



Washington Educator Skills Tests—Basic® (WEST-B®)

WEST–B Test-Taking Strategies

The WEST–B is a test of basic knowledge and skills that candidates are required to take for admission to a Washington teacher preparation program and to work as an educator in Washington schools. The best preparation for this test is to have studied consistently throughout your preparation both before and in college. At the point when you are preparing to take the test, effective preparation requires systematic study. Remember that you are not only preparing for a test, but also reviewing content that will be an important part of your responsibilities as an educator.

The information in this document is designed to help candidates taking the WEST–B:

- Understand the structure and content of the test
- Develop a study plan
- Learn strategies for successful test-taking

For information regarding who must take a WEST test and which test(s) you need to take, visit the OSPI Certification website at <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/Teacher/teachertesting.aspx>.

Understanding the Structure and Content of the Test

The skills assessed by the WEST–B are described in the test framework that is available to view or print by selecting "[Prepare](#)" and then "[WEST–B Test Frameworks](#)" on the WEST website. The sections below describe how to use the test framework to understand both the design and content of the WEST–B.

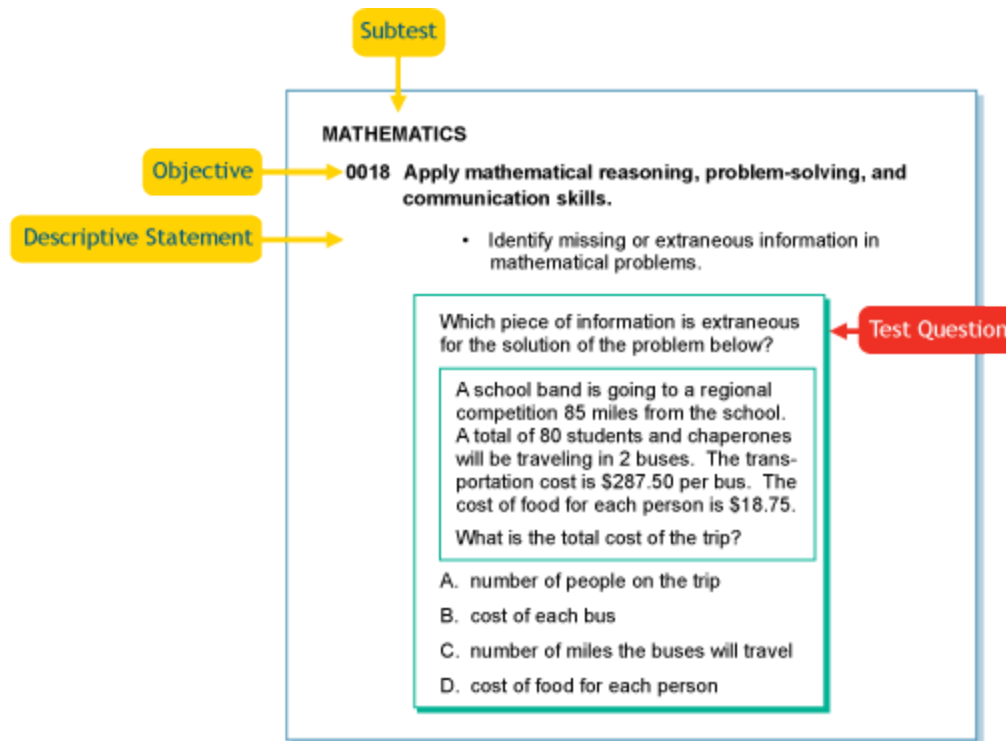
Test Framework

The test framework consists of objectives that are aligned with the Washington State K–12 Learning Standards. The objectives are organized into three subtests: Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. Each objective is defined by a number of descriptive statements. These components of the framework are described below.

- The **objectives** define the content on which candidates will be tested. They are broad descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and understanding that a teacher needs in order to teach effectively in a Washington classroom and/or to successfully complete a Washington teacher preparation program.
- The **descriptive statements** provide further details about the nature and range of content covered by the objectives. They are intended to suggest the types of content that may be included in the test questions measuring the objective.

Test questions (multiple-choice questions or writing assignments) are designed to measure specific content defined by one of the objectives within each subtest.

