

ACCESS for ELLs Headset Specifications

The table below outlines features for headsets and recording devices and WIDA’s rationale in recommending those features. Please note that WIDA does not endorse specific brands or devices.

Recommended Features	Reason for Recommendation	Alternatives not Recommended
Device: Headset	Allows for recording and playback using the same device.	Separate headphones and microphone increase the need to ensure proper connection and setup on the computer and thus complicate the testing site set-up.
Headset Design: Over Ear Headphones	Comfortable when worn for a longer period of time by students of different ages. Weight and size of headphones can be selected based on students’ age. Portable headphones are smaller and lighter and hence may be suitable for younger students. Deluxe headphones are larger and heavier but have the advantage of canceling out more noise.	In ear headphones (ear buds) that are placed directly in the ear canal are more difficult to clean between uses by different students. They are also not suitable for younger students. Many ear buds come with the microphone attached to the cord, making capturing the students’ voice more of a challenge.
Play Back Mode: Stereo	The sound files of the assessment are recorded and played back in stereo.	
Noise Cancellation Feature: None	Noise cancellation often does not cancel out the sound of human voices.	Many headsets with a noise cancellation feature require a power source (e.g. batteries or USB connection) and hence complicate the testing site set-up.
Type of Connector Plug: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single 3.5 mm plug (TRRS) • Dual 3.5 mm plugs (TRS) • USB 	Some computers have two ports for connecting audio-out and audio-in separately, while others have one port for both. Make sure to check your specific equipment before purchasing headsets. Adapters for both types are widely available.	Many USB-connected headsets require driver installation, but perform adequately for audio playback and recording. If you use USB headsets, please ensure that they are functioning properly prior to testing. To ensure test security, do not allow students to use Bluetooth or other wireless headsets.

Recommended Features	Reason for Recommendation	Alternatives not Recommended
Cords: Fabric-covered	Fabric-covered cords are less likely to tangle up during storage.	Many headsets include an inline mute button control. This control may interfere with the recording and should be used with caution.
Volume Control: Inline	Students will not be able to adjust the volume on their computer once they have opened INSIGHT.	Headsets that do not have an inline volume control will need to be tested for volume prior to opening INSIGHT.
Microphone Windscreen: None	Many headsets have a hard, plastic casing around the microphone instead of a foam windscreen that can easily be cleaned with any standard disinfectant.	Foam windscreen covers are difficult to clean and sanitize. Please make sure you follow any policies regarding cleanliness in your state or school.

Please keep in mind that headsets are only required for the Speaking domain. All other domains may be administered with headphones that don't include an attached microphone. Since WIDA recommends testing no more than 3-5 students in the same room for Speaking, districts may be able to purchase a combination of headsets and headphones.