

# New York State Testing Program **NYSESLAT**



## A Parent's Guide



### **Achieving Excellence in Education**

The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) is designed to annually assess the English proficiency of all English language learners enrolled in Grades K–12 in New York State schools. The test gives the State and schools important information about the English language development of English language learners, and is part of the State's compliance with federal laws that mandate the annual assessing and tracking of English proficiency of English language learners.

This brochure describes the NYSESLAT and how it measures the progress of English language learners. From this brochure, you will learn what you can do to help your children meet the challenges of the NYSESLAT.

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## An Overview of the NYSESLAT

The NYSESLAT is designed to measure the English language proficiency of students who have been identified as English language learners. The Department has developed this test in partnership with Questar Assessment, Inc. (Questar), a test development company, and with the collaboration of teachers from across the State. The NYSESLAT is administered annually to all English language learners in Grades K–12. Your child’s performance on this test will be the basis for determining whether he or she continues to be classified as an English language learner. Test results are also used to determine how much language support is needed. In addition, test results are used in conjunction with New York’s accountability system.

Based on the results of the test, your child’s English language proficiency level is classified as beginning, intermediate, advanced, or proficient. Such classification must be used to provide the required amount of English as a second language instruction prescribed under Part 154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

Part 154 is the State’s law that describes how instructional programs and services for English language learners in New York State must be put into effect.

The NYSESLAT is given at six grade bands: K, 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, and 9–12. Each grade band consists of four subtests, which assess different language skills: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing. The test is a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions that assess the student’s ability to use academic English.

The Speaking subtest is given to students individually. During the Speaking subtest, the student answers questions by speaking. The student’s spoken responses are scored by New York State teachers.

The Listening, Reading, and Writing subtests are given in a group setting. Students answer multiple-choice questions or write their answers to open-ended questions. All student written responses to open-ended questions are scored by New York State teachers.

Subtest	Multiple-Choice Questions	Open-Ended Questions		
		Short Written Response	Extended Written Response	Oral Response
Speaking				✓
Listening	✓			
Reading	✓			
Writing	✓	✓	✓	

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why do we have the NYSESLAT?

State and federal laws require that all English language learners from kindergarten through Grade 12 be assessed every year to measure their English language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in order to assess and track their annual progress toward proficiency in English.

The NYSESLAT helps schools determine which instructional standards they must focus on to ensure their English language learners fully acquire the language proficiency that will prepare them for success in the classroom.



### When will the test be administered?

The NYSESLAT is administered to students in the spring of every year.

### Who will score the tests?

The multiple-choice questions on the NYSESLAT are machine scored. Questions on the Speaking subtest and on a portion of the Writing subtest are scored by New York State teachers who receive special training in the rating of students' oral and written responses.

### What are the NYSESLAT results used for?

Test results provide students, teachers, and parents with an objective report of each student's strengths and weaknesses in the English language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Results help determine whether these students are making adequate progress toward English language proficiency. Test results also help schools focus on ways to improve instruction so that English language learners become proficient in English.

### Are there accommodations for students with disabilities?

Testing accommodations are provided based on individual needs. During testing, accommodations are provided for students with disabilities. These accommodations are recommended by the Committee on Special Education and are specified in each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), or in his or her Section 504 Accommodation Plan (504 Plan).

Certain testing accommodations are not permitted for some sections of the tests because these accommodations would change what the test is measuring. For example, reading to a student the portions of the Reading subtest, which is intended to measure a student's reading skills, is not a permissible testing accommodation. Testing accommodations on the NYSESLAT for students who are not identified as students with disabilities are not permitted.

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## How You Can Help

**You can play an important role in helping your child to do well in school and to prepare for these tests.**

**Here are some things you can do:**

✓ **Talk with your child's teacher.**

Getting to know your child's teacher is an excellent way to stay informed about your child's performance at school. Attending parent-teacher conferences and school events are good ways to maintain regular communication with your child's teacher.

✓ **Be supportive throughout the year.**

Make sure your child comes to school ready to learn, attends school regularly, and completes all homework assignments. Ask your child about his or her performance in school, and be generous with praise.