The following example illustrates the relationship of a multiple-choice test question to its corresponding objective and descriptive statement in the WEST–B test framework. This same direct relationship between multiple-choice test questions and their corresponding objectives applies to all WEST–B subtests.



Reading Passages

Parts of the WEST–B have test questions based on reading passages. There are several strategies that may be employed for test questions with reading passages. One strategy is to read the passage thoroughly and carefully and then answer each question, referring to the passage as needed. A second strategy is to read the questions first and then read the passage with the questions in mind. A third strategy is to scan the passage quickly to gain an overview of the content and then answer each question by referring back to the passage for the specific answer. Use the strategy that works best for you.

Whatever strategy you choose, it is best to avoid answering the questions based on your own opinions of the material in the passage; rather, you should answer the questions based on the facts contained in the passage and the inferences you derive from the material presented there.

Planning Your Course of Study

Step 1: To assess your degree of preparedness to take the WEST–B, read the test objectives for the subtest(s) you are preparing to take.

The test framework is the only source that specifies the information covered by the WEST–B.

- Read through all test objectives for the subtest(s) you are taking to get a general understanding of the material the subtest covers.
- The objectives form the foundation and focus for the test questions. The descriptive statements that follow each objective (indicated by bullets) provide examples of possible content covered by the objective. Read each objective and its descriptive statements carefully for a more specific idea of the knowledge and skills you will be required to demonstrate on the test.

Step 2: To improve your test-taking skills, answer the sample questions.

After you have become familiar with the test objectives, try to answer the sample test questions for the subtest(s) you are taking. The sample multiple-choice questions were developed in conjunction with the questions that appear on the actual test and are the best examples of the types of questions used on the test. Thus, answering these questions will give you valuable practice in answering questions like the ones you will see on the actual test. After reading a question, you may want to reread the objective to see how the question is aligned to the objective. This may help you understand what items associated with particular objectives might look like.

After answering a sample question, read the Correct Response and Explanation provided to check your answer. Even if you answered the question correctly, read the explanation for the correct response to help you understand how the correct response was derived or the reasoning for the correct response. If you answered the question incorrectly, or if you had a different rationale for the correct response, you may need to do some additional studying of the content covered by that objective.

Step 3: Develop a study plan to focus your studies.

- **Identify the most appropriate resources.** These may include your basic textbooks from English, language arts, and mathematics core courses; your class notes and other assignments; textbooks currently in use in Washington public elementary and secondary schools; and publications from local, state, and national professional organizations.
- **Develop a study plan schedule.** Consider reviewing a book on study skills development or studying with other people who will be taking the test by forming or joining a study group.

Suggested Study Method

One study method that many students have found to be effective is "PQ4R," or "Preview, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review." To use this method to study for the WEST–B, you may decide to study for each of the three subtests separately. After reviewing the objectives and descriptive statements for a particular subtest, you could locate appropriate study materials such as textbooks. Then you could apply the six steps of the PQ4R method as described below.

1. **Preview:** Scan the section headings and subheadings of the chapter or article you wish to study. Read the introduction or overview section as well as the summary section. This initial step can provide a good foundation on which to build your knowledge of a topic or skill.
2. **Question:** Based upon the WEST–B test objectives and your preview of the study materials, think of specific questions that you would like to find answers for as you study. Write these questions down and use them as a guide as you read.
3. **Read:** Read through the chapter you have selected. Adjust your reading speed as needed; some sections may take less time to read than others. Also, study any figures, tables, or graphics when you come across references to them in the text. This helps to keep each piece in context.
4. **Reflect:** As you read, think about the examples and descriptions provided in the text. You may also think of examples from your own experience that are related to what you are reading. Reflective reading is active reading; by interacting with what you read, you may better understand and remember the content.
5. **Recite:** When you complete each section of the text, check your understanding of what you have read. Can you answer the questions about this section that you wrote down before you started? Do you need to reread the section or some parts of it? Monitoring your progress by asking yourself these types of questions may help you identify areas you understand well and areas that you will want to study further.
6. **Review:** After you have finished reading the text, you may want to check your understanding of the content by reviewing your questions for the whole chapter. Can you answer your questions without referring to the text? Reviewing your questions for a chapter immediately after you finish reading it, as well as later in your study plan schedule, can help you retain and apply what you have learned.

When you have finished studying material for one subtest this way, move on to the next subtest.

