Pennsylvania Read-Aloud Guidelines
For Operational Assessments

- Keystone Exams
- PSSA
# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION........................................................................................................................................3

GENERAL GUIDELINES.........................................................................................................................3

Answer Choices.........................................................................................................................................3

Emphasis in Test Items.............................................................................................................................3

Fill in the Blank.........................................................................................................................................4

PSSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS .........................................................................................................4

Section 1: Writing and Language ...........................................................................................................4

Grade 3, Sections 2–4: Reading ................................................................................................................6

Grades 4–8, Section 2: Reading .................................................................................................................7

Grades 4–8, Sections 3–4: Reading and Text Dependent Analysis.............................................................7

KEYSTONE LITERATURE .......................................................................................................................7

PSSA MATHEMATICS/KEYSTONE ALGEBRA I ..................................................................................7

Symbols ..................................................................................................................................................7

Numbers...............................................................................................................................................8

Graphs/Tables/Charts..............................................................................................................................8

Graphics/Diagrams/ Figures/Clocks .......................................................................................................10

PSSA SCIENCE/KEYSTONE BIOLOGY ...............................................................................................10

Chemical Symbols.................................................................................................................................10

Scientific Units......................................................................................................................................10

Graphs/Tables/Keys...............................................................................................................................11

Science Scenarios ................................................................................................................................11

Diagrams/ Figures/ Flowcharts...........................................................................................................12
INTRODUCTION
This manual provides guidelines for “Readers” who read words, phrases, or test items aloud for operational assessments in Pennsylvania for the Keystone Exams and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure consistency in the read-aloud events for students in classrooms throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in order to maintain fairness for all students.

A “read aloud” may be considered to be a test feature or an accommodation. As a test feature, the read aloud of a word, phrase, or test item is allowable for all students. For more information regarding the difference between a test feature and an accommodation, see the *PSSA and Keystone Accommodations Guidelines*. The current version of this document can be found at:

- [www.education.state.pa.us](http://www.education.state.pa.us) [First click on the green check mark icon and then click on “Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)” or “Keystone Exams.”]

For all content areas and subjects, Readers may not clarify, elaborate, paraphrase, assist, or cue a student through uneven voice inflection. Read the *PSSA and Keystone Accommodations Guidelines* for specific instructions regarding the guidelines for reading aloud to a student or a group of students. Read aloud of any test item should only occur at individual student request unless otherwise specified as a documented accommodation for a non-English speaker or a student with a disability.

GENERAL GUIDELINES
Of utmost importance when reading aloud any item or portion thereof is that the validity of the item be maintained. Any portion of an item that might cue the correct answer or provide inappropriate assistance for the test taker must not be read aloud.

Answer Choices
- For multiple-choice questions, read the answer choice letter, pause briefly, then read the answer choice. Pause again before reading the next answer choice letter.
- Do not say anything prior to the answer choice letter, such as “answer choice” or “option.”

Emphasis in Test Items
- Emphasize words that are underlined or bolded as a part of the question being asked (e.g., not, best, or most) using voice inflection.
- Emphasize titles that are underlined, in quotation marks, or in italics by briefly pausing before and after the emphasis.
- Do not emphasize individual words or phrases that are underlined as part of a stimulus or answer choice.
Fill in the Blank

- Read the blank element as “blank” preceded and followed by a pause. For example, “I would like to have either an apple (pause) blank (pause) a banana to eat with my lunch.”
- If the space to be filled in has a number, read it as “blank number x” where x is the number on the line.

PSSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Section 1: Writing and Language

A read-aloud is permitted for all multiple-choice questions and writing prompts found in Section 1 of the English Language Arts assessment at Grades 3–8 as per restrictions specified in the PSSA and Keystone Accommodations Guidelines.

Stimulus Sentences

In some cases, sentences within a larger stimulus will be sequentially numbered for ease of reference for the students. When reading these paragraphs or groups of sentences, do not read or refer to the sentence numbers.

Example:

Read the paragraph.

(1) The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania encourages citizens to plant rain gardens. (2) Rain gardens capture storm water so that the water does not flow into storm drains. (3) Existing low spots or shallow pits lined with gravel make ideal locations for rain gardens. (4) If you use native plants in your rain garden, it will be easy to take care of and might even have attracted birds and butterflies.

