



TELPAS Rating Tips

General Tips for Completing Calibration Sets

- Complete calibration in a quiet, distraction-free environment.
- Your mind should be fresh.
- Do not rush. Calibration sets typically take between 1 and 2 hours to complete.
- Before beginning, review the key information about the holistic rating process in Rater Activity 4 of the *TELPAS Manual for Raters and Test Administrators*.
- During calibration, you may refer to your TEA training resources and notes you have taken during the course of your training.
- Use headphones or high-quality external speakers to ensure optimal audio quality. It is important to be able to hear the students you are rating.
- When rating students, it is important to take **both** the teacher observation text and the student samples into account. Do not focus on only one or the other.
- Do not weigh a first or last video sample or writing sample any more heavily than another other sample when rating students.
- Make note of each student's grade level during calibration. Remember, you are rating the ability to understand and use English in grade-level contexts.

Rating Tips—All Language Domains

- **Refer to the PLDs as you rate each student.** Do not assume you have the PLDs memorized.
- Rate students holistically, taking all descriptors for the proficiency level into account. Do not focus narrowly on isolated descriptors or use the descriptors as a checklist.
- Pay attention to the student's ability to communicate in both social (basic interpersonal) and academic contexts.
- If you are in doubt between two proficiency levels, read the two levels in their entirety. After reading the descriptors and the summary statements for each level, choose the level the student fits most consistently. Do not underestimate the importance of the summary statements.
- Base your ratings only on the PLDs. Do not inadvertently factor in other student abilities or characteristics.

- o *Other student abilities:* Remember that you are assessing the ability of ELLs to understand and use English in academic contexts. You are **not** assessing their academic knowledge and skills. For example, when considering what a student has written about a science topic or when observing a student's interactions during a science lesson, consider only the student's ability to understand and use English to engage in the lesson, not the student's grasp of the concepts being taught.
- o *Other student characteristics:* Do not base ratings on personality or other learning characteristics. For example, your ratings should not be influenced by a student's good or poor study habits or whether a student is timid or outgoing in class.
- Each proficiency level encompasses a range of growth in second language acquisition. English communication skills in the early versus late stages of a level are quite different. Comparing one student to another may lead to incorrect ratings. Using the PLDs with each student will help you avoid student comparisons.
- A student may progress through the proficiency levels in listening, speaking, reading, and writing at somewhat different rates. Focus on the PLDs for just the language domain you are rating.
- An ELL's ability to communicate in English varies somewhat from task to task and topic to topic. The language demands associated with the task, the student's interest level, and the student's familiarity with the topic and topic-related vocabulary make a difference. It is important to observe students in a variety of situations over time and determine the level at which they perform **most consistently**. Do not be unduly influenced by occasional "outlier" performances.
- Remembering the key words **most consistently** will also help you designate the appropriate level for students near the border between two proficiency levels. Such students occasionally "peak" into the higher proficiency level or "spike down" to the lower proficiency level, depending on the side of the border they are on.
- The advanced high level is not intended to equate to native English language proficiency. It indicates that the student is able to communicate in English *with a minimal need for second language acquisition support* in social and grade-level academic settings.

Rating Tips—Speaking

- Whether ELLs or not, some students are more talkative by nature than others. Giving brief responses is not necessarily a sign of a lower speaking proficiency level. You may need to ask probing questions ("Tell me more about that") and find ways to put the student at ease to determine the full extent of his or her English speaking proficiency.
- Tips for deciding between beginning and intermediate speakers:
 - o Beginning speakers may at times produce accurate, recently practiced or memorized sentences in addition to single words and phrases.
 - o Intermediate speakers are capable of expressing themselves in original sentences. Their ability to speak in sentences is not limited to the reproduction of recently practiced or memorized English.

