



Updated!

2012 STAAR Test FAQs

The STAAR™ test is more rigorous than the TAKS™. Here is what to expect.

Q What grades and subjects does this affect?

A Grades 3–8 and high school. This document will focus on the changes at grades 3–8. The changes also affect several areas of study, including Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Science, and Social Studies.

Q When will the new tests be administered?

A **Reading:** Grades 3, 4, 6, 7: April 25; Grades 5 & 8: March 28

Science: Grades 5 & 8: April 26

Mathematics: Grades 3, 4, 6, 7: April 24; Grades 5 & 8: March 27

Social Studies: Grade 8: April 27

Writing: Grades 4 & 7: March 27 (Day 1) and March 28 (Day 2)

Q How are the tests changing?

A Overall changes

- The test will be more rigorous with greater item complexity to reflect the goal of better preparing students for college and career readiness.
- Test length will increase, with the number of items increasing by as much as 15%.

Assessment of higher-order thinking

- In Reading, critical analysis will be emphasized more than literal understanding.
- In Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, process skills will be assessed in context, not in isolation, allowing for more authentic assessment of these content areas.
- In Mathematics and Science, the number of open-ended (griddable) items will increase.
- In Writing, students will need to write two essays instead of one.

Performance measurement

- Three new student labels will categorize student performance—Unsatisfactory (I), Satisfactory (II), and Advanced (III).
- Cut scores will be set in 2012 and may be higher than in the past to reflect greater rigor.

Q How many items were on the old test and how many will be on the new?

Grade	Reading		Mathematics		Writing		Science	
	TAKS # of Items	STAAR # of Items	TAKS # of Items	STAAR # of Items	TAKS # of Items	STAAR # of Items	TAKS # of Items	STAAR # of Items
3	36	40	40	46	–	–	–	–
4	40	44	42	48	28 multiple choice; 1 writing prompt	28 multiple choice; 2 compositions	–	–
5	42	46	44	50	–	–	40	44
6	42	48	46	52	–	–	–	–
7	48	50	48	54	40 multiple choice; 1 writing prompt	40 multiple choice; 2 compositions	–	–
8	48	52	50	56	–	–	50	54

Q How have the test objectives changed?

A The overall structure of the standards has changed. Objectives are now called Reporting Categories, and all standards are now categorized as Readiness or Supporting Standards. The Readiness Standards were identified by TEA as skills to be assessed and emphasized on the STAAR test. The Supporting Standards are assessed, but not heavily emphasized.

Q How do STAAR™ test items differ from TAKS™ items?

A The STAAR test items are much more rigorous and complex, asking students to use higher-order thinking skills in order to answer the items correctly. See below for two sample items—one math and one reading—that illustrate the complexity of the STAAR test items.

Mathematics, Grade 4

TAKS test released item (2009)

During math class, 4 students used 60 tiles to play a math game. Each student received the same number of tiles at the start of the game. How many tiles did each student receive?

- A 12
- B 64
- C 56
- D 15

Students must:

1. Divide $(60/4)$ to find the answer.
TEKS Standard 4.4.E

STAAR test released item (2011)

Maricella buys 75 tickets at a carnival. She keeps 35 tickets for herself and gives the remaining tickets to her 2 sisters. If each of Maricella's sisters gets the same number of tickets, how many tickets does each sister get?

- A 40
- B 20
- C 55
- D Not here

Reading, Grade 4

TAKS test released item (2009)

The difference between the article and the story is that the story —

- F shows where the center is located
- G explains the important work done at the center
- H gives facts about endangered animals
- J describes a personal experience

Focuses on the passages as a whole, and only asks students to identify a characteristic of one passage.
TEKS Standard 4.11.D

STAAR test released item (2011)

What is one difference between the poem and the selection?

- A Carmen knows Grams personally, while Zach does not know the people he helps.
- B Carmen shares her ideas with others, while Zach does not.
- C Carmen's plan requires other people, while Zach's does not.
- D Carmen ignores Miss D.'s question, while Zach responds to the people around him.

Q How many test days will there be for each subject? Will there be time limits?

