

# Test Format

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## What Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) are offered?

### Mathematics Interim Assessment Blocks

Math IABs assess specific concepts. These concepts are directly related to the domains at each grade level. The [Connecticut Core Standards \(CCS\) for Mathematics](#) require that mathematical content and mathematical practices are connected. Students are expected to make connections between content and practice, model a mathematical situation, and explain their reasoning when solving problems. In addition, two of the major design principles of the standards are focus and coherence. Coherence implies that the standards are more than a mere checklist of disconnected topics, while attending to focus will allow the student the time necessary to learn and master grade-level content in order to be able to build upon it the following year.

Each grade has just one math performance task (PT). Remember, this IAB PT block is the same PT as the one in that grade provided in the Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs).

Teachers can use the [Smarter Balanced Mathematics Interim Assessment Blocks Blueprint](#) or the [Mathematics Focused Interim Assessment Blocks Blueprint](#) to examine the general concentration of each block along with the math skills comprised within each block. Blueprints are organized by grade level and provide details about the claims, assessment targets, and Depth of Knowledge addressed by the items in the block, along with the number of items allocated to each of those categories. Blueprints allow for optimal planning and the purposeful integration of interims aligned to the goals of classroom instruction.

Generally, each IAB can generally be completed in one class period. Administration of the IAB Math Performance Tasks will take approximately one hour.

### English Language Arts (ELA) Interim Assessment Blocks

Aligned to the [CCS for English Language Arts](#), the ELA IABs measure readiness in reading, writing, listening, and research. The CCS reinforce the importance of students being able to learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, as well as to think critically. In ELA, interims are designed to measure reading comprehension of literary and informational text, writing, listening, and research. With minor exceptions in Grade 8, the same categorical blocks are available in Grades 3-8 and high school.

In all grades assessed, except Grade 8, writing skills were divided into writing brief texts or brief writes, revision of writing, using appropriate language and vocabulary, and editing skills, the block that focuses on conventions. In the Grade 8 IABs, the Edit/Revise Block is the combination of editing, language, and vocabulary use. Each IAB can approximately be completed in one class period.

Each grade has just one performance task in either opinion/argumentative writing, informational/explanatory writing, or narrative writing. Remember this IAB PT block is the same PT as the one in that grade provided in the ICA.

Administration of the ELA Performance Task will take approximately two hours to complete. Teachers can use the Smarter Balanced [ELA Interim Assessment Blocks Blueprint](#) or [Focused Interim Assessment Blocks Blueprint](#) to learn more about how ELA concepts and grade-appropriately skills are divided by block, and in turn use those blocks to naturally fit within their curriculum.

## How are Interim Comprehensive Assessments designed and when are they used?

The Interim Comprehensive Assessments include the full array of Smarter Balanced accessibility resources, test the same content, and report scores on the same scale as the summative assessments. They are recommended for use in rare and specific situations given the lengthy test time and requisite for administering both the fixed items and the performance task to yield results. For example, they can be administered in Grades 9 and 10 to gauge College and Career Readiness. They can be administered to students new to the Connecticut Public School System if no other standardized assessment results are available.

Given the comprehensive nature of these assessments, the testing time for an ICA may take as many as 6.4 hours for both content areas. The ICA PT must be taken with the fixed-form ICA test in order to receive a score. Furthermore, scores are not diagnostic like the IABs and therefore provide a broader overview of student performance.

The ICA fixed form contains 36–49 items depending on the content area and grade level. Once the entire ICA (fixed form and PT) is completed by the student, certain constructed-response in the math performance tasks will need to be hand scored by school staff. Constructed-response items on the ELA fixed form will be automatically scored by the scoring engine using [automated scoring](#). For more information about the types of reports available in the Centralized Reporting System, access these short [videos](#). (Please scroll down to the bottom of the web page to access the videos.)

It is important to consider the types of data that result from the ICA. The ICA reporting provides the same type of scores as those provided for the summative assessments:

- An overall scale score and a corresponding achievement level are provided in a student's Individual Score Report. This is reported in four achievement levels.
- Each claim score reporting includes three performance levels: Below Standard, At/Near Standard, and Above Standard.

Contact the Connecticut State Department of Education Performance Office at [ctstudentassessment@ct.gov](mailto:ctstudentassessment@ct.gov) or 860-713-6860 for guidance concerning the administration of the ICA.

