

WorkKeys® Essential Skills User Guide: Your Guide to Workplace Success



ACT® **WorkKeys**®
Assessments

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
What are Essential Skills?	3
WorkKeys Essential Skills.....	3
FAQs About Essential Skills	5
Interpreting WorkKeys Essential Skills Reports.....	6
A Note on Developing Your Skills	8
A Note for Career Coaches.....	11
ADMINISTRATION.....	12
Test Administrator and Test Coordinator Roles.....	12
Examinees: How to Access and Launch the Assessment.....	13
Sample Instructions and Items	16
Examinees: How to Access Reports.....	17
Examinees: Credly Badges.....	18
Test Administrators and Test Coordinators: How to Access Reports	18
ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS.....	20
Understanding Levels of Accessibility Support.....	20
Authorizing Accessibility Supports	22
Accessibility Support Options.....	22

Introduction

What are Essential Skills?

Essential skills are called by many names, including “soft skills,” “21st-century skills,” or “employability skills.” These skills are different from core academic skills like reading or math. Studies show that essential skills are very important for doing well in education and in job settings.

In school, having these skills can help you do well in your studies and finish your degree. At work, these skills can make you perform well at your job, make you happy at work, and help you work well with others. People with these skills are less likely to quit their jobs, and they can earn more money over their lifetime.

Also, having essential skills can make your life better in many ways. It can make you happier, help you make healthier choices, and give you a better quality of life. These skills are like superpowers that can make everything in your life better!

WorkKeys Essential Skills

The WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment measures six essential skills: Integrity, Resilience, Leadership, Collaboration, Work Ethic, and Curiosity. Research shows that these skills are related to work outcomes that organizations want. The assessment uses the Big Five and HEXACO models as the framework. These models were selected because research shows that they are helpful ways to understand and describe different aspects of a person's behavior and skills. Imagine you have six big buckets, and each bucket represents a different part of who you are and how you act. The six skills in the HEXACO framework are:

Honesty-Humility: This is about being honest and not trying to take advantage of others. People who score high here are sincere and straightforward, while those who score low may sometimes bend the truth.

Emotionality: This is about how much you show your emotions and how easily you get emotional. If you score high, you might be more in touch with your feelings. If you score low, you might be more emotionally detached.

Extraversion: This is about how social and outgoing you are. If you score high, you enjoy being around people a lot. If you score low, you might prefer spending time alone.

Agreeableness: This is about being kind and getting along with others. High scorers are friendly and considerate, while low scorers may be more focused on their own needs.

Conscientiousness: This is about being organized, responsible, and persistent. If you're high, you're good at getting things done. If you're low, you might be more relaxed and go with the flow.

Openness to Experience: This is about being open to new ideas and experiences. High scorers like trying new things, while low scorers may prefer routine.

The table below contains a definition for each skill measured by the WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment and shows how each aligns to the Big Five and HEXACO models. Together, these skills represent key behaviors that help individuals achieve workplace success.

Table 1. Alignment of WorkKeys Essential Skills to the ACT Holistic Framework and Big Five / HEXACO Models

WorkKeys Essential Skill	Big Five / HEXACO Domain	Definition
Work Ethic	Conscientiousness	demonstrate persistence, goal striving, reliability, dependability, and attention to detail at work
Collaboration	Agreeableness	demonstrate the ability to work on teams, empathy, helpfulness, trust, and trustworthiness
Resilience	Emotionality	demonstrate stress management, emotional regulation, a positive response to setbacks, and poise
Leadership	Extraversion	demonstrate assertiveness, influence, optimism, and enthusiasm
Creativity	Openness to Experience	demonstrate ingenuity, flexibility, open mindedness, and embracing diversity
Integrity	Honesty-Humility	demonstrate honesty, sincerity, fairness towards others, and modesty at work

ACT test developers intentionally selected the Big Five and HEXACO models for this work because of three important features. These models are:

- **Comprehensive** – emerged from analyses of terms that describe human attitudes and behaviors.

- **Universal** – have been replicated across many samples, languages, and cultures.
- **Validated** – there is a 60-year body of evidence that shows these skills predict many important workplace outcomes.

FAQs About Essential Skills

Q: Are assessments of essential skills reliable?

A: The reliability of a test reflects the stability or consistency of test results over time and across diverse settings. Research has reported that assessments of essential skills display moderate to high internal consistency reliability, meaning how well each item relates independently to the rest of the items on a scale and how they relate overall. The internal consistency reliability of the WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment falls in the moderate to high range. Further information on the reliability of the assessment can be found in the [Technical Manual](#).

Q: Are assessments of essential skills valid?