Whether you use PQ4R or some other study technique, the key to success is to become familiar with the material you are studying. Predict what the content will be, ask yourself questions about it, paraphrase information aloud, relate the information to other things you know, review and summarize what you have learned—become involved in your studying.

Strategies for Success on the Day of the Test

Review the following strategies to help you do your best when taking the WEST–B.

Follow directions	Listen to and follow all test directions.
Pace your work	The test session is designed to allow sufficient time for you to complete the subtest(s) for which you register. You may wish to review the test items for a subtest before you answer any test items to help you gauge how to pace yourself. If you are taking the Writing subtest, remember to leave enough time to respond to the writing assignments.
Choose which section to complete first	If you are taking more than one subtest, choose which section of the test you want to complete first. Many candidates choose to complete the Writing subtest first, when they are fresh. Others choose to complete the Reading or Mathematics subtests first, depending on areas of anticipated difficulty. No one approach is recommended, but you should feel free to complete the subtests of the WEST–B in the order with which you feel comfortable.
Read carefully	Do not try to save time by skimming directions or by reading the test questions quickly. You may miss important information and instructions.
Determine the "best answer"	Your response to each multiple-choice question should be the best answer of the alternatives provided. Read and evaluate all four answer choices before deciding which one is best.
Guess wisely	Your multiple-choice results will be based on the number of questions you answer correctly. Attempt to answer all questions. You will not be penalized for incorrect responses; it is better to guess than to leave a question blank. If you are unsure about a question, use your knowledge of the content area to eliminate as many of the alternatives as you can, then select among the remaining choices.
Estimate	Some test questions on the Mathematics subtest of the WEST–B ask you to make a calculation based on numerical information. One way of dealing with this kind of question is to estimate the answer before reading the response options. If you can estimate, for example, that the answer will be between 10 and 20 (rather than between 100 and 200, or 1 and 10), you may be able to eliminate one or more of the response options. Often you do not have to perform a detailed calculation to obtain the correct response.

Respond to writing assignments fully and clearly

If you are taking the Writing subtest, be sure to read and respond to each part of the assignment. It is important for scorers to be able to understand your responses. Also, make sure that you have recorded your responses to the writing assignments as instructed.

After the Test

There are also a few things you can do after the test that may be helpful to you.

First, it may be useful to review the list of objectives you used during your studying. Look over that list and mark the objectives that represented the most difficult content for you on the test. Regardless of your performance, you may wish to enhance your own knowledge by further study in those areas.

Also, when you receive your score report, you will learn which subtests were more or less difficult for you. Devote further study to the content of the subtests in which your performance was the weakest. Remember that all the objectives that were tested have been identified as being of importance to the job of an entry-level educator in Washington.

The WEST–B is part of your preparation to enter the profession of teaching. With the help of this study guide, you should be able to use the time before and during the test wisely.

Study Resources That May Be Helpful in Preparing for the WEST-B

- *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2002.
- *Basic Skills for College: Build Your Math and English for 2-Year and 4-Year Colleges* by Edith Wasner, Jessika Sobanski, and Erika Warecki. Learning Express, 2001.
- *Master Math: Basic Math and Pre-Algebra* by Debra Anne Ross. Career Press, 1996.
- *All the Math You'll Ever Need: A Self-Teaching Guide* by Steve Slavin. John Wiley & Sons, 1999.
- *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*, 9th Edition by M. Neil Browne and Stuart M. Keeley. Prentice Hall College Division, 2009.
- *Elements of Style*, 4th Edition by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White. Longman, 1999.
- *Words Fail Me: What Everyone Who Writes Should Know About Writing* by Patricia T. O'Connor. Turtleback Books, 2002.
- *Grammar Smart: A Guide to Perfect Usage*, 2nd Edition. Princeton Review, 2002.
- *The Little English Handbook: Choices and Conventions, Longman Classics Edition, MLA Update Edition*, 8th Edition by Edward P. J. Corbett and Sheryl L. Finkle. Longman, 2010.
- *The Least You Should Know about English: Writing Skills, Form A*, 10th Edition, by Paige Wilson and Teresa Ferster Glazier. Wadsworth Publishing, 2008.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers*, 15th Edition. University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th Edition. American Psychological Association (APA), 2009.
- *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, 3rd Edition. Modern Language Association of America (MLA), 2008.