



California Assessment of
Student Performance and Progress

Grades
3•4•5

Parent Guide to the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments

Overview and Sample Questions



California Department of Education



Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide information about the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments, including sample test items for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics. This information will help parents better understand their children's test results. The Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments are part of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System, which replaces the previous Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program.

Every spring, students in grades three through eight and grade eleven take the **Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments** for ELA and mathematics. Results from these assessments are just one piece of information to help teachers, parents/guardians, and students understand how well a student is meeting the grade-level standards.

The Smarter Balanced System includes additional resources to improve teaching and learning. These resources include formative assessment tools and interim assessments. **Formative assessment** is a process that teachers use every day to check on student understanding. It includes a variety of informal and formal strategies to help both teachers and students assess what students are learning. This information can then be used by both teachers and students to decide what they must do next or differently to help students learn the material they have not learned.

From time to time, teachers may also give tests to check how well students have learned the material they have been taught **over a period of time** and what may need to be reviewed or retaught. These types of tests, called **interim assessments**, may be given at the end of a few days (such as a mathematics quiz or a spelling test), after a unit of instruction (such as a chapter test or unit writing assignment), or after a few weeks (such as a quarterly test). More information about the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments is available on the CDE's Interim Assessments Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/sbacinterimassess.asp>.

A glossary of important terms used in this handbook is provided at the end.

Information on other assessments in the CAASPP System, as well links to important resources and sample responses to a constructed response item, are provided in the appendixes of this guide.

How the Online Smarter Balanced Assessments Are Different from Previous California Tests

The new Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments are very different from the old STAR tests in several ways:

- They are aligned with California’s new content standards for ELA and mathematics.
- They reflect the critical thinking and problem solving skills that students will need to be ready for college and the 21st century job market.
- They are taken on a computer and are adaptive, which means that during the test, the questions will become more or less difficult on the basis of how the student performs. If the student answers a question correctly, the next question may be a bit more challenging; if the student answers it incorrectly, the next question may be less difficult.
- They provide many more supports for students who need them, including students learning English and students with disabilities, as described in the section below.

Accessibility Supports and Accommodations

The computer-based Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments provide all students with greater flexibility than traditional pencil-paper tests. For example, students can increase the size of an image using the “Zoom In” option or highlight key words as they read a passage. Additional accessibility supports also are available for English learners and students with individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans. For example, some students may access translations or American sign language.

For more information, please see the CDE Student Assessment Accessibility Supports 2014–15 Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/sass1415.asp>.

Item and Task Types

The Smarter Balanced assessment system includes a variety of item types, including:

- Selected-response items, which prompt students to choose one or more answers.
- Technology-enhanced items, which might prompt students to edit text or draw an object.
- Constructed-response items, which prompt students to write a short written or numerical response.
- Performance tasks, in which students engage in a complex set of tasks to demonstrate their understanding. (Students may be asked to conduct research and then write an argumentative essay, using sources as evidence. Or they may be asked to solve a complex problem in mathematics. Performance tasks integrate knowledge and skills across many areas and standards.)

Parents can take the Practice Test to see the different types of questions that students will be given on the Smarter Balanced Assessments. The Practice Test is posted on the Smarter Balanced Practice and Training Tests Web page at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>.

How Student Performance Is Reported on the Smarter Balanced Assessments

Student performance is reported in several ways, as explained below.

Overall Score and Achievement Level

For each grade level and subject area, students receive a score from approximately 2000 to 3000. The overall score falls into one of four achievement levels:

- **Standard Exceeded:** The student has exceeded the achievement standard and demonstrates advanced progress toward mastery of the knowledge and skills needed for likely success in future coursework.
- **Standard Met:** The student has met the achievement standard and demonstrates progress toward mastery of the knowledge and skills needed for likely success in future coursework.
- **Standard Nearly Met:** The student has nearly met the achievement standard and may require further development to demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed for likely success in future coursework.
- **Standard Not Met:** The student has not met the achievement standard and needs substantial improvement to demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed for likely success in future coursework.

See the CDE's Smarter Balanced Scale Score Ranges Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/sbscalerange.asp>.