✓ **Present a positive attitude toward the tests.**

Let your child know that you have confidence in his or her abilities. Explain that some of the test questions may be difficult and that it does not matter if other students finish earlier. Let your child know it is okay to proceed at his or her own pace.

✓ **Be sure your child is physically prepared on the days of the test.**

Taking a test requires a student's full attention, so your child should have a good night's sleep the nights before the test. Make sure your child has a healthy breakfast and a nutritious lunch on test days.



**By working together, parents, teachers,  
and students can raise the level of  
achievement in our schools.**

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# Glossary

## **English Language Learners (ELLs)**

Students who, by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, speak a language other than English and either understand and speak little or no English or score below a state-designated level of proficiency on the State’s approved English as a Second Language test.

## **Extended Written Response**

A type of open-ended question that requires students to write a longer answer, such as a story or an essay.

## **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

An educational plan for a student with disabilities. An IEP is a modification of the standard education program and contains specially designed instructions based on the student’s unique academic, social, and behavioral needs.

## **Multiple-Choice Question**

A test question for which a student chooses, rather than writes, an answer. The student selects the correct response from three or four answer choices.

## **New York State Learning Standards for English as a Second Language**

State-prescribed descriptions of the abilities and competencies that English language learners must demonstrate to successfully integrate into the English academic mainstream.

## **Open-Ended Question**

A test question for which a student provides an oral or written response rather than choosing from several printed answer choices.

## **Oral Response**

A type of open-ended question that requires students to respond by speaking.

## **Short Written Response**

A type of open-ended question that requires students to write a short answer, such as a word or a sentence.

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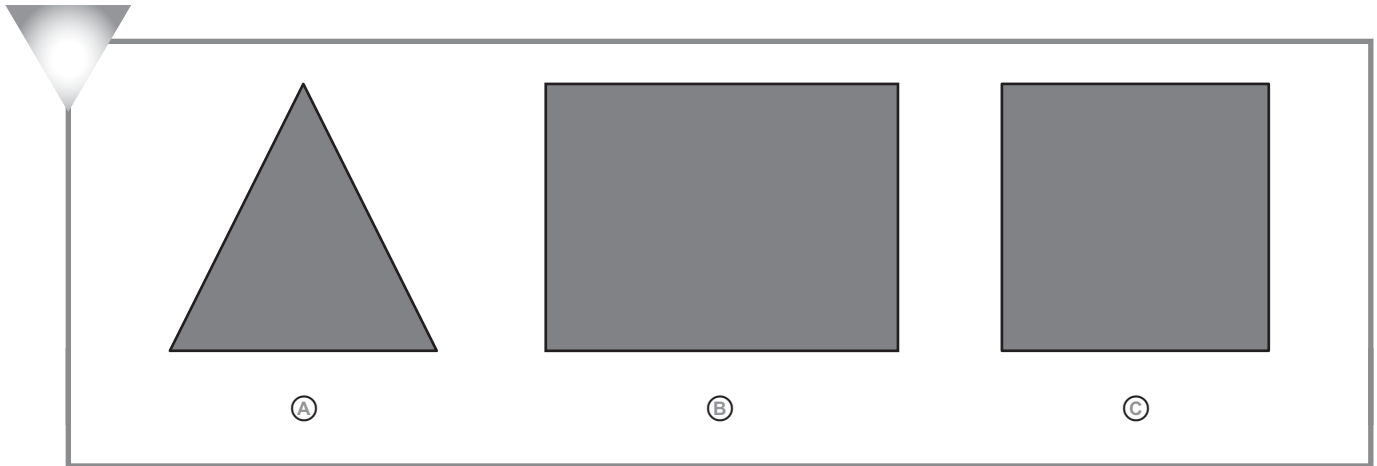
## Sample NYSESLAT Questions

The following samples show the types of questions that appear across the six grade bands and four subtests of the NYSESLAT. These sample questions are drawn from the NYSESLAT Test Sampler Student Booklets, which may be used in the classroom before the actual test. The NYSESLAT Test Sampler Student Booklets and accompanying Directions for Administration are available online at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/nyseslat/>.