Refer to this one-page flyer that highlights the use of [ICAs as an Early Detection System](#).

[The Connecticut Interim Assessments Overview](#) document provides the current IABs available. There are no new blocks for the 2020-21 school year.

### **The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Assessment Blocks**

The NGSS Interim Assessments are organized by grade band. This organization lets teachers integrate the science concepts outlined in the [standards](#). The NGSS Interim Assessments are aligned to three core dimensions of scientific understanding across Earth/Space, Life, and Physical Science. The core dimensions include:

**Disciplinary Core Ideas:** These are the fundamental ideas that are necessary for understanding a given science discipline. The core ideas all have broad importance within or across science or engineering disciplines, provide a key tool for understanding or investigating complex ideas and solving problems, relate to societal or personal concerns, and can be taught over multiple grade levels at progressive levels of depth and complexity.

**Science and Engineering Practices (SEPs):** The practices are what students DO to make sense of phenomena. They are both a set of skills and a set of knowledge to be internalized. The SEPs reflect the major practices that scientists and engineers use to investigate the world and design and build systems.

**Cross-Cutting Concepts:** These are concepts that hold true across the natural and engineered world. Students can use them to make connections across seemingly disparate disciplines or situations, connect new learning to prior experiences, and more deeply engage with material across the other dimensions.

There are 54 NGSS Interim Assessments representing Earth/Space, Life, and Physical Science that capture real-world phenomena through the use of written text, data in tables or graphs, diagrams, drawings, maps, animations, and simulations. Each interim block measures a subset of science practices, disciplinary core ideas, and cross-cutting concepts and contains two item clusters (sets of items) aligned to two different NGSS performance expectations from various topic areas (i.e., Forces and Motion, Ecosystems, Earth Systems). These clusters include a phenomena-based scenario and several item interactions aligned to a single NGSS performance expectation.

The NGSS Interim Assessments offer items organized into sets, called clusters, designed to engage the student in a grade-appropriate, meaningful scientific activity aligned to a specific standard. The NGSS items are machine scored and include:

- **Multiple Choice:** A student selects from traditional multiple-choice options using radio buttons.
- **Multiple Select:** A student can select checkboxes with flexibility on minimum and maximum number of selections.
- **Table Match:** A student creates a one-to-one relationship between two elements. Can be represented graphically or as a table.
- **Inline Choice Interaction:** A student selects responses from drop-down menus throughout the text.
- **Equation Editor:** A student uses flexible entry of one or more mathematical expressions.
- **Graphic Response:** This is a flexible platform to create a wide variety of items from drag-and-drop, to drawing on a coordinate plane to hot spots.

- **Simulation:** A student conducts an experiment by manipulating inputs until they think they have arrived at the right output.
- **Table Input:** This solicits a student to complete tabular data.
- **Hot Text:** A student clicks on a highlighted word or sentence to respond.
- **External Copy:** A student clicks on a highlighted word or sentence to respond. The word or sentence is then copied into the response box.

Students should take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete each interim block.

In lieu of a blueprint, the NGSS Interims are organized by topic. Below is a list of interim assessments organized by grade band. For more details, refer to the [Overview of the NGSS Interim Assessment Blocks webinar](#).

### Elementary School (Grades 3–5)

- Earth and Space Science — Earth’s Systems 1
- Earth and Space Science — Earth’s Systems 2
- Earth and Space Science — Weather and Climate
- Life Science — Matter and Energy in Organisms and Ecosystems
- Life Science — Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems
- Life Science — Inheritance and Variation of Traits
- Physical Science — Energy
- Physical Science — Forces and Interactions
- Physical Science — Structure and Properties of Matter 1
- Physical Science — Structure and Properties of Matter 2
- Physical Science — Waves and Information 1
- Physical Science — Waves and Information 2
- Physical Science — Waves and Their Application
- Physical Science — Motion and Stability

### Middle School (Grades 6–8)

- Earth and Space Science — History of Earth 1
- Earth and Space Science — History of Earth 2
- Earth and Space Science — Space Systems 1
- Earth and Space Science — Space Systems 2
- Earth and Space Science — Weather and Climate
- Earth and Space Science — Human Impacts
- Life Science — Growth, Development and Reproduction of Organisms 1
- Life Science — Growth, Development and Reproduction of Organisms 2
- Life Science — Matter and Energy in Organisms and Ecosystems
- Life Science — Independent Relationships in Ecosystems
- Life Science — Natural Selection and Adaptations 1
- Life Science — Natural Selection and Adaptations 2
- Life Science — Structure, Function and Information Processing 1
- Life Science — Structure, Function and Information Processing 2
- Physical Science — Structure and Property of Matter
- Physical Science — Chemical Reactions
- Physical Science — Waves and Electromagnetic Radiation 1
- Physical Science — Waves and Electromagnetic Radiation 2
- Physical Science — Forces and Interactions
- Physical Science — Energy

