

Skills for Life

The national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills.

Don't get by **get on**

A Guide to the **National Tests** in **Adult Literacy** and **Numeracy**



Giving adults the opportunity to prove their skills and gain a national qualification in literacy and numeracy

Your students have put in all the hard work to improve their skills – so why not reward them?

In the past there were no nationally agreed definitions to describe levels of literacy, numeracy and spoken language among adults. This created inconsistencies in the delivery and assessment of basic skills. To address these problems, *Skills for Life*, the government's national strategy to improve adult literacy and numeracy skills, has supported the development of national standards and core curricula for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

Qualifications and tests are now an essential and integral part of the teaching and learning infrastructure. The national tests in literacy and numeracy provide adult learners with a clear and reliable measure of their achievement and skills. The National Numeracy Tests and the National Literacy Tests are available at Level 1 and Level 2 of the national qualifications framework.

The benefits to learners of taking and passing a test can be immense. They include personal benefits such as increased confidence as well as the motivation to go on to bigger and better things. A qualification in maths or English could fill a gap in their CV or be a stepping stone to further qualifications. It also gives learners a qualification which employers will value and could lead to promotion at work.

Learner: "It's been a life-changing experience for me."

Tutor: "The students have benefited immensely. Their confidence has been boosted and their work has taken off."

••• Your questions answered...



What format do the tests take?

The tests consist of 40 multiple-choice questions worth one mark each – similar to those used in the driving test. The literacy test lasts one hour and the numeracy test one and a quarter hours. The tests are available on paper and on-screen on a regular basis so learners can take them whenever they are ready.

Which skills are assessed in the tests?

The tests assess a sample of the requirements described in the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy. The literacy tests cover the skills of reading, comprehension, understanding writing techniques and spelling,

punctuation and grammar. The numeracy tests cover the skills of interpreting and calculating mathematical information.

Like many other qualifications, the current tests do not test the full range of skills at each level but ICT is being harnessed to test aspects of listening and writing in the future. Where assessment of additional skills is required, it should be done as part of the continuous assessment process associated with the individual learning plan.

What level are the tests?

The tests are available at two levels and are designed to measure skills at an equivalent level to other national qualifications:

Levels				
Adult Literacy and Numeracy Tests	Key Skills qualification	GCSE	GNVQ	NVQ
Level 1	Level 1	D – G grade	Foundation	Level 1
Level 2	Level 2	A* - C grade	Intermediate	Level 2

What is the relationship of the national tests to key skills?

The national literacy and numeracy tests are the same as the external tests for the Key Skills of Communication and Application of Number at Level 1 and Level 2. Adults could take the national test first and then build a portfolio to achieve a key skills qualification.

Is there a cost involved in taking the test?

The test is completely free for adult learners. Providers are charged normal certification fees by awarding bodies.

Do learners have to get every question right?

No. The intended pass mark is around 75%. The pass mark may vary slightly to ensure consistent standards from test to test. This is normal test procedure.

How do candidates receive their results?

Tests are machine-marked, enabling candidates to receive their results as quickly as possible. On-line candidates can receive immediate feedback.

Candidates are awarded a pass or fail grade and those who are successful receive the appropriate Certificate. Detailed individual feedback is given on candidate performance.

Which awarding bodies offer the tests?

National certificates in literacy and numeracy at Levels 1 and 2 are currently available through City and Guilds, Edexcel, OCR, AQA, NCFE, EDI & NOCN. For the most up-to-date list of accredited awarding bodies, visit the QCA's website at www.qca.org.uk/nq/bs/adultlit_numqual.asp A digest of what different Awarding Bodies offer and the costs is included in the updated National Test Toolkit - Move On with a National Qualification.

Where can learners take the test?

Tests are held at test centres approved by the awarding bodies. To become a test centre, contact one of the awarding bodies for details on how to gain approval. The Move On project has produced Guides to becoming a test centre, available at www.move-on.org.uk. The Learning and Skills Council funds test

centres to take external candidates.

