

# General Instructions for Administering Braille Versions of STAAR

## Introduction

Braille versions of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) in English are available to eligible students. Students have the option to take STAAR online using a screen reader and a refreshable braille display. This option is only available on English versions of STAAR grades 3–8 reading, grade 8 social studies, English I, English II, and U.S. History. The decision to provide a student with a braille test booklet or access to an online test using a screen reader and refreshable braille display should be made in accordance with specific accommodation policies located on the [Accommodation Resources](#) webpage. It is recommended that the teacher of students with visual impairments be involved in that decision. This set of instructions provides general information about how to administer the braille version of STAAR. This document is included in the braille kits.

## Test Materials

Districts should indicate “Braille” in the Test Attributes file for each student to receive braille materials. Students registered for online assessments may access paper braille materials during the online administration if the student chooses to do so. The braille test booklets have single-sided pages and single spacing of braille lines. Each subject-area test is presented in a separate booklet.

Both contracted and uncontracted braille test materials are available in Unified English Braille (UEB). Braille orders will default to UEB contracted braille, unless otherwise specified. Mathematics and science assessments will be provided in Nemeth Code within UEB context.

Uncontracted braille tests may be ordered only for students who use uncontracted braille materials routinely during classroom instruction. Districts will indicate the braille format in the Test Attributes file for each student taking a braille version of an assessment. The Test Attributes file must indicate braille and be submitted by the deadline indicated in the Calendar of Events. A corresponding ink-print test booklet will be included in each braille kit. If a student taking a braille test is eligible for an oral administration, the test administrator may use the ink-print test booklet included in the braille kit.

## Preparing Test Materials Prior to Administration

A district or campus is required to prepare any necessary materials to make subject-area tests accessible to students with a visual impairment who otherwise cannot access the test content. The contents of a braille assessment may be previewed by the test administrator during the district-determined preview window. The preview may take place any school day prior to the subject-area test, during the testing week. Districts and campuses are responsible for keeping testing materials secure. When previewing the materials, consider the following:

- Designate a secure location (e.g., campus, room, office) to view test materials, including all materials in braille kits, specific braille instructions, and photocopies of large-print booklets.

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- Determine a time for the test administrator to preview materials to keep access limited.
- Using a Materials Control Form gives testing personnel the opportunity to track material check-in and check-out times and dates.
- Designate a location to securely store all test materials for the administration, including any supplemental materials needed for student accessibility.

### Photocopying of Ink-Print Test Booklet

A student may have a visual impairment that requires the use of two types of test materials. For example, a student may need to use a braille test booklet in conjunction with a large-print test booklet. In this situation, the ink-print test booklet included in the braille kit will need to be photocopied. A campus may photocopy secure test material for a student who has a visual impairment without submitting an Accommodation Request Form to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The contents of a braille assessment and the STAAR large-print test booklet may be previewed by the test administrator during the district-determined preview window. The preview may take place any school day prior to the subject-area test, during the testing week. Districts and campuses are responsible for keeping testing materials secure. There is no need to indicate on the answer document that this procedure was used; however, the following guidelines must be adhered to:

- The district must maintain test security and confidentiality when photocopying test materials. All standard test security policies and procedures must be followed. Refer to the [District and Campus Coordinator Resources](#).
- Photocopying must be done within the district by a trained test administrator who has signed an Oath of Test Security and Confidentiality. Information about this requirement and security oaths is available in the [Security](#) section of the *Coordinator Resources*.
- The test booklet may not be taken apart for photocopying.
- If the mathematics test is enlarged, the state-supplied ruler (as part of the reference materials) must also be enlarged to the same degree to ensure graphics that require the use of a ruler result in the intended measurement. If a mathematics test is photocopied but not enlarged, the copier must be set to copy at 100% and the scaling option set to “no scaling” or “zero” to ensure that graphics result in the intended measurement.
- The memory on the copier must be cleared after photocopying secure test booklets.
- All photocopies must be returned with the nonscorable shipment.

### Specific Braille Instructions

Specific braille instructions supplement the appropriate test administrator manual and are designed to help a test administrator understand and meet the needs of a student taking a braille test. Specific braille instructions are included in each braille kit. Unless otherwise stated in these instructions, the directions contained in the appropriate test administrator manual must be followed.

After the braille kit arrives, but prior to the day of testing, the test administrator should read the specific braille instructions to determine which materials or procedures a student may need for testing.

Specific braille instructions are divided into three sections.

- **General Information:** This section gives the test administrator information about the braille test booklet and how it compares to the ink-print test booklet. Instructions on how to transcribe the student's responses onto the answer document are also included.
- **Specific Instructions:** This section provides information for the test administrator about how a particular braille test differs from the ink-print version. This includes related administration instructions and information about test questions that have been altered to ensure that the test is accessible to a student who reads braille. For example, test questions with a visual element that cannot be rendered in braille will include a description of what is depicted in the ink-print version of the test. Although such descriptions are provided in the braille booklet, the test administrator may read them aloud from the specific braille instructions at a student's request. This section also informs test administrators of any manipulatives (e.g., a braille ruler or three-dimensional geometric figure) that a student will need in order to complete the test.
- **Test Administration Directions:** This section includes general and specific information about the braille test that should be read to the students (e.g., whether special symbols or standard braille codes are used on the test). Any information that is on the Transcriber's Notes page in the braille test booklet is also provided in this section.