Which sentence in the paragraph has an error?

A. sentence 1  
B. sentence 2  
C. sentence 3  
D. sentence 4

The question above should be read aloud as follows: “Read the paragraph. (pause) The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania encourages citizens to plant rain gardens. Rain gardens capture storm water so that the water does not flow into storm drains. Existing low spots or shallow pits lined with gravel make ideal locations for rain gardens. If you use native plants in your rain garden, it will be easy to take care of and might even have attracted birds and butterflies. (pause) Which sentence in the paragraph has an error? (pause) A (pause) sentence 1, (pause) B (pause) sentence 2, (pause) C (pause) sentence 3, (pause) D (pause) sentence 4”
Guidelines for Punctuation Items

- Do not say the name of any punctuation used in test questions.
- For end punctuation, read the sentence with normal inflection. Do not add unnatural inflections that may cue a student.
- Do not indicate quotation marks or apostrophes in any manner.
- For commas, briefly pause wherever a comma appears in a sentence.

Example

Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

A. He said “My new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”
B. “He said My new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”
C. He said, “My new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”
D. “He said, My new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”

The question above should be read aloud as follows:

“Which sentence is punctuated correctly? (pause) A. (pause) He said my new kitten loves to roll in the grass. (pause) B. (pause) He said my new kitten loves to roll in the grass. (pause) C. (pause) He said (pause) my new kitten loves to roll in the grass. (pause) D. (pause) He said (pause) my new kitten loves to roll in the grass.”

Guidelines for Capitalization Items

- Do not provide a verbal indication of capitalization within items.

Example

Which sentence has a mistake in capitalization?

A. We enjoyed reading the play If You Give a Mouse a Cookie.
B. Our class loudly sang the song “it’s a Small World” at the show.
C. My favorite chapter in the book is called “First Day of Spring.”
D. I read the book Two little Trains three times already today.

The question above should be read aloud as follows:

“Which sentence has a mistake in capitalization? (pause) A. (pause) We enjoyed reading the play (pause) if you give a mouse a cookie. (pause) B. (pause) Our class loudly sang the song (pause) it’s a small world (pause) at the show. (pause) C. (pause) My favorite chapter in the book is called (pause) first day of spring. (pause) D. (pause) I read the book (pause) two little trains (pause) three times already today.”
Guidelines for Spelling Items
- Speak the word rather than the individual letters in the word.
- Pronounce misspelled words as though they were spelled correctly.

Example

Read the sentence.

Several students were sitting under the tree.

Which word in the sentence is not spelled correctly?

- students
- were
- sitting
- under

The question above should be read aloud as follows:

“Read the sentence. (pause) Several students were sitting under the tree. (pause) Which word in the sentence is not spelled correctly? (pause) A. (pause) students, (pause) B (pause) were, (pause) C (pause) sitting, (pause), D (pause) under.”

Guidelines for Writing Prompts
- Writing prompts must be read aloud on an individual basis only and only at student request. Do not read aloud a prompt to the entire class.
- The bulleted lists below each step of the writing process may be read aloud on an individual basis only. Do not read the bulleted list to the entire class.
- Read the writing prompt or bulleted list exactly as written. Do not clarify, elaborate, paraphrase, assist, or cue a student through uneven voice inflection. Do not provide a definition of a word or phrase.
- If stimulus material is present below the writing prompt, any text that is a part of that stimulus material may be read aloud. Do not provide a verbal description of any graphic.

Grade 3, Sections 2–4: Reading
A read aloud is not permitted for any passage, multiple-choice question (or answer choice), evidence-based selected response question (or answer choice), or short-answer question found in Sections 2 through 4 of the PSSA English Language Arts assessment for Grade 3.
Grades 4–8, Section 2: Reading
A read aloud is not permitted for any passage, multiple-choice question (or answer choice), or evidence-based selected response question (or answer choice) found in Section 2 of the PSSA English Language Arts assessment for Grades 4–8.

Grades 4–8, Sections 3–4: Reading and Text Dependent Analysis
A read aloud is not permitted for any passage, multiple-choice question (or answer choice), or evidence-based selected response question (or answer choice) found in Section 3 or Section 4 of the PSSA English Language Arts assessment for Grades 4–8.