### GRADE K Listening

**Examiner says:** Listen to the question. Then circle the picture that answers the question.

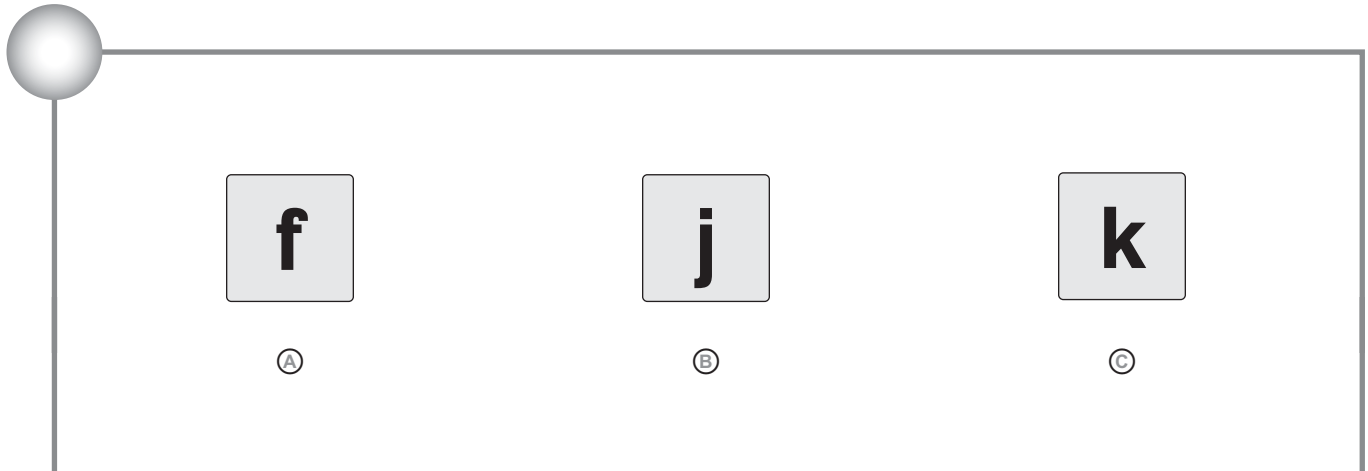
Which picture shows a triangle? . . . Which picture shows a triangle?



### GRADE K Reading

**Examiner says:** You are going to listen to a word. Find the letter that makes the *first* sound in the word. Circle the letter that makes the *first* sound.

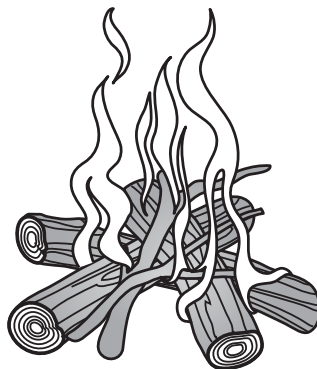
Which letter makes the *first* sound in the word *jar*? . . . Which letter makes the *first* sound in the word *jar*?



## GRADES 1–2 Writing

*Examiner says:* Look at the picture. Listen to the word. Write the word on the line.

This is a picture of a fire. Write the word “fire” on the line.