A 'Find your nearest test centre' facility is available at www.move-on.org.uk

How often are the tests held?

Awarding bodies offer weekly paper test dates and most provide tests on-screen and on demand making it even easier for learners to take the test when they feel ready.

Are practice tests available?

Sample tests for practice purposes and lots of supporting materials are available on www.move-on.org.uk. On-line practice tests can also be found on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/nq/ks/ and www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus. A hard copy of File 3 - 'Move On with a National Qualification' containing sets of practice tests is available from the DfES Publications Team on 0845 60 222 60. Please quote NTT/PT04.

Will the qualifications be valued by employers?

Employers can be confident that individuals who hold literacy and numeracy qualifications at both levels are

competent to apply the skills covered in a variety of contexts.

The Skills for Life Strategy Unit is working to raise awareness and ensure that the qualifications are recognised by employers. For example, the Unit is currently working with the Sector Skills Councils to ensure that certificates are accepted by employers within their sectors. This is an on-going process and one that will be achieved over time.

Will the certificates provide entry to Higher Education?

The certificates should be seen as a stepping stone to other broader qualifications such as Key Skills and GCSEs which provide access to Higher Education. Universities and colleges accept the Certificates for entry to some courses.

What about ESOL learners?

ESOL candidates are encouraged to take the literacy and numeracy tests. Also available are newly accredited Certificates in ESOL Skills for Life. The National Test in literacy assesses the reading component of this new qualification.

••• Your questions answered...

Won't learners be reluctant to put themselves forward to do a test?

To the surprise of many teachers who were concerned about the introduction of external testing of adult literacy and numeracy, all our evidence shows that learners have been overwhelmingly positive about the tests. Experience to date has confounded many critics who had predicted that students would 'run a mile rather than get tested'.

"I've never been anti-test, it's just that I thought these would be too off putting to the students – but I was wrong."
(Tutor)

And students' own experiences of taking the test only reinforce this:

"It made me think – I wouldn't mind doing another one."

"I quite enjoyed it, it wasn't the sort of things they forced you to do at school."

"Give it a go – you've got nothing to lose. It's broadened my horizons and given me more self-confidence. I know now that I'm as good as anybody and I can do anything I want. It's for everybody."



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Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
Enquiry Line: 020 7509 5556
E-mail: info@qca.org.uk
www.qca.org.uk

Move On Development Office
Tel: 01823 333 386
E-mail: move-on@ctad.co.uk
www.move-on.org.uk

NOCN (National Open College Network)
Tel: 01322 268 080
E-mail: nocn@nocn.org.uk
www.nocn.org.uk

AWARDING BODIES

AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance)
Tel: 0161 953 1180
E-mail: mailbox@aqa.org.uk
www.aqa.org.uk

City and Guilds
Tel: 020 7294 2800
E-mail: enquiry@city-and-guilds.co.uk
www.basic-skills.org.uk

Edexcel
Tel: 0870 240 9800
E-mail: enquiries@edexcel.org.uk
www.edexcel.org.uk

EDI
Tel: 01926 458600
E-mail: custserv@lccieb.com
www.lccieb.com

NCFE (Northern Council for Further Education)
Tel: 0191 239 8000
E-mail: info@ncfe.org.uk
www.ncfe.org.uk

OCNW (Open College of the North West)
Tel: 01524 845046
E-mail: ocnw@lancaster.ac.uk
www.ocnw.com

OCR (Oxford Cambridge & RSA
Examinations)
Tel: 024 7685 1509
E-mail: cib@ocr.org.uk
www.ocr.org.uk

Further information can be found in the **National Test Toolkit**. It contains:

- Detailed information about the National Tests, including a comparison of awarding bodies and funding details
- The Move On approach and resources for promoting, recruiting and supporting learners to pass the test
- Practice tests for literacy and numeracy at Levels 1 and 2 (paper-based and on screen formats)

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