A: Validity refers to the degree to which empirical evidence and theory support the adequacy and appropriateness of conclusions drawn from assessment scores. In the case of assessments of essential skills, studies have shown that properly designed assessments are valid predictors of many aspects of work performance, including quality and quantity of work, teamwork, leadership behaviors, turnover, absenteeism, counterproductive work behaviors, and organizational citizenship/helping behaviors, as well as job satisfaction, job tenure, and earnings.

Specific to the WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment, research indicates that the test measures the same broad themes as those captured by other well-validated assessments of the Big Five and the HEXACO—the models that served as the theoretical models for this assessment. Further, validity estimates from research done with the Essential Skills assessment suggest that this assessment is predictive of job performance in similar ways as those reported in the research literature. Detailed construct and criterion validity evidence is presented in the [Technical Manual](#).

Q: Can people develop their essential skills?

A: There is a common misconception that one's characteristic ways of feeling, thinking, and behaving are "set" at an early age and do not change, or that there are "types" of people with particular skills. However, there is much evidence to counter these misconceptions. Research overwhelmingly supports the notion that our essential skills change over time. Studies have found that people's skills naturally change throughout their lifespans. That is, people tend to mature as they grow older, and are more likely to do the following: persist when challenges arise, cooperate with others, manage their emotions in stressful situations, and stay flexible and open to new experiences.

Research has also found that people can change their skills on purpose, either through simple activities like undergoing a series of behavioral challenges, through systematic curriculum delivered at school or workforce development settings, and through more structured and longer-term interventions, like one-on-one coaching.

Q: Can an examinee “cheat” on this type of assessment?

A: In general, research has shown that “fakeability” or cheating has a small impact on the validity of assessments of essential skills tests in most settings, particularly in training and development contexts. Although most examinees tend to respond honestly when completing assessments like these, sometimes examinees do exaggerate their positive attributes, which can potentially bias the results of an assessment. For this reason, the WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment contains multiple item types, which research shows can help to mitigate against response biases and attempts to “fake” the results.

Q: How do examinees react to these types of assessments?

A: In training and development contexts, people seeking formative feedback find taking an assessment of essential skills helpful. In selection contexts, research based on opinion surveys of job applicants shows that the majority of respondents perceived these types of assessments as an appropriate selection procedure. When asked to rank order their overall impression of various selection procedures from positive to negative, assessments of essential skills consistently ranked in the middle (i.e., neutral), below interviews and above honesty testing.

Q: Do these assessments result in adverse impact?

A: Adverse impact refers to the likelihood that a selection tool systematically selects members of one demographic group over another. In terms of adverse impact, research on assessments of essential skills has shown small to moderate differences between demographic groups. Further, these types of assessments are rarely implicated in adverse impact claims. Consistent with the research literature, analyses from the WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment show that this assessment does not result in substantial adverse impact. Additional information is provided in the [Technical Manual](#).

Interpreting WorkKeys Essential Skills Reports

Two reports are available to help understand an examinee’s scores: an Examinee Report and a Roster Report. The features of each report are described below.

Examinee Report

The Examinee Report provides detailed information on an examinee. For each individual who completes the WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment, this report includes scores on

each of the six skills. Score reports include a graphical representation of the respondent's scores on each skill, as well as interpretive information about what each score means. Further, the report includes a link to a free coaching tool with exercises and activities designed to help examinees improve their skills. Figures 1 and 2 feature an example Examinee Report.

The top of page one contains the name of the assessment, the examinee's name, and the date that the assessment was completed.

Below the identifier information is a brief explanation of percentile scores. The assessment is norm referenced, which means that the examinee is compared to others who have taken the assessment. So, if 100 people were to take the assessment, someone who scores in the 60th percentile would do as well as or better than 60 out of the 100 people. Note that a percentile is not the same as a "percent"; that is to say, a percentile of 60 does not mean that the examinee answered 60% of the questions "right." Percentiles are derived from raw scores using the norms obtained from a large sample of individuals who have completed the assessment. For more details on norms, consult the [Technical Manual](#).

Following the explanation of percentiles is a profile of the examinee's essential skills scores. The profile is sorted in descending order, starting with highest percentile score, and followed by lower scores. These scores are also color-coded to help the use and interpretation of the scores. Percentile scores at or above the 84th percentile indicate an examinee demonstrates a given skill often and independently. Scores in this range are considered "high" and are visually represented in a dark blue color. Percentile scores between the 17th and 83rd percentiles indicate an examinee demonstrates a given skill sometimes, and sometimes requires help or prompting from others. Scores in this range are considered "moderate" and are visually represented in a medium blue color. Percentile scores at or below the 16th percentile indicate an examinee rarely demonstrates the given skill or does not yet demonstrate the skill independently. Scores in this range are considered "low" and are visually represented in a teal or green color.