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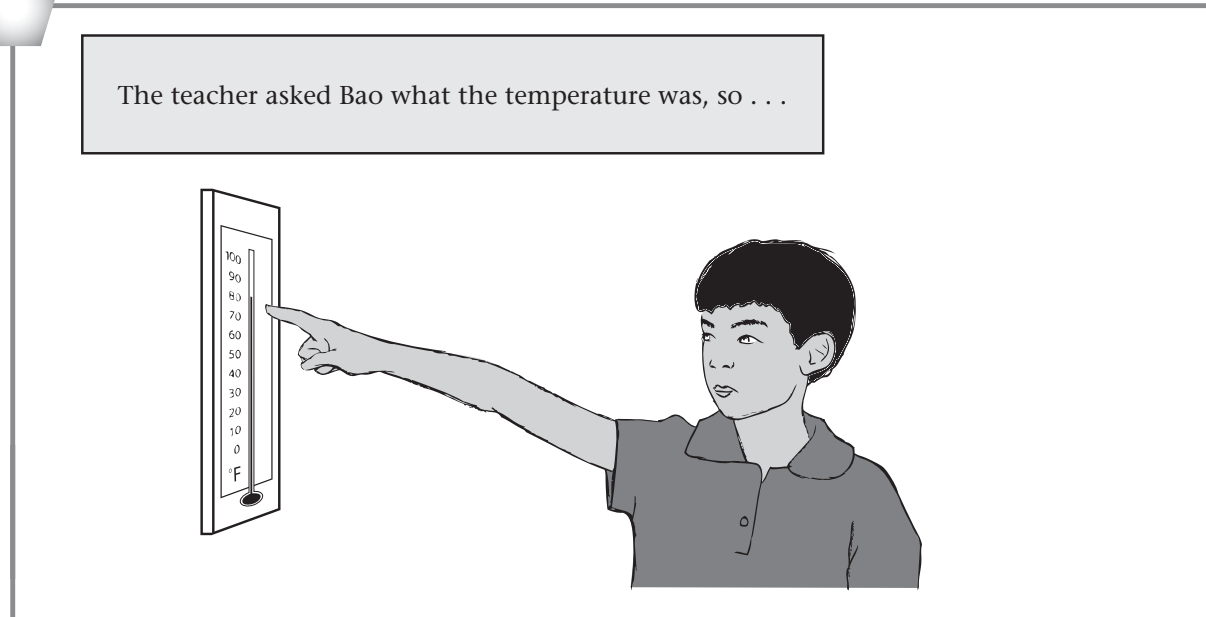
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## GRADES 3–4 Speaking

**Examiner says:** Look at the words above the picture, and read them silently as I read them out loud. Then look at the picture and finish the sentence. Use the picture to choose your words.

The teacher asked Bao what the temperature was, so . . .



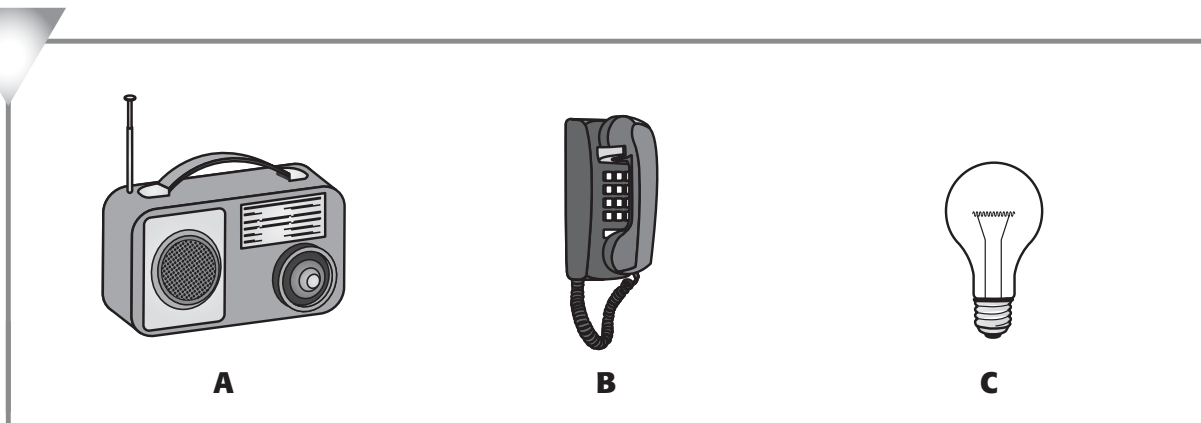
## GRADES 3–4 Listening

**Examiner says:** You will hear a brief story or conversation. Then you will hear a question. Find the picture that answers the question. Fill in the correct circle on your answer sheet.

After you hear what the history teacher said, I will ask you a question about what the class will learn today. Now listen.

“All week, we have been learning about important inventions. So far, we have studied inventions like the light bulb and the radio. Today, we will learn about how Alexander Graham Bell helped invent the first telephone.”

Which invention will the class learn about today?