Area Achievement

The test reports show how a student performed in key areas, also called **claims**, in ELA and mathematics.

- **ELA Areas:** Reading, Writing, Listening, and Research/Inquiry
- **Mathematics Areas:** Problem Solving & Modeling/Data Analysis, Concepts & Procedures, and Communicating Reasoning

For each area, a student’s performance is represented as “**Above Standard**,” “**At or Near Standard**,” or “**Below Standard**.”

A sample student score report is provided on the CDE’s CAASPP Individual Score Reports Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/caaspp15rpttalkpts.asp>.

The CDE video *Understanding Your Child’s Score Report* is posted on the Youtube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQi4qI0Crmk>. This video describes and explains the 2015 CAASPP Student Score Report. A Spanish version of the video is available on this site.

Although the results of the state tests are important, they are just one way to assess the progress of students. Students and parents should review the test results in combination with report cards, class assignment grades, and teacher feedback.





How Reports are Used

Results from the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments provide one piece of information about a student’s academic performance that can:

- Help facilitate conversations between parents/guardians and teachers about student performance.
- Serve as a tool to help parents/guardians and teachers work together to improve student learning.
- Help schools and school districts identify strengths and areas that need improvement in their educational programs.
- Provide the public and policymakers with information about student achievement.

Student Performance in English Language Arts/Literacy

The Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for ELA are organized by four areas, or claims.

ELA Areas (Claims) For Grades Three, Four, and Five		
	Reading	Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts
	Writing	Producing clear and purposeful writing
	Listening	Demonstrating effective communication skills
	Research/Inquiry	Investigating, analyzing and presenting information

For more information, see the Smarter Balanced Assessments Web page at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>.

Grade Five ELA

In grade five, students continue to read more challenging literature, articles, and other sources of information and continue to build their vocabulary. Students are also expected to understand and **clearly summarize what they have learned** from readings and classroom discussions, **referring to specific evidence and details from the text**. Students write regularly and continue to develop their ability to **gather, organize, interpret, and present information**.

For more information, please see the *Parent Roadmap—Supporting Your Child in Grade Five, English Language Arts*, which is posted on the Council of the Great City Schools Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=416&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=721&PageID=330>.

A Spanish version of the publication is available on the same Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=427&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=731&PageID=365>.

Grade Five Sample Test Items for ELA

The sample test items that follow represent the kinds of passages and questions that grade five students at different levels of achievement would likely answer correctly. For example, a student at the “Standard Nearly Met” achievement level would typically receive and correctly answer an item associated with that achievement level.

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Reading

Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met

Read the sentences from the text.

I once watched a hummingbird do a really special aerial maneuver. It dived down through a small swarm of insects, then flew back up to dive through the swarm over and over again.

Which phrase **best** states the meaning of “aerial maneuver” in the text?

- A. a series of actions performed by the hummingbird while flying
- B. a series of actions performed by the hummingbird while hovering
- C. a series of beak movements that help hummingbirds catch insects
- D. a series of wing movements that help the hummingbird use energy skillfully

Area

Reading

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts

Standard(s)

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

Answer

A

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Reading

Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded

Waterbugs

When you go home from school, if you pass a pond, you are almost sure to be able to find one, or more, of the three water-bugs of this lesson, and I want you to look at them.

The first is a long, thin, black insect. He walks on top of the water, looking like a needle on legs. He is sometimes called a “needle-bug,” but more often a “water-measurer,” because he seems to measure the water with his legs as he runs. He has very fine hairs under his body and on his legs. The air between these hairs prevents him from getting wet and being drowned. He has two long feelers, and a long thin beak. His legs and body are a reddish color and his wings a glossy black. If you watch him, you will see him start all at once across the pond. He is catching a water-fly. Then he will hold it in his front claws, and suck the juice out of its body. Though the water-measurer has wings, he does not often fly. The next water-bug is not so thin. He is about an inch long, and has a flat body with grey wings folded across it. He has only very short feelers, and his front legs are thick and strong, with pincers at the end, and this is why he is called the “water-scorpion.” He uses these pincers to seize the insects in the water, and sucks them dry through his sharp beak. He swims under water very slowly, or crawls in the mud, and is easily caught. You may catch him too when he comes up to get air. This he does in a very funny way. He has two long bristles at the end of his tail. When he puts these together they make a tube like a hollow straw. He comes near the top of the water, and thrusts out the end of this tube into the air, and draws some into his body. The eggs of the mother water-scorpion are stuck on to the leaves of water-plants, and look like seeds. The last water-bug I am sure you know. He is a little fellow, rather like a beetle, with six legs, two of them being very long ones; and he swims upside down, rowing himself along with these two legs, as if they were oars. This is why he is called a “water-boatman.” He has a long, sucking beak, but you will hardly see it unless you dip him out with a glass and look close. For as he swims upside down, the bug bends his head down on his chest, so that his beak lies between