Page two contains a more detailed profile of the examinee's essential skills. Again, these are sorted in descending order, starting with the highest percentile score. This detailed profile provides more information about what the score for each specific skill means and how an examinee can continue to demonstrate that skill from a behavioral perspective.

The bottom of each page of the Examinee Report contains a link to the [Examinee Resources](#) webpage that contains the following resources:

- A user guide for interpreting scores and administering the assessment (this guide).
- Information for how to claim digital badges (for examinees who scored at the "high" level on any of the skills).

- A free coaching tool with exercises and activities designed to help examinees improve each of their essential skills.

A Note on Developing Your Skills

The WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment will help you to identify your strengths so you can highlight them when talking to potential employers. The assessment will also help you identify areas you need to work on changing to increase your employability. The purpose of this guide and the other examinee resources activities and tools is to help you to take an active role in using your assessment results whether you are developing your skills on your own or with guidance from your coach.

Through training and effort, you can change your workplace behaviors and become work ready and more successful at work!

What's in it for you?

- Recognize work-related behaviors that employers value.
- Become more aware of your work-relevant behaviors.
- Identify personal strengths and areas for development.
- Leverage your strengths to help you perform better at work.
- Claim digital badges to promote your skills to employers.
- Work on developing areas that may be challenging for you in the workplace.
- Adopt behaviors that will help you become more successful at work and may lead to a higher-level job.

Figure 1. Examinee Report, page 1



Identifying information

Explanation of percentile scores

Essential Skills profile of scores, sorted from highest to lowest score

Explanation of scores that fall in the "high", "moderate," or "low" categories

Link to Examinee Resources

Figure 2. Examinee Report, page 2



Detailed profile of the Essential Skills, with skills and interpretive information sorted from highest to lowest score

Link to Examinee Resources

Roster Report

The Roster Report catalogs all examinees who have been assessed during a specified time period. This report includes the following information:

- Examinee email
- Examinee name

- Site of administration
- Reason for administration (as stated by the examinee)
- Date and time of administration
- Examinee age
- Examinee location (state and country)
- Examinee education and employment status
- Examinee demographics (race/ethnicity, gender, date of birth, and language)
- Examinee current schooling status
- Examinee's percentile scores for each of the six Essential Skills

The Roster Report is generated as a .csv file, which can be opened by any spreadsheet application, such as Microsoft Excel. As a result, an administrator can filter and sort the contents of the report based on any of the fields listed above. Filters may be used to narrow down the larger pool of examinees based on specific criteria.

A Note for Career Coaches

The coaching tools and activities that are part of the Examinee Resources page are designed to guide examinees toward taking an active role in developing their behaviors and skills to be more successful at work. The tools can be implemented in a small group setting or as self-directed learning activities. Topics covered by the free coaching tools are listed below.

Integrity

- Introduction to Integrity
- Ethical Behavior
- Valuing Your Values
- Acting Responsibly
- Integrity Role Play

Work Ethic

- Introduction to Work Ethic
- Identifying and Setting SMART Goals
- Setting Priorities
- Achieving Your Goals
- Dealing with Procrastination

Collaboration

- Introduction to Collaboration
- Being a Good Team Member
- Effective Communication

Resilience

- Introduction to Resilience
- What is Stress?
- Your Stress Response
- How You Cope with Stress
- Action Plan for Stress Management
- Adapting to Change
- Dealing with Setbacks

Leadership

- Introduction to Leadership
- Overcoming Shyness
- Building Your Self-Confidence
- Assertive Communication
- Practicing Optimism and Overcoming Pessimism

Creativity

- Respecting Others
- Working as Part of a Team
- Resolving Conflict in the Workplace
- Introduction to Creativity
- Ideation
- What Would Happen If...
- Weird and Wacky Ideas
- Flip Side of the Coin

In addition, if your site has access to the WorkKeys Essential Skills Curriculum, the Essential Skills courses are a great way to help examinees develop their skills. A crosswalk showing the alignment between the WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment and the WorkKeys Essential Skills Curriculum is featured in Table 2. For access to the WorkKeys Essential Skills Curriculum, contact your ACT sales representative.

Table 2. High-Level Alignment between WorkKeys Essential Skills Assessment and Curriculum

WorkKeys Curriculum Essential Skills Courses	WorkKeys Essential Skills Assessment					
	Integrity	Work Ethic	Collaboration	Resilience	Leadership	Creativity
Working in Teams	X	X	X			X
Interpersonal & Business Communication			X	X	X	X
Work Discipline	X	X		X	X	X
Customer Service	X	X	X	X	X	
Problem Solving & Critical Thinking			X	X	X	X

Administration

Test Administrator and Test Coordinator Roles

There are two separate roles you may have at your site: test administrator and test coordinator. However, many sites may have one individual assuming both roles and using the titles interchangeably during setup, pre-test activities, and online administration of the assessment. A test administrator might manage the entire setup process, including accounts of the test coordinator and examinees, and be in direct contact with an ACT team member. Whereas a test coordinator might be responsible for ensuring examinees have a smooth test taking experience and report any challenges to the test administrator. As mentioned before, one person can also assume all

responsibilities. It is not required to have two separate roles for the WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment.