- o Remember that parts of what intermediate speakers say (particularly at the earlier stages of this level) may be difficult to understand. This is especially the case when they attempt to use complex or less familiar English.
- Evaluate a student's pauses carefully. Pauses may be related to content and not necessarily the student's ability to speak in English. All students, whether ELLs or not, sometimes need to think before responding to a question.
- Be careful that your ability to understand a student's native language does not cause you to overlook or fill in gaps in second-language development.
- Do not expect flawless English from advanced high speakers. There is a range of development within this level, just as there is at the other proficiency levels. Pay close attention to what the advanced high PLDs say about pronunciation and other second language acquisition errors.

Rating Tips—Listening

- Pay careful attention to the complexity of the English the speaker uses with the student.
- Pay attention to both the verbal and nonverbal indications of the student's listening comprehension.
- Do not confuse speaking with listening proficiency. Students may be at different proficiency levels in these domains. Be sure to rate these domains separately by referring only to the PLDs for domain in question.

Rating Tips—K–1 Reading

- Remember, due to the developmental nature of K–1 literacy (for both ELLs and non-ELLs), it is important to weigh the ability of the student to understand English text read aloud (first descriptor in PLDs).
- The third descriptor is used only if the student has reached the general developmental stage of decoding text (has "cracked the code" necessary for learning to read).
- A student to whom the third bullet does not apply is eligible to be rated beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high based on the first two descriptors.
- Do not confuse high academic achievement in reading with the advanced high level of English reading proficiency. Do not reserve the advanced high rating only for ELLs who demonstrate high academic achievement in reading. The advanced high level indicates that the K–1 ELL has the ability to use the English language, with minimal second language acquisition support, to build foundational reading skills.
- For ELLs who are able to read independently, pay attention to whether the words they struggle to decode are familiar or unfamiliar and whether those words would be familiar to non-ELL peers. Disregard words that typically cause non-ELL peers to struggle. ELLs not yet at the advanced high level need **more than** minimal second language acquisition support to understand English that is typically familiar to native non-ELL peers.

Rating Tips—K–1 Writing

- Consider only the descriptors without asterisks (*) for students who have not yet reached the developmental stage of generating original written text using a standard writing system.
- Remember that a student who has not yet “cracked the writing code” may still be rated beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high based on the descriptors without asterisks. Remember the developmental nature of K–1 literacy (for all students).
- Base your ratings on the PLDs. Do not factor in strengths and weaknesses related to academic achievement in writing. For example, do not reserve the advanced high rating for only those students who have strong punctuation, spelling, and organizational skills. The advanced high level indicates that the K–1 ELL has the ability to use English to build, with minimal second language acquisition support, foundational writing skills.
- Separate writing errors typical of all students (ELLs and non-ELLs) in these grades from errors specific to learning a second language. Do not withhold an advanced high rating from an ELL for making errors that are typical of non-ELL peers.

Rating Tips—Grades 2–12 Writing

- Reading collections aloud often helps raters better determine proficiency ratings.
- Do not inadvertently factor in strengths and weaknesses related to academic achievement in language arts. For example, do not reserve the advanced high rating for only those students who have strong punctuation, spelling, and organizational skills. Keep the PLD summary statement in mind —advanced high ELLs have the English vocabulary and command of English language structures necessary to address grade-appropriate writing tasks with minimal second language acquisition support.
- Do not let an overall at-a-glance impression of the organization, handwriting, punctuation, spelling, or length of a collection influence your rating.
- Clear your mind of academic writing rubrics or other second language acquisition rubrics.
- When rating students, disregard writing errors that are common for non-ELLs at the student’s grade level. These do not help determine an ELL’s stage of second language acquisition.
- Be careful that your ability to understand a student’s native language does not cause you to overlook or fill in gaps in second-language development.
- Tips for deciding between beginning and intermediate writers:
 - o Beginning writers may at times produce accurate, recently practiced or memorized sentences in addition to single words and phrases.
 - o Intermediate writers are capable of expressing themselves in original sentences. Their ability to write in sentences is not limited to the reproduction of recently practiced or memorized English.
 - o Parts of an intermediate student’s writing may be hard to understand even for individuals accustomed to the writing of ELLs. This is especially the case when an early intermediate student attempts to use complex or less familiar English.