A Students in grades 3–8 taking the reading and mathematics STAAR assessments will have the same number of test days—one per subject—as they did under the TAKS Assessment Program. Students in grades 4 and 7 taking the STAAR writing assessment will now have an additional day—two days total—to take the test. Unlike the TAKS test, which did not place a time limit on students, each STAAR assessment will have a four-hour time limit.

Q How does STAARReady™ Test Practice compare to the new STAAR test items?

A The STAAR Ready Test Practice questions closely mirror the items from the STAAR test in both rigor and complexity. See below for two examples—one math and one reading—of how the STAAR Ready Test Practice items match the STAAR test items.

STAARReady™ Test Practice item (2011)

A candy store gives away 4 lollipops to each person who enters the store between 10:00 A.M. and noon. At 10:00 A.M., the store has 350 lollipops. By noon, the store has 154 lollipops. How many customers entered the store between 10:00 A.M. and noon?

- F 49
- G 51
- H 98
- J 196

Students must:

1. Subtract $(75-35)$, and then
2. Divide $(40/2)$ to find the answer.

TEKS Standard 4.4.E

Students must:

1. Subtract $(350-154)$, and then
2. Divide $(196/4)$ to find the answer.

TEKS Standard 4.4.E

STAARReady™ Test Practice item (2011)

What is one difference between the selection and the story?

- F The article describes Mae's work as a doctor, but the story tells about Mae's experiments in space.
- G The article tells about Mae's many years of school, but the story focuses only on the moment Mae first flew into space.
- H The article tells about Mae's many achievements, but the story imagines what it was like as Mae listened to the countdown and looked back at her childhood dream.
- J The article describes how important Mae's family was to her success, but the story describes special teachers that Mae remembers.

Requires students to identify *specific* details in both passages.

TEKS Standard 1.19.F

Similar to the STAAR released item, this item asks students to look for specific evidence in both texts to make a deeper comparison. The correct answer (H) encourages students to consider the differences between the genre, focus, and purpose of each text.

TEKS Standard 1.19.F

How do I know that the products our students are using are aligned to the 2012 STAAR™ test and are the most up to date?

In Reading

- For practice items, you should see answer choices that are much more similar to one another, meaning that it is harder for students to discern the real answer from the distractor. This requires students to read the passage in more detail and draw higher-order conclusions.
- Content should require students to compare multiple literary tools. If, for example, you see questions that test theme or setting in isolation, then the product is not preparing students for the higher-order analysis required for the STAAR test.
- You should also see a heightened focus on drama, poetry, and distinct genres.

In Math

- You should not see separate lessons or separate practice items on Underlying Processes and Mathematical Tools. (The STAAR test does not assess these standards separately.)
- You should see content addressing Geometry and Spatial Reasoning at grade 5, as this is an important new Readiness Standard.
- TEA released updated math reference sheets on 8/30/11. This should be reflected in any practice test materials you purchase.

In Science

- Approximately 40% of the STAAR test questions are aligned to the Scientific Investigation and Reasoning Skills.

In Writing

- Students “write two essays addressing different purposes for writing rather than one longer personal essay, which TAKS required.” (*STAAR Q&A, updated 10/31/2011*)
- New writing rubrics have been developed for each writing type (personal and expository).

Is there anything else I need to know?

Curriculum Associates has followed the test changes closely to ensure that students are prepared for the more rigorous STAAR test. If you purchase now, you can be certain STAAR Ready™ already matches the format, content, and rigor addressed in the latest TEA STAAR updates. **In addition, we always guarantee that we will provide our customers with updated test practice products.**

With STAAR Ready Reading, Math, Science, and Writing, you can be sure that you have **materials that most accurately match the STAAR test.**

Please visit i-Ready.com/STAAR for the latest news.



What to look for when choosing your STAAR test practice and instruction:

	STAAR Ready	Other
1 Does it include the latest updates that match the current TEA blueprints?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Does it provide solid instructional support for test preparation materials?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Are the TEKS standards clearly identified for each instructional lesson?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Is it more difficult to differentiate between the choices in the STAAR multiple-choice answers?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Has each book been revised , or are only blackline masters being provided?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Is the recommended instruction driven from the data provided by the practice tests ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Does it provide additional online practice and progress monitoring ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Do the assessment results provide a clear indication of how your students would perform if they took the STAAR today ?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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