

# The English Language Learner CAN DO Booklet

**Grades 3-5**

**INCLUDES:**

Performance Definitions  
CAN DO Descriptors

For use in conjunction with the  
WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards

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## Foreword: The WIDA English Language Learner CAN DO Booklet

The WIDA Consortium, from its conception, envisioned a system of standards and assessments that would assist schools in teaching academic language to English Language Learners (ELLs). This dream, now a reality, includes the development of practical tools to guide teachers when designing and implementing lessons, monitoring student progress, determining student language proficiency levels, collaborating across programs, and conveying results to ELLs and their parents.

The *WIDA English Language Learner CAN DO Booklet* is a very important contribution to meeting these goals. The booklet complements the *WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards* and provides a valuable set of resources aligned to the Performance Definitions for the levels of English language proficiency. WIDA's professional development program works with these resources to assist teachers in embedding academic English into content lessons and working school-wide to ensure the academic success of our culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

The WIDA Consortium recognizes that as a teacher of ELLs, you have a challenging but crucial job within your school. We sincerely hope that this booklet and other WIDA resources help to make your work more effective and your students more successful both in learning English and mastering challenging academic content.



Timothy Boals, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
WIDA Consortium

## Introduction

The resources contained in this booklet are intended to support classroom instruction. As with all WIDA products and services, they address language proficiency in relation to five English language proficiency (ELP) standards:

- Social and Instructional Language
- The Language of Language Arts
- The Language of Mathematics
- The Language of Science
- The Language of Social Studies

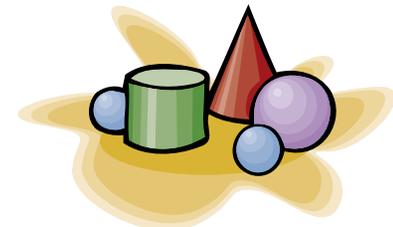
The following table displays the major components of WIDA’s standards-based system. The bold-faced components are included in this booklet and listed in the order in which they appear.

<b>Components of WIDA’s Standards-based System</b>	
<b>Standards-based Component</b>	<b>Distinguishing Feature</b>
Strands of Model Performance Indicators as representative of the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards	Illustrate how English language learners process and use language for each English language <b>proficiency standard, language domain,</b> and language proficiency <b>level</b> <i>by grade level cluster</i>
<b>Performance Definitions</b>	Outline how English language learners process and use language for each <b>level</b> of language proficiency <i>in grades K-12</i>
<b>CAN DO Descriptors</b>	Describe how English language learners process and use language for each <b>language domain</b> and level of language proficiency <i>by grade level cluster</i>
Speaking and Writing Rubrics	Document how English language learners process and use language in the domain of <b>speaking or writing</b> for each <b>level</b> of language proficiency based on three criteria: linguistic complexity, vocabulary usage, and language control <i>in grades K-12</i>

The resources contained in this booklet are intended to support classroom instruction. The **Performance Definitions** (see page 4) provide criteria that shape each of the six levels of English language proficiency. The three bullets within each proficiency level in the Performance Definitions represent:

- **Linguistic Complexity**—the amount and quality of speech or writing for a given situation
- **Vocabulary Usage**—the specificity of words or phrases for a given context
- **Language Control**—the comprehensibility of the communication based on the amount and types of errors

The Performance Definitions provide a concise, global overview of language expectations for each level of English language proficiency. They span the spectrum of grade levels which means that educators must interpret the meaning of the Definitions according to students' cognitive development due to age, their grade level, their diversity of educational experiences, and any diagnosed learning disabilities (if applicable). For example, in level 5, “extended oral or written discourse” would probably be indicated by a 1st grade student’s ability to orally retell a story in a series of sentences using simple transition words. However, a middle school student might be expected to exhibit linguistic complexity at level 5 by incorporating a variety of sentence structures in an essay several paragraphs in



length. It is important to recognize that the Performance Definitions are the basis for use of other standards-based resources such as the CAN DO Descriptors.

The **CAN DO Descriptors** (see pages 6-7) are the centerpiece of this booklet, designed to support teachers by providing them with information on the language students are able to understand and produce in the classroom. What is unique about the CAN DO Descriptors is that they apply to all five English language proficiency standards, which means they provide an opportunity to link language development across all academic content areas. The Descriptors are intended to be used in tandem with the Performance Definitions. This is because the quantity and quality of language expected at a particular level of language proficiency may not be fully indicated within the CAN DO Descriptor for each language domain and proficiency level.

