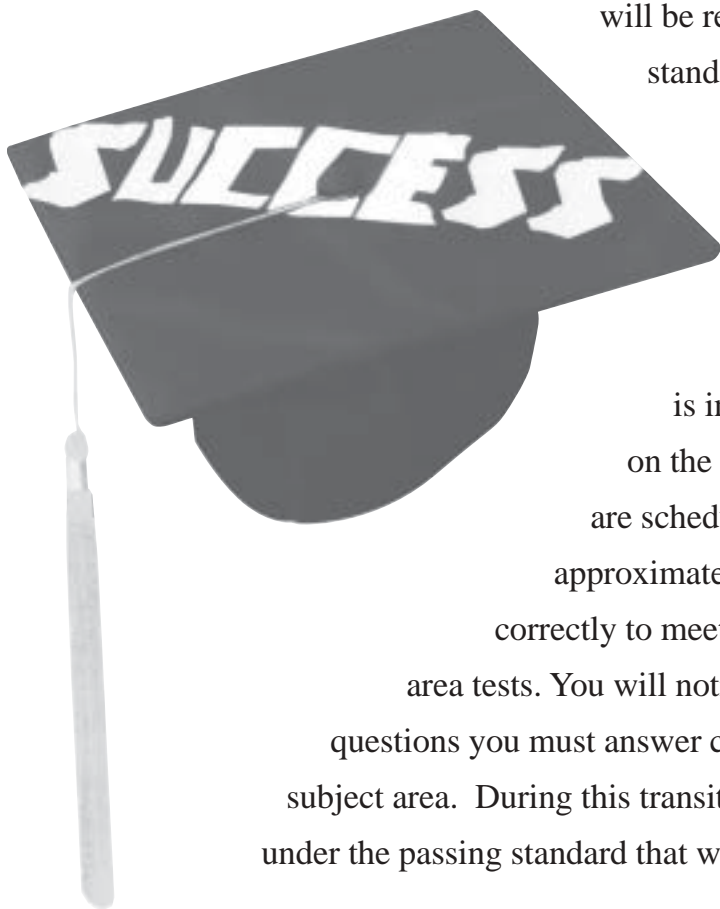
To view the TEKS for American & U.S. history, as well as World History, World Geography, and U.S. Government and Economics, go to www.tea.state.tx.us/ssc/teks_and_tas/teks.htm

TAKS REQUIREMENTS

Passing standards being phased in

Beginning with students who are in the 11th grade during the 2003-2004 school year, students will be required to pass the exit level TAKS in order to receive a diploma from a Texas public high school. The State Board of Education has adopted passing standards for TAKS that will be phased in over the next three years. For each subject-area test, the number of questions that students must answer correctly to meet the standard, or pass, will increase slightly from year to year over three years. Members of the Class of 2007 will be the first students who

will be required to meet the fully implemented standards.



A chart listing the estimated number of questions that must be answered correctly at each step during the transition is included in this brochure. Look at the chart on the adjoining page and find the year that you are scheduled to graduate. You can see approximately how many questions you must answer correctly to meet the standard on each of the four subject-area tests. You will notice that the approximate number of questions you must answer correctly to earn Met the Standard varies by subject area. During this transition period, you will be allowed to graduate under the passing standard that was in place when you started the 10th grade.

Information booklets containing sample TAKS questions can be found at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/taks/booklets/index.html. Additional information about the Texas testing program is available at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/.

PASSING STANDARDS

IF YOU PLAN TO GRADUATE IN 2005

MET STANDARD				COMMENDED	
SUBJECT	Total Test Items	Approximate # of correct answers needed		Approximate # of correct answers needed	
*English Language Arts	73	37	50.7%	63	86.3%
Mathematics	60	25	41.7%	54	90.0%
Science	55	24	43.6%	50	90.9%
Social Studies	55	22	40.0%	49	89.1%

IF YOU PLAN TO GRADUATE IN 2006

MET STANDARD				COMMENDED	
SUBJECT	Total Test Items	Approximate # of correct answers needed		Approximate # of correct answers needed	
*English Language Arts	73	40	54.8%	63	86.3%
Mathematics	60	29	48.3%	54	90.0%
Science	55	27	49.1%	50	90.9%
Social Studies	55	25	45.5%	49	89.1%

IF YOU PLAN TO GRADUATE IN 2007 or later

MET STANDARD				COMMENDED	
SUBJECT	Total Test Items	Approximate # of correct answers needed		Approximate # of correct answers needed	
*English Language Arts	73	43	58.9%	63	86.3%
Mathematics	60	33	55.0%	54	90.0%
Science	55	30	54.5%	50	90.9%
Social Studies	55	28	50.9%	49	89.1%

*A score of 2 or higher on the composition is required for *Met Standard* on English Language Arts tests.

The number and percent of correct items required to achieve the Met Standard and Commended Performance levels are *approximate* and may differ slightly from those shown above to ensure that equivalent standards are maintained for each exit level TAKS administration.

RESOURCES

A variety of resources are available to provide you with a better understanding of the new TAKS testing program. The following sites or publications may assist you with any questions you may have.

★ **INFORMATION BOOKLETS:** These booklets provide helpful explanations as well as show sample items, reading/writing selections, and prompts to give you a good sense of this new assessment. Copies of the booklet can be downloaded at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/taks/booklets/index.html

★ **UNDERSTANDING THE CONFIDENTIAL STUDENT REPORT—A GUIDE FOR PARENTS:** This brochure provides a brief summary of the TAKS program, explains a sample Confidential Student Report (CSR) so that parents can understand their child's test report, and gives a brief summary of each TAKS test objective for each subject area tested. You can find the brochure at www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/guides/parent_csr/index.html

★ **TEKS (CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS):** The state curriculum can be downloaded by grade and/or subject at www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/index.html. Also available on the web is a "frequently asked questions" document with additional information about the required curriculum.

★ **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:** High school graduation requirements can be obtained through your school's counselor or at www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/handbook/7Ch74Gr9in9899.PDF

If you have any questions about TAKS or the new state requirements for graduation, contact your school's counselor or principal, or go to the state's website at www.tea.state.tx.us. To obtain more information, you may also call the Texas Education Agency at (512) 463-9734.



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