

# Assessment Passage & Item Quality Criteria Checklists

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ELA/Literacy, Grades 3–12

Quality Checklist for Assessment Texts Worth Reading

Quality Checklist for Assessment Questions Worth Asking

# Assessment Passage & Item Quality Criteria Checklist

## ELA/Literacy Quality Checklist for Assessment Texts Worth Reading

The following checklist has been designed to help evaluators of ELA/literacy assessments determine if texts used to assess Reading and/or Writing align to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The checklist has been set up in a gated manner so that evaluators can quickly determine if or whether a text aligns to, or strays from, the expectations of the CCSS. If a text does not pass the criteria in Section 1 and cannot be moved to a different grade, the text should be removed from consideration. If a text does pass the criteria in Section 1 or passes by being moved to a different grade, the text should be evaluated against the additional criteria in Section 2.

Use the center column to explain each determination. Have the Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy open for continual reference. At the end of Section 2, rate the text as Accepted, Accepted Conditionally, or Rejected.

In this document, the word “text” refers to all kinds of stimuli used in Reading and Writing assessments, as appropriate, e.g., printed texts, video, audio, charts, graphs.

# Assessment Text Quality Criteria Checklist Section 1

**For evaluation of individual texts and sets of texts: Each text must meet all of the following criteria. A text that does not pass the criteria in this section and cannot be moved to a different grade does not need to be evaluated further.**

Criteria	Details	Evidence
<p><b>1.1 Quantitative measures of text complexity should determine grade-band placement:</b> Has the text been placed within the grade band indicated by a quantitative analysis (with the exception of some literary texts written in simple style)?</p>	<p>Every text should be accompanied by specific evidence that it has been analyzed with at least one research-based quantitative tool for grade-band placement, with the exceptions of poetry and drama. If quantitative data is not available, evaluators should obtain a Lexile or other rating for the text (see <a href="http://achievethecore.org/text-complexity">http://achievethecore.org/text-complexity</a>). Note that some literary texts, especially in high school, may be placed above the grade band indicated by quantitative data because of mature ideas and themes.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Move (to grade ____ )</p>
<p><b>1.2 Qualitative analyses of text complexity should determine grade level placement:</b> Has the text been placed at the grade level indicated by a qualitative analysis?</p>	<p>Every text should be accompanied by specific evidence that it has been analyzed with a qualitative measure for grade-level placement. If a qualitative analysis is not available, evaluators should use a tool that focuses on qualitative aspects of text complexity (see <a href="http://achievethecore.org/qualitative-text-analysis">http://achievethecore.org/qualitative-text-analysis</a>).</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Move (to grade ____ )</p>

# Assessment Text Quality Criteria Checklist Section 1

## Criteria

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### 1.3 Text quality is fundamental to text selection:

Does the text represent professional-quality literary or informational writing?

## Details

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The text should demonstrate coherence, thorough development of ideas, clear use of evidence and details, and effective structure. A history/social studies or science/technical text, especially, should reflect the factual accuracy and quality of writing that is produced by authorities in the particular academic discipline. To meet quality requirements, the text will most likely be previously published. If the text was “commissioned,” evaluate it closely for richness of content and clarity of organization, as many commissioned texts are thin and diffuse.

## Evidence

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### Rating:

- Yes  
 No

NOTE: (“Move” is not an option; poor quality texts should never be used)

### 1.4 All texts must align to the particulars of the grade-level Standards:

Do the characteristics of the text (e.g., story, literary nonfiction, historical account, scientific procedure) accurately represent the specific requirements of the Standards at the designated grade?

This requirement also applies to pairs or multiple texts; the Standards often have specific requirements for pairing texts.

### Rating:

- Yes  
 No  
 Move (to grade \_\_\_\_ )

# Assessment Text Quality Criteria Checklist Section 1

## Criteria

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**1.5 Audio or video texts must meet the quality criteria that other texts do:**

If a text is an audio or video stimulus, does it provide rich content and represent high-quality sound and/or viewing production?

## Details

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These texts must be content rich and have appropriate clarity and accents so that they can be clearly understood.

## Evidence

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### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A (not audio or visual)

NOTE: (“Move” is not an option; poor quality texts should never be used)

**If the text has any “No’s” for any one of the questions above, remove it from consideration.  
If the text has all “Yes” or “Moves,” proceed to Section 2.**

# Assessment Text Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

Texts that pass the first section must next meet the following criteria, as applicable, possibly after revisions.