For example, the CAN DO Descriptors show that students may be able to “*identify*” at various levels of language proficiency, but the language (linguistic complexity, vocabulary usage, and language control) they use will vary tremendously. At one end of the spectrum, beginning English language learners may *identify* by pointing or using short words or phrases, whereas at the end of the language development continuum, students will begin to *identify* complex themes and ideas described in detailed technical language.



## Performance Definitions for the Levels of English Language Proficiency in Grades K-12

At the given level of English language proficiency, English language learners will process, understand, produce, or use:

<b>6</b> <b>Reaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level</li> <li>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level</li> <li>• oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers</li> </ul>
<b>5</b> <b>Bridging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specialized or technical language of the content areas</li> <li>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports</li> <li>• oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade-level material</li> </ul>
<b>4</b> <b>Expanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific and some technical language of the content areas</li> <li>• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences, or paragraphs</li> <li>• oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</li> </ul>
<b>3</b> <b>Developing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general and some specific language of the content areas</li> <li>• expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs</li> <li>• oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written, narrative, or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</li> </ul>
<b>2</b> <b>Beginning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general language related to the content areas</li> <li>• phrases or short sentences</li> <li>• oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one- to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</li> </ul>
<b>1</b> <b>Entering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas</li> <li>• words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-, choice, or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</li> <li>• oral language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support</li> </ul>



## Grade Level Cluster CAN DO Descriptors

The grade level cluster CAN DO Descriptors have been created by teachers, primarily for teachers, who work with English language learners throughout the consortium. During 2007-08, over 900 teachers and administrators participated in refining and validating five grade level clusters of Descriptors from the original document spanning the K-12 spectrum. These Descriptors for the four language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and five levels of English language proficiency are based on the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards.

### Interpretation of the CAN DO Descriptors

To maintain the succinctness of the individual statements, some basic assumptions need to be made in interpreting the CAN DO Descriptors.

1. Sensory, graphic, or interactive support are present through language proficiency level 4, Expanding.
2. English language learners can process or produce the **language** associated with the stated language functions.
3. Linguistic complexity, vocabulary usage, and language control increase incrementally as students move from one English language proficiency level to the next.

The CAN DO Descriptors are a sampling of the language expectations of English language learners as they travel along the continuum of English language development. Unlike the strands of model performance indicators that scaffold across levels of language proficiency, the CAN DO Descriptors function independently within a given level of language proficiency.

## Uses for the CAN DO Descriptors

The CAN DO Descriptors are a resource, in addition to the English language proficiency standards, to use in classrooms with English language learners. As an instructional assessment tool, language teachers may:

- Share the Descriptors with classroom teachers and administrators to describe the second language acquisition process around the levels of English language proficiency
- Provide resource teachers, such as Title I or literacy coaches, additional information about English language learners
- Use to plan with tutors or mentors who work with English language learners
- Develop or co-develop lessons and units of study with differentiated language objectives
- Set language goals with their English language learners
- Explain to parents students' progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Suggest language goals to be incorporated into Individual Education Programs (IEPs) for English language learners with diagnosed disabilities
- Translate English language proficiency test scores (i.e., ACCESS for ELLs®, W-APT™, and WIDA MODEL™) into classroom practice
- Observe and note levels of student performance as a precursor to using WIDA Speaking and Writing Rubrics for formative assessment
- Use the Descriptors to advocate on behalf of English language learners



## CAN DO Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 3-5

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the **language** needed to:

