



ESL Diagnostic (ESLD)

Student Handbook

Office of Assessment
Office of Academic Affairs
The City University of New York

The most up-to-date ESLD information may be found at
<https://www.cuny.edu/academics/testing/testing-faqs>

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What is the ESL Diagnostic (ESLD)?

The ESL Diagnostic (ESLD) is an on-line web-based timed writing assessment that will be used to determine a student's ability to do college-level writing in English. The purpose of the ESLD is to assess your skills to see if they are consistent with the instructional goals of college-level writing courses, and to assess your readiness for introductory college courses. The learning skills taught in first-year College courses are reflected in the ESLD, which assesses your ability to read, understand, and respond to a reading text of 250-300 words. Entering students, who, based on their high school transcript, are designated as potential English language learners, will be notified for the ESLD. The student's ESLD response will be reviewed by the College English/ESL faculty, who will determine appropriate placement into English composition, corequisite English composition or ESL courses and interventions.

Who is notified for the ESLD?

Students who have been identified as potential English Language Learners (ELL) will be notified for the ESLD. CUNY identifies English Language Learners as students who:

- have attended a foreign high school for 6 or more months where the primary language of instruction was not English;
 - have attended a U.S. high school and took any class identified as 'ESL'.
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- The TOEFL, IELTS, PTE, or the Duolingo exams are used for Admissions purposes only; ELL students who have not met CUNY's proficiency requirements in reading and writing are required to respond to the ESLD.
 - ELL students who have a bachelor's degree or higher from a foreign institution where the primary language of instruction was not English are required to be assessed for English course placement via the ESLD.

What happens next: ESLD invitation and procedures

ELL students will receive an email notification for the ESLD from the University Testing Office:

- The email will be sent to all email addresses on the student's CUNYFirst record.
 - The email will include a personalized hyperlink to the ESLD. This hyperlink is for the student who is required to respond to the ESLD and should not be shared with any other person.
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- ELL students will need to use a computer, Chromebook, or tablet to access the ESLD. Before you start the ESLD, be sure that your laptop/Chromebook/tablet is fully charged or plugged in. Check that the web browser that you are using is not set up to translate web pages into your native language. Using Google Translate or any other type of outside help is not permitted!
 - ELL students should complete the ESLD as soon as possible to ensure that their essay response will be evaluated in time for advisement and registration.
 - ELL students are allowed to submit only one essay response and it will be used to determine placement at all CUNY colleges to which the student has been admitted.
 - The ESLD response will be provided to the ESL/English faculty at the CUNY College you plan to attend, approximately 3-5 business days after it has been submitted.

- ELL students' essay responses will be evaluated to determine correct English course placement by the ESL/English faculty at the College that the student is planning to attend. Once course placement has been determined, the College will contact the student directly for advisement and registration. If the College Advisement Office has not contacted you within 10 business days of you submitting your ESLD response, please contact them directly; a list of contacts for the College Advisement Office by college can be found here: <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/registrar/advising/>
- ELL students who receive the ESLD notification and have questions or technical difficulties with the ESLD should reply to the ESLD email notification. The University Testing Office will respond to your issue via email within one business day. The University Testing Office is unable to respond to college specific questions regarding advisement or registration; please email the College you are planning to attend directly if you have questions.

Please note: ELL students who have met CUNY's proficiency requirements in reading and writing will not be assessed via the ESLD. Students can meet CUNY's proficiency requirements in the following ways:

- Having a New York State English Regents score of 75 or higher;
- Having passed a college level 3 credit English course with a grade of 'C' or better;
- Having a CUNY English Proficiency Index score of 65 or higher.

What is the format of the ESLD?

The ESLD is comprised of two sections that students must complete:

Section 1:

- Students may use a dictionary, including a bi-lingual dictionary, but other resources are not allowed. Examples of resources that students **may not use** include:
 - Spelling and Grammar check
 - Apps, including Google Translate
 - Internet information
 - Other people
- Students will have **90 minutes** to read a short reading passage and write an essay response in English. A 90-minute timer will be displayed during Section 1 and will show how many minutes students have to complete their essay response.
- Students should only access the ESLD when they have the time available to complete it, as the 90-minute timer cannot be stopped. Students who close the ESLD once the timer begins will be locked out of Section 1, and will only be able to access Section 2.
- Students, who complete their essay response before the 90 minutes are over, can choose to move on to Section 2. However, once students move to Section 2, they are **NOT** able to return to Section 1. Students will be automatically moved to Section 2 once the 90 minutes is over.
- Students should not use the tab or alt buttons, forward or back arrows, refresh or exit the web browser or they will be locked out of Section 1.
- Students will write their essay response in the blank box that appears directly below the reading text.