It is permissible to read aloud the three-page text-dependent analysis question (or a word or phrase found from the text-dependent analysis question) found at the end of Section 3 or Section 4 of the PSSA English Language Arts assessment for Grades 4–8 on an individual basis at student request.

KEYSTONE LITERATURE
A read aloud is not permitted for any passage, multiple-choice question (or answer choice), or constructed-response question for a Keystone Literature Exam.

PSSA MATHEMATICS/KEYSTONE ALGEBRA I
A read aloud is permitted for both the PSSA Mathematics Tests and the Keystone Algebra I Exams for all multiple-choice questions (and answer choices) and open-ended/constructed-response questions. Students with a documented accommodation for a disability or for a non-English speaking designation may have the entire assessment read aloud in an appropriate setting; otherwise, they may request a word, phrase, or test item be read aloud on an individual basis.

Symbols
Symbols should be read in a way that does not cue the correct answer or provide inappropriate assistance for the test taker.

The following symbols are each read as “times”: ×, ●.

For a number or variable followed by a grouping symbol, read the number/variable followed by “times the quantity” (e.g., 3(x + 7) would be read as “3 times the quantity x plus 7”).

The symbols \( \overrightarrow{AB} \), \( \overline{AB} \), or \( \overleftarrow{AB} \) would be read as “segment A B,” “line A B,” or “ray A B.” Pause between speaking the letters.
Each of the following symbols would be read as “a symbol”: \( \perp, \Box, \cong, \sqsubset, \sqsupset, \leq, \geq \).

Exponents should be read as “x to the n” for \( x^n \).

**Numbers**

Numbers should be read in a way that does not cue the correct answer or provide inappropriate assistance for the test taker. If the question is assessing a student’s knowledge of place value, read the number using the following examples:

- 2,224—read as “two, comma, two, two, four”
- 10.205—read as “one, zero, point, two, zero, five”

In questions where the student is given a written-out dollar value to match with a numerical value, $18.24 would be read as “dollar sign, one, eight, point, two, four.” In all other instances, $18.24 would be read as “eighteen dollars and twenty-four cents."

For questions where the place value is not relevant, read the numbers in standard form (e.g., 1,234 would be read as one thousand, two hundred thirty-four).

Fractions should be read as “the fraction (numerator) over (denominator)” (e.g., \( \frac{3}{4} \) would be read as “the fraction three over four”).

Mixed numbers should be read as “(whole number) and the fraction (numerator) over (denominator)” (e.g., 2 \( \frac{1}{4} \) would be read as “two and the fraction one over four”).

Negative numbers are scripted as “negative (number).”

**Graphs/Tables/Charts**

First read the title. “The title of the [type of graph or table] is [title].”

Number lines: “The title of the number line is [title]. The label below the number line is [label]. The numbers below the number line are [numbers]. The letters above the number line are [letters].”

Line plots: “The title of the line plot is [title]. The label below the line plot is [label]. The numbers below the line plot are [numbers].”

Tally charts: Read the title and headings. Refer to the tally marks as “some tally marks” rather than the number of tally marks shown. For one tally mark, read “a tally mark” and for zero tally marks, read “no tally marks.”
Stem-and-leaf plots: “The title of the stem-and-leaf plot is [title]. The numbers on the stem-and-leaf plot are [read each row from left to right]. Below the stem-and-leaf plot is a key. Key, [number] bar [number] equals [number].”

Double stem-and-leaf plots: “The title of the double stem-and-leaf plot is [title]. The numbers on the double stem-and-leaf plot are [read each row from left to right]. Below the double stem-and-leaf plot is a key. Key, [number] bar [number] equals [number]; [number] bar [number] equals [number].”

Box-and-whisker plots: “The title of the box-and-whisker plot is [title]. The label below the box-and-whisker plot is [label]. The numbers below the box-and-whisker plot are [numbers from left to right].”

Bar graphs: “The title of the bar graph is [title]. The label to the left of the bar graph is [label]. The numbers to the left of the bar graph are [numbers]. The label below the bar graph is [label]. The words below the bars are [bar labels].”

Double bar graphs: “The title of the bar graph is [title]. The label to the left of the bar graph is [label]. The numbers to the left of the bar graph are [numbers]. The label below the graph is [label]. The words below the bars are [bar labels]. Below the bar graph is a key. Key, [label], [label].”