### **High School (Grades 9–12)**

- Earth and Space Science — History of Earth 1
- Earth and Space Science — History of Earth 2
- Earth and Space Science — Human Sustainability 1
- Earth and Space Science — Human Sustainability 2
- Earth and Space Science — Weather and Climate 1
- Earth and Space Science — Weather and Climate 2
- Earth and Space — Space Systems 1
- Earth and Space — Space Systems 2
- Life Science — Matter and Energy in Organisms and Ecosystems
- Life Science — Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems
- Life Science — Natural Selection and Evolution
- Life Science — Inheritance and Variation of Traits
- Life Science — Structure and Function 1
- Life Science — Structure and Function 2
- Physical Science — Energy
- Physical Science — Waves and Electromagnetic Radiation
- Physical Science — Forces and Interactions 1
- Physical Science — Forces and Interactions 2
- Physical Science — Structure and Property of Matter
- Physical Science — Chemical Reactions

Teachers can refer to the [Next Generation Science Standards Interim Assessments Quick Guide](#), which provides the focus of each block across elementary, middle, and high school. The listing of focal areas can be used during planning and the purposeful integration of interims into science instruction.

Cluster specifications presented by grade band in the following documents present guidelines for the development of items used to measure the breadth and complexities of the NGSS tasks.

[Next Generation Science Standard \(NGSS\) Cluster/Item Specifications for Grades 3-5](#)

[Next Generation Science Standards \(NGSS\) Cluster/Item Specifications for Middle School](#)

[Next Generation Science Standards \(NGSS\) Cluster/Item Specifications for High School](#)

For additional information on NGSS Interim Assessment items, view the brochure on [How to Access and Score NGSS Sample Items](#).

### **What types of items are on the interims?**

Below is a list of the available item types that might appear on a Smarter Balanced ELA or Mathematics, or NGSS Interim Assessment. All Smarter Balanced items included in the interim assessment blocks were developed as part of an overall item pool used to supply both the math and ELA interim and summative assessments. Alternatively, the NGSS interim items were developed specifically for interims, but they are very similar to items in the summative test bank. Each item across all content areas must pass a rigorous set of quality criteria and be piloted prior to placement on either assessment.

There are short item tutorials available to explain how to respond to each type of item. Tutorials are also available for students during the interim and summative assessments. Teachers can review these item types with students in advance of testing to build confidence and ensure understanding of the test format and item interactions.

- [Equation Response](#): displays a basic numeric keypad or a full array of mathematical operators, symbols, and functions that must be used to demonstrate an answer.
- [Evidence-Based Selected Response](#): refers to a multi-part question related to the accompanying reading passage. All parts must be answered before proceeding to the next question.

- [Writing Extended-Response Item](#): provides a box for the student to freely type a written response. An editing tool bar may be provided with options to format an essay.
- [Grid Item](#): is interactive and allows the student to use a number of mechanisms to demonstrate an answer. Mechanisms include dragging and dropping objects to different sections of the answer space, highlighting or selecting different sections of a given graphic in the answer space, plotting points and creating lines and shapes with action buttons provided at the top of the answer space, or a combination of these mechanisms.
- [Hot Text](#): gives the student the ability to highlight or move text. Words or groups of words can be selected, dragged, and rearranged. The student may also have the ability to highlight specific words or phrases.
- [Matching Item](#): allows the student to click within a table to classify concepts, statements, values, etc., according to the categories available.
- [Multi-Select Item](#): lists a selection of possible answers. The student may select multiple answer choices.
- [Multiple-Choice Item](#): lists a selection of possible answers. The student must select only one to indicate an answer choice.
- [Constructed Response Item](#): provides a box for the student to freely type an answer in.
- [Table Item](#): displays a table with missing information. Students may complete the table by entering an answer in the text box(es) displayed.

Students can gain familiarity with various item types by participating in a training test, which combines sample items that allow students to practice using the tools and features available within the online system.