Criteria	Details	Evidence
<p><b>2.1 Excerpts must be selected with care:</b> If the text is an excerpt from a larger work, does it carry a sense of completeness and maintain the intent of the original, and are edits for length made at the beginning or end of the piece, rather than in patchwork fashion?</p>	<p>If “No” is checked, recommend changes in the excerpting or reject the text and recommend replacing it with a more complete excerpt.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>
<p><b>2.2 Introductory material must include only the most necessary information:</b> If the text is presented with introductory material, does the introduction avoid summarizing or explaining the meaning of the text or giving students answers to questions?</p>	<p>If “No” is checked, suggest edits to the introduction.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>

# Assessment Text Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

## Criteria

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### 2.3 Illustrations must add value:

If a text includes visual elements, are they related to the central ideas of the text, and do they provide important additional information?

## Details

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If “No” is checked, suggest adding or deleting specific illustrations.

## Evidence

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### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

### 2.4 Expository text structures are desirable for informational texts:

If an informational text uses chronological rather than expository structures, is there sufficient justification, in terms of quality and/or subject matter, for its use?

If “No” is checked, suggest replacing the text with one that uses expository structures unless there is sufficient justification for its use.

### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

# Assessment Text Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

## Criteria

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### 2.5 Each text must fall within an acceptable range of word count:

Does the text fall within an acceptable range for word count at the indicated grade level?

## Details

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If “No” is checked, reject the text or suggest edits for length.

## Evidence

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### Rating:

- Yes  
 No

### 2.6 Paired or multiple texts must have a clear and meaningful relationship with each other:

If texts are paired, are the potential points of comparison significant (not superficial), such as theme, amount and quality of evidence, differences in emphasis, distinguishable structures, changes to derivative text?

If “No” is checked, reject one or more of the texts and, if possible, make recommendations for replacements.

### Rating:

- Yes  
 No  
 N/A

# Assessment Text Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

## Criteria

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**2.7 For tasks that simulate research, one text should serve as an “anchor” text:**

Does the first text in the set provide foundational knowledge and lead naturally to additional reading and exploration?

## Details

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If “No” is checked, suggest another text as the anchor or recommend replacing one or more texts.

## Evidence

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### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

### Overall Rating for Checklist #2:

- Accepted (all Yes)
- Accepted conditionally, with comments to be addressed
- Rejected

# Assessment Passage & Item Quality Criteria Checklist

## ELA/Literacy Quality Checklist for Assessment Questions Worth Asking

The following checklist has been designed to help evaluators of ELA/literacy assessments determine if individual test questions (items) in Reading and/or Writing assessments align to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The checklist has been set up in a gated manner so that evaluators can quickly determine whether an item aligns to, or strays from, the expectations of the CCSS. If an item does not pass the applicable criteria in Section 1, the item should be removed from consideration. If an item does pass the applicable criteria in Section 1, it should be evaluated against the additional criteria in Section 2.

Use the center column to record each determination. Have the Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy open for continual reference. At the end of Section 2, the item can be marked as Accepted, Accepted Conditionally, or Rejected.

In this document, the word “item” refers to all formats of test questions.

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 1

**For evaluation of individual items and sets of items: Each item must meet all of the following criteria. An item that does not pass the criteria in this section does not need to be evaluated further.**

Criteria	Details	Evidence
<p><b>1.1 Reading test questions must be text-dependent, requiring analysis of text and use of evidence:</b> If it is a Reading test question, does the item require close reading and careful analysis of the text—by asking for either direct or indirect use of textual evidence, as required by Reading Standard 1?</p>	<p>Every Reading item must require students to use evidence from the text either directly, by citing textual evidence, or indirectly, by relying on textual evidence to make a claim or inference.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>
<p><b>1.2 Writing prompts should be text-dependent, requiring analysis of text and use of evidence:</b> If it is a Writing prompt, does the item require students to analyze text and provide textual evidence in their response, as required by Writing Standard 9?</p>	<p>If the prompt calls for narrative writing, this requirement can be marked as N/A; however, narrative prompts that do require textual analysis are more desirable than those that do not.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 1

## Criteria

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### 1.3 Reading test questions and Writing prompts must be worthy of student attention:

Does the item focus on the central ideas or important particulars of the text, rather than insignificant or peripheral aspects?

## Details

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Reading items and Writing prompts must allow students to deliver significant insights about the text.

## Evidence

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### Rating:

- Yes  
 No

### 1.4 Reading test questions and Writing prompts must align to grade-level Standards:

Does the item genuinely (not superficially) align to the intent of the grade-level Standard(s) indicated in the item metadata?

Reading items must align to the intent of at least one Reading Standard (in addition to Standard 1), avoiding mere surface treatment of any Standard. Writing prompts must be designed to elicit one of the three types of writing named in Writing Standards 1, 2, and 3 (as well as aligning to Standard 9). A “blended” writing type is also aligned.

### Rating:

- Yes  
 No

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 1

## Criteria

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**1.5 Items assessing vocabulary must focus on words and phrases that are important to central ideas in the text:**

If the test question is a Reading item or Writing prompt assessing vocabulary, does it assess a word or phrase that is important to understanding the central ideas of the text, giving students a “payoff” in gaining greater understanding the meaning of the text?