Section 2:

Students will answer six questions regarding their English language skills. This section is not timed and the responses will help the College ESL professors have a better understanding of the student's language skills, in order to determine appropriate English course placement.

ESLD EXAMPLE: The following is an example of the ESLD.

Section 1

Directions: Please read the passage below and write an essay in English. You will have 90 minutes to write your essay, and you may use a dictionary, including a bi-lingual dictionary. You are expected to write this essay by yourself, with no help from any other outside sources. Your essay should do the following:

1. Explain the main point the author is making.
2. Share what you think (your opinion) about the author's main point.
3. Support your opinion about the author's main point by connecting it with your personal experience and/or what you have read, seen, learned about in school and/or on TV or social media about the topic.
4. Once you have finished your essay, be sure to review your writing and make any changes or corrections that will help the reader clearly understand the points in your essay.

Note: *this is an example of the ESLD. It is NOT the reading text on the real ESLD.*

The Benefits of Writing by Hand

By Maria Konnikova

Does writing by hand matter? According to many educators, it doesn't matter very much. New education requirements, which have been adopted in most states, call for teaching legible writing, but only in kindergarten and first grade. After that, the focus of instruction changes to teaching students how to type.

But new evidence suggests that there are strong links between writing by hand and broader educational development. Children not only learn to read more quickly when they first learn to write by hand, but they also are better able to develop new ideas and remember information. In other words, it's not just what we write that matters — but how.

Psychologists Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer report that in both laboratory settings and classrooms, students learn better when they take notes by hand than when they type on a keyboard. Earlier studies said the difference could be due to the distracting effects of computers, but the new research suggests that writing by hand helps students to understand a lecture better. When we write by hand, thinking about what we are writing and the physical act of writing on paper stimulate certain parts of the brain that can lead to better understanding and memory.

The benefits of writing by hand extend beyond childhood. For adults, typing may be a fast and efficient alternative to writing by hand, but that efficiency may also reduce our ability to understand new information.

Not every expert is persuaded that the long-term benefits of handwriting are quite so significant. But one skeptic, psychologist Paul Bloom, acknowledges that the new research is, at the very least, thought-provoking. "With handwriting, the very act of writing it down forces you to focus on what's important," he said. He added, "Maybe it helps you think better."

Adapted from: "What's Lost as Handwriting Fades," by Maria Konnikova. *The New York Times*, June 2, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html>

Section 2

Directions: Please fully complete the following questions. You must respond honestly and truthfully to the questions because your responses will be used to help you register for the English class that is best suited for you! If you are placed into the wrong class, you will have to be moved. Please help us understand your English level.

You must complete this section in order to submit your response to the ESL Diagnostic Assessment.

How is your ESLD essay response evaluated?

Your ESLD response will be reviewed by an ESL/English Professor at the college you are planning to attend. The Professor will evaluate your essay based on the following elements:

- “Critical Response to the Writing Task and Text”: You will need to demonstrate understanding of the main ideas in the reading text, using critical analysis.
- “Development of Writer’s Ideas”: In this category, you are evaluated on your ability to develop your ideas based on the text in a clear and organized way. Your response should include both general statements and specific details and examples. Specific references to the text must be included with these details and examples.
- “Structure of the Response”: This category evaluates your ability to organize ideas into a cohesive essay that supports a central focus, or thesis. The structure of your essay is evaluated for evidence of logical connections between ideas and the use of transitions to convey these connections.
- “Language Use: Sentence Structure, Word Choice, Grammar and Mechanics”: Your essay should demonstrate sentence control and variety in sentence structure, as well as appropriate vocabulary use. The essay should follow the conventions of standard American English, mechanics and punctuation.