For students who are eligible to receive content and language supports and are taking STAAR braille, including students using a refreshable braille display, districts should:

- submit a Special Administration of an Online Assessment form in TIDE to receive a STAAR with Embedded Supports test booklet, and
- place an order for braille materials in TIDE by indicating "Braille" under the *Presentation* tool field. Then select "UEB Contracted" under the *Refreshable Braille Type* tool field. To order uncontracted braille materials, select "Braille" under the *Presentation* tool field and then select "UEB Uncontracted" under the *Refreshable Braille Type* field. A braille type must be selected for paper or online tests. If a braille type is not selected, braille orders will default to contracted braille.

If a paper with embedded supports test is used in conjunction with the braille assessment, it may be necessary to view the braille assessment with the paper administration guide to assist with preparing materials for administration. The contents of a braille assessment and the paper with embedded supports test may be previewed by the test administrator during the district-determined preview window. The preview may take place any school day prior to the subject-area test, during the testing week. Districts and campuses are responsible for keeping testing materials secure.

For students who are taking STAAR using a refreshable braille display, the student will not be able to use the speech-to-text functionality. Districts should continue to use the same process for transcription that is being used in daily instruction in the classroom. For example, districts may use Dragon speech recognition software for the transcription of the student composition.

## Training

Districts should plan appropriately to ensure that individuals who are administering the braille version of the assessments have received training in these procedures and special instructions prior to testing.

Campus testing coordinators are responsible for issuing the test materials to the appropriate test administrators. It is important that test administrators be given their test administration materials, including all applicable specific braille instructions, in time to prepare for testing, especially if additional accommodations are needed. Campus coordinators are also responsible for monitoring braille administrations to ensure that they are conducted, to the greatest extent possible, in the same manner as the administration of non-braille tests.

### **Student Response Procedures**

The test administrator and the student should determine the best method for responding to the test questions based on what the student is most comfortable using. Review the Basic Transcribing designated support policy document found in the [Coordinator Resources](#) for response mode options. For example, “Student writes responses on another workspace” allows for the options of using an electronic notetaker, braille, scratch paper, dry-erase board, word processor, etc., for multiple-choice questions, griddable questions, or writing prompts. Special consideration should be given to the type of paper that a student will need to generate a response for the writing prompt. The student’s response in its entirety must fit onto the correct page on the answer document that contains 26 lines. Twenty-six lines of handwritten text is approximately 1,750 typed characters (not including spaces) or 3–4 braille pages (depending on the size of braille paper).

Students with a visual impairment may need to test in a separate setting in cases where their methods of response might distract other students. Any student responding verbally must receive an individual administration, which is an accessibility feature. This information can be found on the Accommodation Resources webpage.

Braille test booklets have full braille cells that correspond to the number of boxes on the answer document for griddable questions. Students should be informed that they must limit their response to the number of full braille cells presented. The braille kits include mathematics and science reference materials that match the format provided in the ink-print test booklets. If a student has written on the reference materials, the materials must be destroyed after testing.

### **Student Materials and Designated Supports**

All materials and equipment needed by the student, including designated supports, should be provided before testing begins. Refer to each specific policy document found in the [Coordinator Resources](#) for student eligibility criteria and special instructions.

- The test administrator should have available braille paper, typing paper, bold-lined paper, raised-line paper, pens, crayons, pencils, 20/20 pens, markers, placeholders, and any manipulatives or reference materials required by the specific braille instructions. Special consideration should also be given to lighting conditions for students with low vision.
- Students who take the braille version of the tests at any grade level may use slates and styluses, electronic notetakers, word processors, projection or low-vision devices (such as a closed-circuit television [CCTV]), braille rulers, tactile drawing boards (such as a Draftsman), tactile graph boards, Cranmer modified abacuses, or speech-output calculators.

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- Students taking the braille version of the grade 8 science assessment may use a periodic table that is routinely used in the classroom in addition to the Periodic Table of Elements included as reference material in the test booklet.
- Students taking the braille version of the grade 8 mathematics assessment, grade 8 science assessment, or Algebra I assessment may use an Audio Graphing Calculator (AGC). Other programs that perform graphing functions may be used except for those that include a computer algebra system (CAS), unless the CAS is disabled.
- For students who are eligible for content and language supports and take the braille version of STAAR, the test administrator must use the appropriate STAAR with Embedded Supports Secure Test Instructions. This guide provides picture descriptions of content and language support images and graphics (e.g., charts, tables, graphs) that may be reproduced for accessibility (e.g., braille graphics, pairing graphics with tactile symbols, texts, or objects, enlarging, or projecting). These instructions are not meant to replace any STAAR administration materials but must be used in conjunction with the appropriate specific braille instructions for the test being administered.