Circle graphs: “The title of the circle graph is [title]. The labels on the circle graph are [read the labels starting at the 9-o’clock position and going around clockwise].”

First quadrant graphs: “The title of the graph is [title]. The label to the left of the graph is [label]. The numbers to the left of the graph are [numbers]. The label below the graph is [label]. The numbers below the graph are [numbers].”

Coordinate grids: “The title of the (coordinate) (grid/plane)¹ is [title].² The numbers to the left of the vertical line are [read numbers on y-axis from bottom to top]. The numbers below the horizontal line are [read numbers on x-axis from left to right]. The points marked on the grid are labeled [points].³

1. Use coordinate grid or coordinate plane based on what is referenced in the first part of the question.
2. If there is no title, replace the first sentence with “A coordinate grid is shown.”
3. Only read the point labels if they are words.
Graphics/Diagrams/Figures/Clocks
The read aloud of most graphics follows this pattern: “The title of the picture (or figure or diagram) is [title].” (Use picture, figure, or diagram based on what is referenced in the first part of the question. Other parts of the picture are only included if measurements or other pertinent information is included.)

An analog clock is referred to as a clock; a digital clock is referred to as a digital clock. If there is no title, then read “A (digital) clock is shown,” followed by any labels.

PSSA SCIENCE/KEYSTONE BIOLOGY
A read aloud is permitted for both the PSSA Science Tests and the Keystone Biology Exam for all multiple-choice questions (and answer choices), open-ended/constructed-response questions, and scenarios. Students may have the entire assessment read aloud or they may request a word, phrase, or test item be read aloud.

Chemical Symbols
Symbols should be read in a way that does not cue the correct answer or provide a hint for the test taker. If a question includes both the name and the symbol of an element or formula of a compound, the symbol/formula may be read as the name in later instances within the test question. If only the symbol/formula appears within a test question, only the symbol/formula should be read (e.g., Cl₂ should be read as “C, l, two,” not as “chlorine gas” or “chlorine”).

Scientific Units
Abbreviated units should be described using the full word(s). For example, 3 m should be read as “three meters,” and 9.8 m/s² should be read as “nine point eight meters per second squared.”
Graphs/Tables/Keys
For graphs, first read the title of the graph. Then read the label and the numbers on each axis, referring to the horizontal axis as the bottom of the graph and the vertical axis as the left side of the graph. The order will depend upon the content of the graph. Describe the key if there is one.

For data tables, first read the title of the data table. If the data table has two columns, read as follows:

- The heading of the left column is “___”
- The heading of the right column is “___”
- The data from left to right are as follows:
  - Row one: ___, ___
  - Row two: ___, ___
  - Etc.

If the data table has three or more columns, read as follows:

- The headings of the columns from left to right are: “___”
- The data from left to right are as follows:
  - Row one: ___
  - Row two: ___
  - Etc.

Headings with units should be read with an insertion of “in” between the measurement and the unit (e.g., “Distance (feet)” should be read as “Distance in feet”).

Most data tables should be read left to right by each row; however, it is more appropriate to read some data vertically for each column.

Science Scenarios
First read the directions above the scenario, and then read the phrase “The title of the scenario is ‘___’.”

If a picture/diagram/data table shown within the scenario is not referenced in the sentence prior to its appearance, use the phrase “A (picture/diagram/data table) is shown. The title of the (picture/diagram/data table) is ‘___’.”
**Diagrams/ Figures/ Flowcharts**

Always read the title if there is one. “The title of the (diagram, figure, flowchart, food web, etc.) is (‘___’).”

Diagrams with labels should be described in a concise format including all text/ labels, as in the following example:

“The drawing shows a side view of a grasshopper. There are four labels from left to right: compound eye, hard outer covering, double wings, jointed hind legs.”

Food webs should be described by starting at the bottom of the food web and reading all labels and describing the direction of arrows.

Flowcharts:

- Horizontal flowcharts should be read left to right and include a description of the labels and arrow directions.
- Vertical flowcharts should be read in the direction indicated by the arrows and include a description of the labels. If arrows are not present, they should be read top to bottom and include a description of the labels.

Note: A graphic should be referenced by the Reader the same way it is identified in the introduction of the item (or scenario), with the same term used consistently throughout the script. Picture, diagram, and drawing are **not** interchangeable.