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Reading
Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

his legs. His eyes at the side of his head are very large, so that he can look both down and up. This is very useful, for he swims under tadpoles and grubs, and catches them in his claws. Then he bites them with his sharp beak, and sucks out their soft body. He is always swimming in the water, or crawling in the mud. In the evening he sometimes comes out and flies to another pond or ditch.

The mother water-boatman lays small, long, white eggs on stems and leaves in the water. You may often find them in March, and in April you may see the little bugs swimming upside down like their parents. If you take the trouble, you may catch these three water-bugs in a net, and put them in a glass, and see all I have told you.

Excerpt from *By Pond and River* by Arabella Buckley. In the public domain.

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Reading Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

Click on the statement that **best** describes what the information in the first and last paragraphs reveals about the author’s point of view.

- A. The author most likely conducts experiments to study water-bugs.
- B. The author most likely thinks that observing water-bugs is difficult.
- C. The author is most likely an instructor who is teaching about water-bugs.
- D. The author is most likely a student who is writing a paper about water-bugs.

Part B

Click on **all** of the phrases from the text that **best** support your answer in part A.

“When you go home from school, if you pass a pond, you are almost sure to be able to find one, or more, of the three water-bugs of this lesson, and I want you to look at them.”

“If you take the trouble, you may catch these three water-bugs in a net, and put them in a glass, and see all I have told you.”

Area

Reading

Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts

Standard(s)

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

Answer

Part A: C

Part B: “I want you to look at them,” and “see all that I have told you”

Grade Five Mathematics

In grade five, students build their understanding of the **place value system** by working with **decimals up to the hundredths place**. Students also **add, subtract, and multiply fractions**, including fractions with unlike denominators. They continue to expand their geometry and measurement skills, learning the concept of volume and measuring the **volume of a solid figure**.

For more information, please see the *Parent Roadmap—Supporting Your Child in Grade Five, Mathematics* posted on the Council of the Great City Schools Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=429&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=736&PageID=366>.

A Spanish version of the publication is available on same Web page at <http://www.cgcs.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceID=431&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=750&PageID=367>.

Grade Five Sample Test Items for Mathematics

The sample test items below represent the kinds of passages and questions that grade five students at different levels of achievement would likely answer correctly. For example, a student at the “Standard Nearly Met” achievement level would typically receive and correctly answer an item associated with that achievement level.

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Communicating Reasoning

Achievement Level: Standard Nearly Met

The art teacher gives stickers to the 96 students in her classes. She has 264 stickers to give out. She gives out one sticker at a time to each of her students until the stickers are all gone. How many students get more than 2 stickers?

- A 36
- B 72
- C 82
- D 96

Grade Five

Area**Communicating Reasoning**

Demonstrating ability to support mathematical conclusions

Standard(s)

Find whole-number quotients of whole numbers with up to four-digit dividends and two-digit divisors, using strategies based on place value, the properties of operations, and/or the relationship between multiplication and division. Illustrate and explain the calculation by using equations, rectangular arrays, and/or area models.

Answer

B

Grade Five Sample Test Item—Concepts & Procedures

Achievement Level: Standard Met

Jonas has a file cabinet in the shape of a right rectangular prism.

- The area of the base of the file cabinet is 450 square inches.
- The height of the file cabinet is 53 inches.

Enter the volume, in cubic inches, of the file cabinet.

← → ↶ ↷ ✖

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
0	.	$\frac{\square}{\square}$

Area**Concepts & Procedures**

Applying mathematical concepts and procedures

Standard(s)

Relate volume to the operations of multiplication and addition and solve real world and mathematical problems involving volume.