Test Administrator and Test Coordinator Responsibilities

The test administrator and/or test coordinator may be responsible for the following:

- **Creating and managing accounts in their learning management systems**
 - LMS users: Direct support will be provided to test administrators by ACT on how to import and set up the assessment courses for test administrators, test coordinators, and examinees.
 - Agilix Buzz users: Direct and ongoing support will be provided to test administrators by an ACT Implementation Manager to help set up and manage assessment courses for test administrators, test coordinators, and examinees throughout the duration of your contract.
- **Facilitating and delivering the assessment for examinees**
 - LMS users: Test administrators will add test coordinators and examinees to the assessment course.
 - Agilix Buzz users: A confirmation email will be sent to the test administrator to confirm test coordinators and examinees have access to the assessment course and examinees are ready to test. Credentials will be sent via a secure email link.
 - Once examinees are ready to begin the assessment, test coordinators can direct them through the steps below in the *Examinees: How to access and launch the assessment* section.
- **Hide/Unhide Assessments**
 - LMS users: Test administrators can “publish” the second assessment when examinees are ready to complete it.
 - Agilix Buzz users: Test administrators can contact their ACT Implementation Manager or make the second assessment visible by following these [directions](#) when examinees are ready to complete it.
- **Monitor Reports**
 - Test administrators and test coordinators will have access to all Individual Score Reports and a Roster Report to view progress and help assist with any examinee who may need support.
 - Directions on how to locate these reports can be found in the *How to Access Reports* sections below.

Examinees: How to Access and Launch the Assessment

When examinees are ready to take the assessment, they will log into the course through their learning management system. Only one assessment will be visible to them (WKES01). Examinees can take a second assessment (WorkKeys Assessments | Essential Skills – WKES02) later to determine if change or growth has occurred between

the two assessment administrations. ACT recommends waiting at least 90 days after taking the first assessment to administer the second.

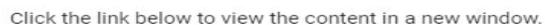
Steps for online testing:

1. Click on the WorkKeys Assessments | Essential Skills – WKES01 link.



WorkKeys Assessments | Essential Skills - WKES01

2. A new message will appear. Click on the blue WorkKeys Assessment link to open a new window. It may take 1-3 seconds to load the assessment.

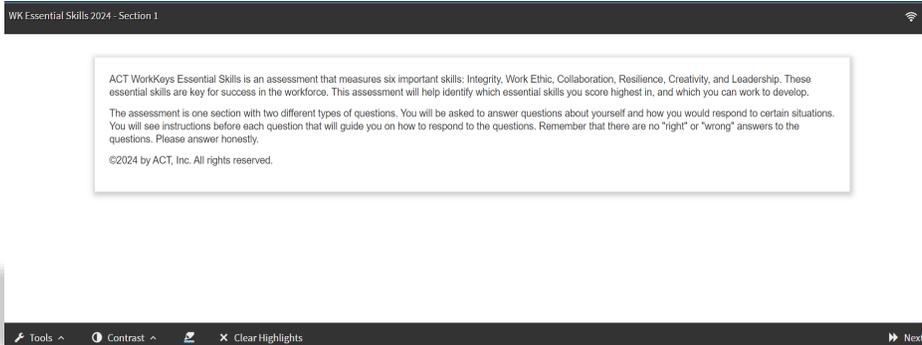


Click the link below to view the content in a new window.



[WorkKeys Assessments | Essential Skills - WKES01](#)

3. Once the assessment appears, read the directions, and begin the assessment. The first several questions are demographic questions. Click “Next” on the bottom right corner to proceed to the next question.



WK Essential Skills 2024 - Section 1

ACT WorkKeys Essential Skills is an assessment that measures six important skills: Integrity, Work Ethic, Collaboration, Resilience, Creativity, and Leadership. These essential skills are key for success in the workforce. This assessment will help identify which essential skills you score highest in, and which you can work to develop.

The assessment is one section with two different types of questions. You will be asked to answer questions about yourself and how you would respond to certain situations. You will see instructions before each question that will guide you on how to respond to the questions. Remember that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the questions. Please answer honestly.

©2024 by ACT, Inc. All rights reserved.