**DIRECTIONS**

Read the passage. Then answer the questions

**Changing Rocks**

- 1 Rocks may seem as if they will never change. However, they are always changing. Every day, rocks are broken down by wind, heat, cold, flowing water, or ice. This process is called weathering.
- 2 Weathering happens slowly over time. But weathering eventually breaks rocks down into pieces. Some rock pieces are large, like boulders. Other pieces are small, like pebbles and sand.
- 3 These pieces, big and small, become the building blocks for new rocks. Wind and water move the rock pieces and deposit them in new places. Over time, layers of rock pile up. These layers get pressed together and harden to form new rock. The new rock is called sedimentary rock.

What is the main idea of paragraph 1?

- A** Wind breaks down rocks.
- B** Water moves rocks.
- C** Rocks change constantly.
- D** Weathering happens slowly.

According to the passage, what is true about sedimentary rock?

- A** It is not affected by heat.
- B** It is formed in layers.
- C** It is not affected by weathering.
- D** It is formed quickly.

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## GRADES 7–8 Listening

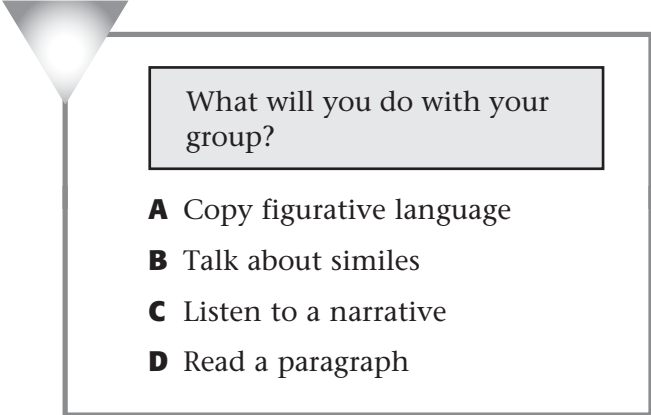
*Examiner says:* You will hear a brief story or conversation. Then read the question and answers silently as I read them out loud. Fill in the correct circle on your answer sheet.

You will listen to a teacher talking. Now listen.

“Today we are going to discuss similes. A simile is a type of figurative language that compares two things. It uses the words ‘like’ or ‘as.’ I’m going to read aloud a paragraph from a personal narrative. Listen for similes, and write down any that you hear. Then, get in your groups and discuss what the writer means by these similes and whether you think his use of figurative language is effective or not.”

What will you do with your group?

- A. Copy figurative language
- B. Talk about similes
- C. Listen to a narrative
- D. Read a paragraph



What will you do with your group?

- A** Copy figurative language
- B** Talk about similes
- C** Listen to a narrative
- D** Read a paragraph

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## GRADES 7–8 Writing

### DIRECTIONS

Write a paragraph that describes what is happening in the picture. Include as many details as you can. Someone who reads your paragraph should be able to imagine the entire scene.

Before you start writing, look at the picture carefully and think about the following:

- What is the setting?
- Who is the person, and what is she doing?
- What might the person be thinking or feeling?



## GRADES 9–12 Speaking

*Examiner says:* Look at the picture. Listen to the question about the picture. Then answer the question. Be sure to answer both parts of the question.

What is the man doing, and why do you think he is doing that?

What is the man doing, and why do you think he is doing that?




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## GRADES 9–12 Writing

### DIRECTIONS

Read the sentence and look at the underlined part. There may be a mistake. If you find a mistake, choose the correct answer. If there is no mistake, choose *Correct as is*.



The lava flew into the sky as the volcano erupted.

Which answer is correct?

- A** flown
- B** fly
- C** flying
- D** Correct as is

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## For More Information

If you want to know more about specific topics related to the NYSESLAT Testing Program, please see the following web sites:

### **The NYSESLAT Testing Program**

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/nyseslat/>

### **Office of State Assessment**

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/>

### **General Information on Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/testaccess/policyguide.htm>

For more information, email the New York State Education Department at [emscassessinfo@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:emscassessinfo@mail.nysed.gov).

You may also write to us:

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