Answer

23850

Glossary

accessibility supports and accommodations

Tools and supports that help students access the test questions so they can best demonstrate what they know and are able to do. The Smarter Balanced tests include:

- **Universal Tools** available to all students based on their preference. These include online tools such as highlighting, digital notepads, and zooming in and out as well as other supports like scratch paper or breaks between test sections.
- **Designated Supports** available for a student when an educator or support team determines a special need. These include such tools as color contrast or masking as well as language supports for English learners, such as translated test directions or bilingual glossaries.
- **Accommodations** specially identified for students with IEPs or 504 plans. These include online tools, such as text-to-speech, closed captioning, and on-screen ASL translation as well as other supports, such as read aloud or use of a scribe.

achievement level

A score or descriptive statement that represents how well the student knows the standards for the subject area and grade level. For the Smarter Balanced tests, there are four achievement levels labeled as Standard Exceeded, Standard Met, Standard Nearly Met, and Standard Not Met.

assessment

A term generally used to mean the same thing as test.

CAASPP

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, which is the new state assessment system. The CAASPP system includes tests that public school students take at the end of the school year in different subject areas and grade levels.

claim or area	Broad sets of knowledge and skills within a subject area, such as Reading within English Language Arts/Literacy or Problem Solving in Mathematics. On the Smarter Balanced tests, students will get results in key areas based on groups of test questions that measure similar or related knowledge or skills.
college and career ready	A phrase that indicates a student is leaving high school well-prepared to succeed in college and the workplace.
Common Core State Standards	Academic content standards adopted by California that describe what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in order to graduate from high school ready for college and a career. The Common Core State Standards challenge students to develop a deep understanding of subject matter, learn how to think critically, and apply what they are learning to the real world.
computer adaptive test	A test given on a computer in which the questions change or adapt on the basis of a student's answers, so each student gets a customized test. When a student answers incorrectly, the computer assigns easier or less complex questions. When a student gets answers correct, the computer gives the student harder or more complex questions.
computer-based test	A test given on a computer.
content standards	Statements of academic expectations that describe what students should know and be able to do in a subject area.
formative assessment	A process teachers use during instruction to check on student understanding.
interim assessment	A test given at regular intervals, such as a chapter test, to evaluate what students have learned.

performance task	A connected set of questions and activities, based on a theme or scenario, in which students apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems. In the Smarter Balanced assessments, students do a performance task in English language arts/literacy and one in mathematics. The performance task includes a classroom activity, done with the teacher, to introduce vocabulary and make sure all students have basic knowledge and understanding about the topic. Students then go to the computer to read materials, respond to several shorter questions, and complete a longer essay or problem.
scale score	Each year, in each subject area, a student will get an overall score between approximately 2000 and 3000. This score represents how well a student did on the test, and it corresponds to one of four achievement levels: Standard Exceeded, Standard Met, Standard Nearly Met, and Standard Not Met.
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium	A state-led public agency, currently supported by member states and territories, that developed new tests that align to the new Common Core State Standards and measure student progress toward college and career readiness.
STAR	The Standardized Testing and Reporting Program, the previous California assessment system that has been phased out.
summative assessment	An assessment designed to be given near the end of the school year to evaluate a student’s knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic standards.
test item	A question, problem, or task on a test. Test items may take different forms such as multiple choice, fill-in the blank or short answer, or constructed response (where students may write sentences or essays, or show how they solve a mathematics problem).

Appendix A: Other Assessments in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress System

California Alternate Assessment

Students in grades three through eight and grade eleven who have significant cognitive disabilities and whose individual education program requires that an alternate test be administered are eligible to take the California Alternate Assessment (CAA) instead of the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments.

Required Assessments for Science

Students in grades five, eight, and ten continue to take the science assessments that were part of the California STAR program. These include the California Standards Test (CST); the California Modified Assessment (CMA), which can be taken by eligible students with disabilities; and the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA), which may be taken by students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Optional Assessment: Reading/Language Arts

The Standards-based Test in Spanish (STS) for Reading/Language Arts is available for students in grades two through eleven who receive instruction in Spanish. This paper-based test, part of the previous STAR program, can be given to Spanish-speaking English learners who are learning language arts in Spanish and to English speakers who are learning Spanish through an immersion or dual language program.