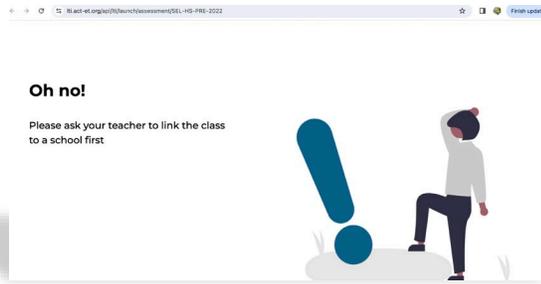
Tools ^ Contrast ^ Clear Highlights

Next

Note: If examinees receive this error message (below) before directions appear, test administrators can contact their ACT Implementation Manager or follow these directions:

[How to Link Assessments - Buzz users](#)

[How to Link Assessments - LMS users](#)



4. After reading the assessment directions and moving to the next page, the examinee will type in responses in each box. This information will be used later to send a Credly badge via email. Be sure to have examinees type in the correct demographic information. Inform examinees all fields are required before moving to the next page.

5. When the last question has been answered after clicking "Next", a message will appear to notify the examinee to click "Submit the test". They have completed the assessment and can now log out.

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	May or May Not	Likely	Very Likely
Spend time each day between now and the due date checking the report for errors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Although it occurs to you that you should check the report for errors, you decide to submit it as is instead.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turn it in early without thinking to check it for errors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Activity Ended

The external activity has ended.

Finished

Sample Instructions and Items

At the beginning of the assessment, examinees will see the following general instructions.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: Please respond to every item. After you answer each item, use the "Next" button in the lower right corner of the browser window to move on to the next one. You are not allowed to skip items or move back to a previous item once you have answered it.

Please click the "Next" button in the lower right corner of the browser window to begin.

After the instructions, they will be asked to input their name, email, and respond to a variety of demographic questions and questions about their reason for taking the assessment (e.g., for school, for work).

After the demographics section, examinees will see instructions and test items similar to those featured in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Sample instructions and items for Likert-type items

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each statement. Then, click that box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I make it a habit to check my work for mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try to be kind to everyone I work with.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am able to stay calm when things get stressful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can think of a lot of ideas in a short amount of time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can easily persuade others to agree with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People think of me as a sincere person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 3. Sample instructions and items for situational judgement items

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each statement. Then, click that box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

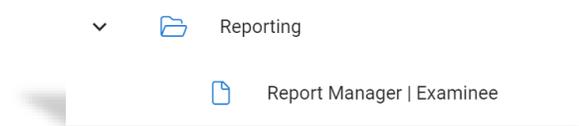
Your supervisor has asked you to develop a plan for a new filing system. When the deadline comes, you aren't certain the plan is free of errors.

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	May or May Not	Likely	Very Likely
Tell her you don't want to turn it in until you've had time to check it for errors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spend time checking for errors even though you'll miss the deadline.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turn it in without checking for errors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

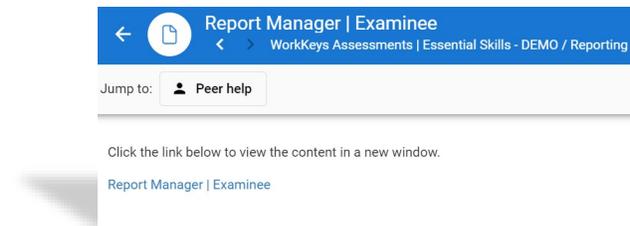
Examinees: How to Access Reports

When the assessment is complete, examinees can download and view their report. They will log into the course through their learning management system and follow the steps below.

1. Click on the Reporting folder. Click the arrow to the left to expand the folder. Click on the Report Manager | Examinee link.



2. A new message will appear. Click on the blue Report Manager | Examinee link.



3. Another message will appear with the date of the test attempt and a link to download the Individual Score Report.

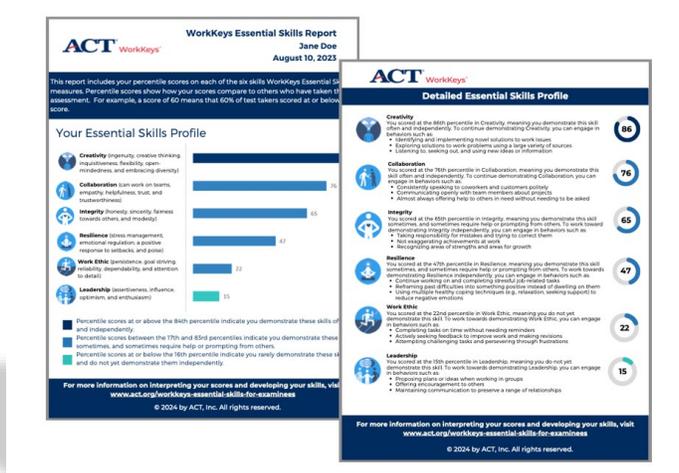
Individual Score Report

The individual score report gives detailed information on your score. The report lists each of the 6 essential skills measured and contains details on score reporting categories.