If a student needs a support not described on the Accommodation Resources webpage, a request for an Other designated support may be submitted to TEA.

### Students Requiring More Time to Complete Testing

Students with visual impairments who take a braille test may require considerably more time to complete the test than students without a visual impairment. If the student typically requires more time than is allotted for testing, refer to the Extra Time (Same Day) designated support policy document in the [Coordinator Resources](#). If extra time during the school day is not sufficient in meeting the needs of the student, and that student needs an extra day to test, an Accommodation Request Form does not need to be submitted to TEA for approval. The appropriate team of people at the local level can determine that a student taking a braille version of STAAR needs an extra day to test; however, the following guidelines MUST be adhered to:

- The district must maintain test security and confidentiality throughout the extended testing period since the student will be taking a secure state assessment at a different time than other testers. All standard test security policies and procedures must be followed. Refer to the [Coordinator Resources](#).
- Students will be permitted to test only over two full, regularly scheduled, consecutive school days. Each day of testing must not extend beyond seven hours.
- Each subject-area test must be administered in the same order as they are for all other students. The student must finish one subject-area test before beginning the next. This can happen in one of two ways. The second test may be started the same day that the student finishes the first test, or the student may wait until the following day to start the next subject-area test.
- When determining how a subject-area test should be divided into two days, you must adhere to these requirements.
  - On day two of testing, the student may not return to any selections, test questions, or written responses viewed on day one.

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- For all reading tests, including the reading portion of the English I and English II tests, all test questions accompanying a selection or paired selection (i.e., multiple choice, short answer) must be completed on the same day they were begun. A student should not begin reading a selection unless the test administrator is certain that the student will have sufficient time to complete all of the test questions that accompany the selection.
- For grades 3-8 reading tests and the writing portion of the English I and English II tests, all test questions accompanying a revising or editing selection must be completed on the same day they were begun. Also, a student's response to an end-of-course (EOC) writing prompt must be completed on the same day it was begun. A student should not begin reading a selection or reading and responding to a writing prompt unless the test administrator is certain that the student will have sufficient time to complete all of it.
- The schedule for the return of testing materials must be maintained to ensure that test results are received by the posted date. Therefore, all testing must be completed by the applicable due date for make-up sessions listed on the Student Assessment Testing Calendar.
- It may be necessary to test the student in a different setting to maintain test security and confidentiality.
- The test administrator or campus coordinator must indicate that the student received an extra day to test by marking the XD bubble in the ACCOMM. field on the student's answer document. If the student was eligible to receive any other designated supports, these should also be recorded per the guidelines in the specific policy document.
- It is recommended that the student's parents be notified regarding the altered testing schedule.

### Transcribing

Student responses for all braille tests must be transferred to the student's answer document. If this is not done, the student's responses cannot be scored. For students taking a braille assessment, eligibility for the Basic Transcribing designated support does not need to be determined and does not need to be documented on the answer document. However, the test administrator transcribing the student's response must do so in accordance with the transcribing guidelines and should refer to this document on the [Accommodations Resources](#) webpage. If the student has a TEA-approved request for the Complex Transcribing designated support, guidelines for this type of administration will be provided.

An answer document is provided with each braille test. The instructions for completing the student identification information and the FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY section of the answer document can be found in the appropriate test administrator manual in the [Coordinator Resources](#).

Transcribing may be done by the test administrator during or after testing. The student's responses should be transcribed as follows:

- Transcribe the student's responses onto the answer document exactly as indicated by the student.

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- Write “Transcribed by (NAME) because student used the braille version” on the answer document in the space under the test information field.
- All transcriptions must be done in No. 2 pencil.

If TEA-allowed or TEA-approved technology-based accommodations (e.g., word processor, speech-to-text) are used by a student during testing, TEA guidelines on the use of this technology must be followed to maintain the security and validity of the assessment. Although some technology may be useful during a daily academic setting, technology that has functionality that violates TEA guidelines cannot be used during a state assessment. The technology guidelines for state assessments can be found on the Accommodation Resources webpage.

The braille (BR) bubble must be marked in the ACCOMM. field on the student’s answer document since the student is taking a braille version of STAAR. If a student had access to other designated supports in addition to taking the braille test, the corresponding bubble(s) should also be marked in this field. This information can be found in the [Coordinator Resources](#).

### Returning Materials

All braille materials, including handwritten, typed, or brailled responses, must be returned to the campus coordinator. All answer documents onto which students’ responses have been transcribed should be returned in the shipment of scorable materials. The answer documents for students taking braille versions of the tests will be processed in the same manner as all other answer documents.

Contact TEA’s Student Assessment Division at 512-463-9536 if you have any questions regarding the administration of braille tests.

The braille booklets, all ink-print test booklets, and specific braille instructions should be returned in the nonscorable shipment. Any brailled, typed, or handwritten responses on scratch paper that include student notes, answers to multiple-choice questions, or responses to written compositions must be destroyed after testing. For additional information about what to return in the nonscorable shipment, refer to the [Coordinator Resources](#).