## Details

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Items should avoid focusing on unusual words or turns of phrase that may stand out as interesting but do not advance an understanding of the text, nor should vocabulary items be “stand-alone” (e.g., based on a single phrase or sentence without any reading passage).

## Evidence

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**Rating:**

- Yes
- No
- N/A

**If the text has any “No’s” for any one of the applicable questions above, remove it from consideration.  
If the text has all “Yes” and appropriate “N/A’s,” proceed to Section 2.**

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

Items that pass the first section must next meet the following criteria, as applicable, possibly after revisions.

Criteria	Details	Evidence
<p><b>2.1 Items must align to the Standards (see 1.5 above) but may require revisions in wording or in the Standards designated for alignment:</b></p> <p>Is the alignment of the item to Reading and/or Writing Standards as precise as possible?</p>	<p>If “No” is checked, suggest revisions in wording and/or a different alignment, or reject the item.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p><b>2.2 The language used in Reading items and Writing prompts should be text-specific, as appropriate:</b></p> <p>Does the item use language specific to the text, avoiding generic or “canned” items that could be used with any text?</p>	<p>If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions unless the use of generic language is appropriate to the Standard being tested (e.g., “What is the central idea?”).</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p><b>2.3 The language used in Reading items and Writing prompts must be clear and concise:</b></p> <p>Will students readily understand the language in the item because it employs vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to the grade level?</p>	<p>If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions.</p>	<p><b>Rating:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

## Criteria

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## Details

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## Evidence

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### 2.4 Each item must exemplify high Standards of technical quality:

If the item uses a selected-response format, is the item free from internal clueing (e.g., the options do not repeat words in the stem; the grammatical relationship between stem and options is correct for all options; the correct response is not more specific than the options; the correct answer does not simply paraphrase words in the text)?

If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions\*.

### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

If the item uses a selected-response format, are the distractors plausible but incorrect (not unintended or arguable correct answers), are general statements precise and accurate, and can claims and inferences be supported by textual evidence?

If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions\*.

### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

If the item asks students to generate a written response, is there a clear description of the task, accompanied by information for students about the criteria for scoring?

If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions\*.

### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

## Criteria

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## Details

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## Evidence

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If the item has two parts, is the relationship between the two parts clear and logical, and is there a plausible link between the options in the two parts?

If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions.

### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

If the item uses computer delivery, does it use technology to approach the text in ways other item types cannot, providing value beyond that of a non-technology enhanced item?

If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions.

### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

If the item uses computer delivery, are the directions for use of technology clear and easy to follow?

If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions.

### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

## Criteria

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If the item assesses vocabulary, does it assess the kinds of words and phrases delineated in the grade-level Standards?

## Details

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If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions.

## Evidence

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### Rating:

- Yes
  - No
  - N/A
- 

If the item calls for comparison or synthesis, is the question related to central (rather than trivial) aspects of the text (e.g., amount and quality of evidence, differences in emphasis, distinguishable structures, changes to derivative text)?

If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions.

### Rating:

- Yes
  - No
  - N/A
- 

If the item contains a graphic organizer or similar format, does the organizer or format add value to the item by allowing students to demonstrate understanding of the text in a way that a traditional item would not?

If “No” is checked, reject the item or suggest revisions.

### Rating:

- Yes
- No
- N/A

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

## Criteria

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## Details

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## Rating

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### 2.5 Sets of items must provide deep and comprehensive coverage of the text:

As a whole, does the set of items require students to read the full text carefully and show their understanding of the central ideas, allowing and requiring students to provide deep insights rather than skim the surface?

If “No” is checked, reject the set or suggest ideas for additional items.

### Rating:

- Yes  
 No

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As a whole, does the set address as many different Standards as appropriate, with items based on the individual characteristics of the text rather than on a forced standard coverage?

If “No” is checked, reject the set or suggest ideas for addition or deletion of items.

### Rating:

- Yes  
 No

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As a whole, is the set of items large and robust enough so that a test form is likely to have an appropriate balance between the number of texts and numbers of questions, giving students sufficient incentive to read closely and carefully?

If “No” is checked, reject the set or suggest ideas for additional items.

### Rating:

- Yes  
 No

# Assessment Item Quality Criteria Checklist Section 2

## Criteria

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As a whole, is the set of items free from clueing (so that one item does not provide the correct answer for another)?

## Details

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If “No” is checked, reject the set or suggest ideas for revisions.

## Rating

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### Rating:

- Yes  
 No

### Overall Rating for Checklist #2:

- Accepted (all yes)       Accepted conditionally, with comments to be addressed       Rejected

\* Consider asking for a rationale for every answer option (MC and TE items) and a sample response for every score point (CR items). Providing rationales and sample responses is best practice in assessment development and tends to generate better quality items.