Your test attempt from 03/08/2024 is scored and your report is available [Download](#)

The examinee can download the report and have immediate access to their Individual Score Report.

(Sample)

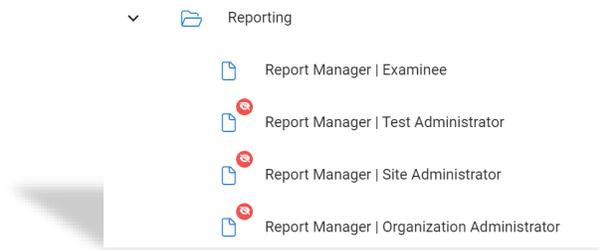


Examinees: Credly Badges

Within a week after completion of the test, examinees who scored high enough on any of the Essential Skills to earn one or more badges will receive a notification. The notification will be sent to examinees at the email address they provided when they completed the assessment and will invite them to claim their badge(s) through Credly. Examinees who accept the badge(s) through Credly will be able to share the badge(s) on their resume or on social media.

Test Administrators and Test Coordinators: How to Access Reports

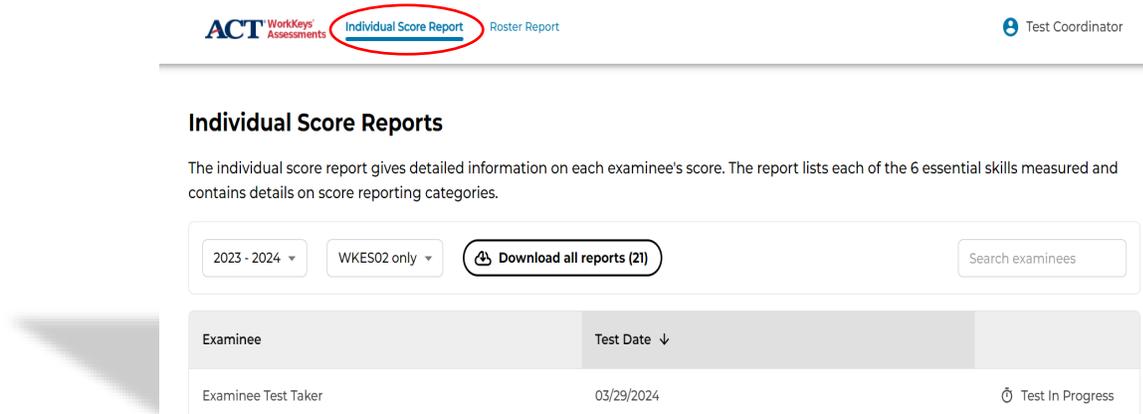
When the assessment is complete, test administrators and test coordinators can download and view reports. They will log into the course through their learning management system and click on the Reporting folder. Click the arrow to the left and expand the folder. Note: The red strikethrough symbol indicates links that examinees cannot view.



A test administrator and test coordinator may have their account set up as a larger organization, a site, or a school. Click on the link that applies to how you are using the assessment. If you are unsure, you can contact your ACT Implementation Manager for help. When you click on a link, a new message will appear. Click on the blue link to open the reports in a new window.

Individual Score Report

By default, the Individual Score Report dashboard will load first. Use this dashboard and the drop-down menus to filter by the year and the assessment. This will show examinee name, test date, and the status. Data will populate, on average, about thirty minutes after assessments are complete.



Once assessments are complete, the examinee's status (far right) will change to "Download Report". Test administrators and test coordinators have the option to download all reports at one time or chose individually using this dashboard.

Roster Report

Test administrators and coordinators also have access to the Roster Report by clicking on the blue link to the right of the Individual Score Report.

Roster Report

The Roster Report shows the site information, examinee demographic data, and detailed score results for all of your examinees that took the assessment in Excel format.

Roster report for: WorkKeys Assessments | Essential Skills - DEMO

2023 - 2024 ▾

WKES01 and WKES02 ▾

Generate Report

Download Report

Use this dashboard and the drop-down menus to filter by the year and assessment. Click on "Generate Report". Next, click on "Download Report" to view a csv file of raw data from each examinee. Please refer to the *Roster Report* section to identify which fields are captured in the file.

Accessibility Considerations

Accessibility supports refer to systems, tools, and accommodations that remove barriers for the entire testing population, including examinees identified as having disabilities and English learners (ELs), as well as examinees who do not have a disability. All examinees need to be able to communicate fairly and effectively what they know and can do when they take a test. All accessibility supports permitted during the ACT WorkKeys Essential Skills assessment and described in this guide are designed to remove unnecessary barriers to student performance on the assessments.