Appendix B: Additional Resources

The links below provide additional information on the new state standards and CAASPP assessments.

Common Core State Standards

- **California Department of Education**

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/ccssresourcesparents.asp>

This Web page containing information for parents and students includes links to informational fliers, videos, Web sites, and other resources.

- **California State PTA**

<http://capta.org/focus-areas/education/common-core/>

This site provides informational fliers and documents, in multiple languages, about the standards and what children are learning at each grade level.

New Assessments

- **California Department of Education**

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/index.asp>

This website provides variety of resources about the CAASPP system. The Students & Parent tab includes links to videos, fact sheets, practice and training tests, and other related information.

- **California State PTA**

<http://capta.org/focus-areas/education/student-assessments/>

This site provides information about the new assessments as well as a sample student report of test results.

- **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/parents-students/>

This Web site, from the developers of the new ELA and mathematics tests, provides information about the new assessments, a downloadable fact sheet for parents, and links to other resources.

- **California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress**

https://login3.cloud1.tds.airast.org/student/V112/Pages/LoginShell.aspx?c=California_PT&v=112

This Web site provides access to training and practice tests that parents and students can use to experience what the new assessment is like, including how the technology works and the kinds of questions and tasks that are on the new tests.

Appendix C: Scoring Rubric and Sample Responses (Constructed Response)

This item is worth a possible two points (0, 1, or 2) and is hand scored.

Scoring Rubric

Score	Rationale
2	<p>A response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives sufficient evidence of the ability to determine/summarize the theme/lesson/author's message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event • Includes specific examples/details that make clear reference to the text • Adequately explains the theme/lesson/author's message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event with clearly relevant information based on the text
1	<p>A response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives limited evidence of the ability to determine/summarize the theme/lesson/author's message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event • Includes vague/limited examples/details that make reference to the text • Explains the theme/lesson/author's message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event with vague/limited information based on the text
0	<p>A response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives no evidence of the ability to determine/summarize the theme/lesson/author's message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the theme/lesson/author's message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event, but includes no examples or no examples/details that make reference to the text <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the theme/lesson/author's message/main idea, or what happens after or during a key event, but includes no explanation or no relevant information from the text

Sample responses that would earn a "0," a "1," and a "2" are provided on the next pages.

The scoring rubric and sample responses are based on the Grade 3 constructed response item on pages 14–16.

Sample Responses

Score: 0 Points

The main idea is there are many steps to finding how people lived.

Think like a scientist and lots of things will tell you everything from the past

The main idea of the Finding the Clues is people that go around looking in places that people lived long ago for objects are called archaeologists.

The main idea of the paragraph is how archaeologists find clues on how it was in the past.

Score: 1 Point

The main idea of this passage is what a dig is and where to find a dig. It said a dig is a place where you dig to try to find how or where people used to live. It also said digs are usually in caves, a forest, a desert, or a modern city.

The main idea of the finding the clues is where and how to find artifacts. This section talks about where to find where people lived a long time ago. It also talks about how they have to be very careful and they have to use special tools to uncover dirt and sand.

The main idea is that they go places all around the world to find clues or artifacts. They used tools like small shovels and brushes. They studied the artifacts and carefully removed them from ground. They were very helpful to the people who visit them and get info.

Score: 2 Points

The main idea of "Finding the Clues" is about a dig site, what you do at a dig site, and finding artifacts. First, a site can be in a cave, a forest, a desert, or a modern city. At the site you first have to divide the ground into sections, and then you remove dirt from each section carefully. Special tools are used such as small shovels and brushes. You also have to search each section slowly. If you find tools or a piece of pottery, you photograph it, and notes are taken. After, you remove it from the ground carefully. These objects are called artifacts. Artifacts help explain how people lived in the past.

The main idea in Finding the Clues is finding the clues how people lived in the past requires careful study. They use special tools, each section must be searched slowly if a piece of pottery or a tool is found, it is photographed and notes are taken before it is removed from the ground.