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 - Reaching
LISTENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Point to stated pictures, words, or phrases</li> <li>Follow one-step oral directions (e.g., physically or through drawings)</li> <li>Identify objects, figures, people from oral statements or questions (e.g., “Which one is a rock?”)</li> <li>Match classroom oral language to daily routines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Categorize content-based pictures or objects from oral descriptions</li> <li>Arrange pictures or objects per oral information</li> <li>Follow two-step oral directions</li> <li>Draw in response to oral descriptions</li> <li>Evaluate oral information (e.g., about lunch options)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow multi-step oral directions</li> <li>Identify illustrated main ideas from paragraph-level oral discourse</li> <li>Match literal meanings of oral descriptions or oral reading to illustrations</li> <li>Sequence pictures from oral stories, processes, or procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret oral information and apply to new situations</li> <li>Identify illustrated main ideas and supporting details from oral discourse</li> <li>Infer from and act on oral information</li> <li>Role play the work of authors, mathematicians, scientists, historians from oral readings, videos, or multi-media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out oral instructions containing grade-level, content-based language</li> <li>Construct models or use manipulatives to problem-solve based on oral discourse</li> <li>Distinguish between literal and figurative language in oral discourse</li> <li>Form opinions of people, places, or ideas from oral scenarios</li> </ul>	
SPEAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Express basic needs or conditions</li> <li>Name pre-taught objects, people, diagrams, or pictures</li> <li>Recite words or phrases from pictures of everyday objects and oral modeling</li> <li>Answer yes/no and choice questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask simple, everyday questions (e.g., “Who is absent?”)</li> <li>Restate content-based facts</li> <li>Describe pictures, events, objects, or people using phrases or short sentences</li> <li>Share basic social information with peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer simple content-based questions</li> <li>Re/tell short stories or events</li> <li>Make predictions or hypotheses from discourse</li> <li>Offer solutions to social conflict</li> <li>Present content-based information</li> <li>Engage in problem-solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer opinion questions with supporting details</li> <li>Discuss stories, issues, and concepts</li> <li>Give content-based oral reports</li> <li>Offer creative solutions to issues/problems</li> <li>Compare/contrast content-based functions and relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justify/defend opinions or explanations with evidence</li> <li>Give content-based presentations using technical vocabulary</li> <li>Sequence steps in grade-level problem-solving</li> <li>Explain in detail results of inquiry (e.g., scientific experiments)</li> </ul>	

The CAN DO Descriptors work in conjunction with the WIDA Performance Definitions of the English language proficiency standards. The Performance Definitions use three criteria (1. linguistic complexity; 2. vocabulary usage; and 3. language control) to describe the increasing quality and quantity of students’ language processing and use across the levels of language proficiency.

## CAN DO Descriptors: Grade Level Cluster 3-5

For the given level of English language proficiency and with visual, graphic, or interactive support through Level 4, English language learners can process or produce the **language** needed to:

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 - Reaching
READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match icons or diagrams with words/concepts</li> <li>Identify cognates from first language, as applicable</li> <li>Make sound/symbol/word relations</li> <li>Match illustrated words/phrases in differing contexts (e.g., on the board, in a book)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify facts and explicit messages from illustrated text</li> <li>Find changes to root words in context</li> <li>Identify elements of story grammar (e.g., characters, setting)</li> <li>Follow visually supported written directions (e.g., "Draw a star in the sky.")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret information or data from charts and graphs</li> <li>Identify main ideas and some details</li> <li>Sequence events in stories or content-based processes</li> <li>Use context clues and illustrations to determine meaning of words/phrases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classify features of various genres of text (e.g., "and they lived happily ever after"—fairy tales)</li> <li>Match graphic organizers to different texts (e.g., compare/contrast with Venn diagram)</li> <li>Find details that support main ideas</li> <li>Differentiate between fact and opinion in narrative and expository text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize information from multiple related sources</li> <li>Answer analytical questions about grade-level text</li> <li>Identify, explain, and give examples of figures of speech</li> <li>Draw conclusions from explicit and implicit text at or near grade level</li> </ul>	
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Label objects, pictures, or diagrams from word/phrase banks</li> <li>Communicate ideas by drawing</li> <li>Copy words, phrases, and short sentences</li> <li>Answer oral questions with single words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make lists from labels or with peers</li> <li>Complete/produce sentences from word/phrase banks or walls</li> <li>Fill in graphic organizers, charts, and tables</li> <li>Make comparisons using real-life or visually-supported materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce simple expository or narrative text</li> <li>String related sentences together</li> <li>Compare/contrast content-based information</li> <li>Describe events, people, processes, procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take notes using graphic organizers</li> <li>Summarize content-based information</li> <li>Author multiple forms of writing (e.g., expository, narrative, persuasive) from models</li> <li>Explain strategies or use of information in solving problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce extended responses of original text approaching grade level</li> <li>Apply content-based information to new contexts</li> <li>Connect or integrate personal experiences with literature/content</li> <li>Create grade-level stories or reports</li> </ul>	

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