Understanding Levels of Accessibility Support

Over the last decade in educational research and practice, we have come to understand that all examinees have tools they need and use every day to engage and communicate effectively what they have learned and can do. There are different levels of support that examinees may need to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on an assessment. ACT WorkKeys Essential Skills assessments make several possible levels of support available, including 1) universal supports, 2) designated supports, 3) English learner supports, and 4) accommodations. All these levels of support taken together are called accessibility supports. These accessibility supports:

- Allow all examinees to gain access to effective means of communication. In turn, this allows them to demonstrate what they know without providing an advantage over any other examinee.
- Enable effective and appropriate engagement, interaction, and communication of examinee knowledge and skills.
- Honor and measure content as the test developers originally intended.

- Remove unnecessary barriers to examinees' demonstrating the content, knowledge, and skills being measured on WorkKeys Essential Skills assessments.

In short, accessibility supports do nothing for the examinee academically that he or she should be doing independently; they just make interaction and communication possible and fair for each examinee.

Accessibility supports apply to all examinees. These are embedded features and locally provided adjustments to the standardized testing procedure that allow for inclusive, accessibly, and fair testing for diverse populations of test-takers. Accessibility supports emphasize an individualized approach to implementing assessment practices for examinees with diverse needs who participate in large-scale standardized testing.

Accommodations are adaptations to the standardized procedures available to examinees with a disability who use the same accessibility support to access instruction and assessment in their educational environment. Accommodations are intended to reduce and/or eliminate the effects of an individual examinee's disability. All allowable accommodations appear in the tables found in Defining and Applying Accessibility Supports.

Designated supports are adjustments to standardized testing procedures that change the way a student accesses the test without changing the content being assessed. They are available to any examinee for whom a need has been identified as long as test security is not compromised and testing environment requirements are met. Districts, schools, and administrative agencies have the authority to approve and provide designated supports listed in this guide for any examinee. Generally, most examinees are tested with their peers; however, under certain circumstances, a change in testing conditions may be necessary for an examinee. Typically, these are adjustments to the testing environment. Most require advance planning to deliver. All allowable designated supports appear in the tables found in Defining and Applying Accessibility Supports.

English Learner Supports are considered for test takers who are not proficient in English. Educational teams and site administrators can select supports needed to access curriculum, instructions, and assessment materials for those who could benefit from English learner supports. These supports include access to a dictionary while taking the assessment, locally provided translated verbal instructions, extended testing time, and small-group testing.

Universal supports are supports embedded into standardized testing processes and procedures to support access to the test for all examinees. These are also referred to as embedded supports. Common universal supports appear in the tables found in Defining and Applying Accessibility Supports.

Authorizing Accessibility Supports

Site administrators have the authority to identify, approve, and implement accessibility supports for test takers to test with the following:

- EL supports based on limited English proficiency.
- Accommodations based on the examinee’s formal education plan.
- Designated supports based on an identified need.

Accessibility Support Options

The following tables list accessibility supports and accommodations available for use on WorkKeys Assessments; describe what each support or accommodation is and who it's for; provide notes on its application or use in the testing environment; and identify the category it falls into (accommodation, designated support, EL support, or universal support). The tables are divided into the following four categories:

- Presentation & formats supports (e.g., alternate formats, assistive technology, auditory presentation), which address the way information is presented or formatted.
- Response & navigation supports (e.g., assistive technology, scribe), which address the way an examinee navigates the assessment or responds to test items.
- Setting & location supports (e.g., preferential seating, small group, adaptive furniture), which address the characteristics of the setting or the location where the assessment is administered.
- Timing supports (e.g., extra testing time, breaks as needed), which address the scheduling of and timing allowed for the test administration.

All supports listed on tables 4-6 are encouraged for use by test-takers who could benefit from them. These are categorized into presentation and formats (Table 4), response and navigation (Table 5), and setting and location (Table 6).

Table 4. Accessibility Supports: Presentation and Formats

Accessibility Support Name	What It Is	Who It’s For	Notes	Support Type
Background music/white noise machine	Instrumental music or white noise played aloud in the test environment intended as an unobtrusive accompaniment to the test administration.	Examinees diagnosed with anxiety who use music as a therapeutic tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All examinees in the test environment must be authorized for background music, or one-to-one administration 	Designated support

			(individual test room) is required.	
Bilingual word-to-word dictionary	A reference source in print containing words in English, and the equivalent word in another language.	Examinees who are not proficient in English, but have sufficient English to use the support effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended test time should be authorized to use with this support. 	English learner support
Color contrast/color overlay	Ability to adjust the contrast between the background and text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with visual impairments Examinees who experience eye fatigue when reading black text on a white background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees select from preset text and background combinations. 	Universal support
Human reader who reads the entire test	A test administrator reads the instructions, questions, and response options to a test-taker.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with a learning disability in reading decoding or comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended test time should be given with this support. A one-to-one administration (individual test room) is recommended. 	Accommodation
Magnification device/zoom	<p>Zoom: Enlarging the screen display using keyboard shortcuts (e.g., Ctrl +).</p> <p>Magnification: Enlarging a section of the screen using an embedded tool.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with visual impairments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When using zoom, examinees may need to scroll to view all text. 	Universal
Read aloud to self	The examinee reads test items and/or answers aloud in an individual setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with a learning disability in reading decoding or comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended one-to-one administration (individual test room). 	Designated support
Sign language interpreter	A qualified individual who visually translates test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with a hearing impairment who use sign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires one-to-one administration 	Accommodation

	directions and items for the examinee.	language as their primary mode of communication.	(individual test room). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The entire test, the interpreter follows the test directions and items exactly, without adding explanation, using American Sign Language (ASL), Signing Exact English (SEE), or cued speech. 	
Text-to-speech reader	An embedded, online auditory presentation accommodation that reads the test items and answers to examinees. Text-to-speech (TTS) readers convert on-screen test directions and test items into spoken voice output.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with a learning disability in reading comprehension or decoding Examinees with a visual impairment who can independently use a mouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TTS is available in English. When administered in a small group, each examinee should have their own headphones. 	Universal
Highlighter	An embedded feature that allows examinees to highlight text within items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees who use similar strategies during instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built in feature on online assessment platform 	Universal

Table 5. Accessibility Supports: Response and Navigation

Accessibility Support Name	What It Is	Who It's For	Notes	Support Type
Answer/custom masking	Custom masking (line reader)—online testing: Sections of the screen are covered by a box which varies in size and location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees who have difficulty with visual clutter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built in feature on online assessment platform 	Universal
Answer eliminator	The examinee crosses out multiple-choice answers to help determine the correct response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees who use similar strategies during instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees use a system tool to cross out answers for online testing. 	Universal
Scribe	A qualified individual marks responses online for the examinee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with motor disabilities which impede their ability to manipulate a mouse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This must be a one-to-one administration (individual test room). Use of a scribe should be accompanied by extra testing time. 	Accommodation

Table 6. Accessibility Supports: Setting and Location

Accessibility Support Name	What It Is	Who It's For	Notes	Support Type
Assistive devices/technology	Specialized tools that allow access to the test such as adaptive keyboards, mouse, specialized seating, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, geoboards, switch, or other assistive devices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with physical impairments Examinees with motor control difficulties Examinees with difficulties producing speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra testing time may need to be authorized based on the support provided. 	Designated support

Fidget device	Small, handheld item designed to relieve tension or stress and channel anxious energy allowing the examinee to concentrate on the test administration (e.g., fidget spinner, chewable jewelry, kneadable dough, stress ball).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with focus impairment, obsessive compulsive disorder, or anxiety impairment 	Devices should not make noise.	Accommodation
Food, drink, and medication for examinees with medical need	Allowing the examinee access to snacks, drinks, and/or medication in the testing environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with medical conditions who require access to food, drinks, or medication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any requested food, drinks, or medications can be made available during the test window. 	Designated support
Permission to stand during testing	Seating an examinee in a location which allows them to stand, walk, pace, or otherwise move and not distract other examinees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees who need an environment that allows for movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This can be provided in a group setting or one-to-one administration. 	Universal support
Preferential seating	Allowing examinee a specific seat location (e.g., sitting in the front to see sign-language interpreter).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with sensory concerns Examinees who are easily distracted Examinees with behaviors that may distract others 		Universal support
Service animals	An animal, typically a dog, trained to assist an individual who has a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any examinee with a disability who has a trained service animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of service animals is a protected right under the ADA. Service animals must be allowed in all areas of the test center where the public is allowed to go. 	Designated support

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA and are not permitted in the testing environment. 	
Small group/one-to-one testing	Allowing the testing in a small group or one to one as an individual administration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with sensory concerns Examinees who are easily distracted 		Designated support/ English learner support
Wheelchair accessibility	Ensuring examinees who use a wheelchair are able to enter and exit the test facility and room. If the test environment is not on the main level, access to elevators or ramps must be available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees for whom walking is difficult or impossible due to illness, injury, or disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table heights may need to be adjusted to accommodate the examinee. 	Designated support
Breaks as needed	Breaks while taking the online assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees with medical conditions which require immediate response Examinees with behavioral concerns which require sensory breaks for calming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examinees indicate when they need to take a break, and when they are ready to resume testing. 	Accommodation