

STAMP4S Test Taker Guide



What is STAMP 4S?

STAMP stands for *Standards-Based Measure of Proficiency* and is a web-based test that assesses language proficiency. A STAMP 4S test has four sections – reading, writing, listening and speaking and the results of this test inform test takers and educators about learning progress and program effectiveness. STAMP 4S test items are based on real-world, everyday situations. STAMP 4S measures a test taker's language ability according to Benchmark Levels that are based on national standards. Test results will indicate the level of proficiency achieved for each section of the test.

Preparing for the STAMP 4S Assessment

Take a STAMP [sample test](#) to familiarize yourself with the layout of the test and the types of prompts that you can expect. It is also advisable to read the STAMP 4S Benchmarks and Rubric Guide if you want information about the skills you need to demonstrate to achieve a certain test level.

Rules for Taking A STAMP 4S Test

The STAMP 4S test must be taken in a proctored environment, with a proctor who is authorized by the organization sponsoring the test.

- No paper, pens, pencils, cell phones, etc. are allowed in the testing area
- No additional applications (e.g., Word, email, chat) or browser windows are allowed to be open during testing
- Avant graders review all written and spoken responses and any inappropriate responses (vulgar, violent, etc.) will not be scored and will be reported to your test administrator

Logging in to STAMP 4S

- Your teacher or proctor will provide the URL, Test Code and Password for the STAMP 4S login page
- You will need to enter a Login Name (between 6-20 characters) on the login page. Login Name may contain lower case letters, numbers, and any of the following special characters: @ (at symbol); _ (underscore); - (hyphen); . (period); , (comma); ' (single quote). Your teacher or proctor may have suggestions on what to enter in this field but please note that your Login Name cannot be the same as anyone else's in your testing group
- Be sure you remember how you entered your Login Name because if you need to resume you will need to use the same Login Name you started the test with previously.
- After you log in, the Student Profile screen will appear where you will need to enter your First Name, Last Name and Student ID. Follow directions from your teacher or proctor for entry into these fields

Taking the STAMP4S Assessment

Your proctor will let you know what section of the test to start first. Reading and Writing sections are usually taken together (the Reading section is a prerequisite for the Writing section). Listening and Speaking sections are also usually taken together (the Listening section is a prerequisite for the Speaking section).

The test will provide helpful instructions at the beginning of each section. Please read the instructions carefully.

Responses to test questions are submitted using the NEXT button, located at the bottom right of the screen. Scroll down, if necessary.

A warning will appear if you spend too much time on one test item. However, the warning message allows you to add more time if needed. If no entry is given when this message is displayed, you will be logged out of the test and will need to resume when you have more time.

Unless directed otherwise, complete all sections of the test until the Test Complete message appears.

Reading and Listening Sections

The Reading and Listening sections of the test are multiple choice and computer-adaptive, meaning that each new question is selected based on previous responses. Because STAMP 4S is used to determine language proficiency for test takers who are at Novice, Intermediate and Advanced levels, the Reading and Listening sections start out with questions at various levels. If you are at the early stages of language learning, the test may challenge you, but don't be frustrated if you encounter a topic or words that are unfamiliar to you. Do your best, but keep in mind that an incorrect answer on an unfamiliar topic is okay and provides the system with valuable information needed for determining proficiency.

As your test progresses, you may see easier or more difficult questions based upon your earlier answers. Each test taker will follow a unique path as he/she moves through the test. You will see approximately 30 questions in each of the sections. The Reading section takes, on average, 40 minutes to complete and the Listening section averages 45 minutes. Either section may take longer for test takers who are getting many higher-level test items, which feature longer reading or listening passages. The speed of your Internet connection can also affect the length of the test.

Here are some tips:

- Read the question and answers before you attempt to read or listen to the passage (this will help guide your reading/listening and help you move through the test more quickly)
- Do not translate each word that you read or hear – translating each word is not reading or listening for comprehension and it will take more time that you can better use in later sections
- In the Listening section, you can listen to each recording two times

Writing and Speaking Sections

- These sections start with a sample item
 - Use the sample Writing item to practice keyboarding special characters you may need to use
 - Use the sample Speaking item to ensure that your microphone is working properly
 - Do not spend much time crafting answers to sample questions as they do not contribute to your final score
- Provide your response using the target language you are being tested in
- Write or record at your highest possible level
- Provide all detail requested in the question and enough detail to fully demonstrate your writing or speaking skills • Stay on topic
- Pace yourself
 - Allow sufficient time for all three of your Writing/Speaking items
 - Complete responses for all items are needed to accurately determine your proficiency level
- In these sections, click **NEXT** to submit the response and move to the next screen
- After clicking **NEXT**, you will not be able to return to the question

Writing Section

The Writing section consists of one or two samples and three test questions.

- For Spanish and French writing tests, a "visual keyboard" is provided for selecting special characters associated with the language
- For Arabic, Chinese and Japanese writing tests, you need to select the correct language for input from your computer's task bar or desktop (your teacher or test proctor can show you how to do this)
- Use the **SAVE** button regularly as you write
 - The test will timeout if 30 minutes have elapsed without clicking **SAVE** or **NEXT**. If a timeout occurs prior to clicking **SAVE**, you will lose all of your writing input. If you timeout after you have clicked **SAVE**, you will lose all of your writing input since your last **SAVE**.
 - A 5-minute warning appears prior to a timeout; click the message if you need additional time; you will also want to click **SAVE** at that time. If no entry is given when this message is displayed, you will be logged out of the test and will need to resume when you have more time.
 - Saving frequently also guards against lost work in the event of any connectivity issues
 - If you get logged out of the test, you can log back in with the same credentials to continue from the point of your last **SAVE**
- When done with a test question, click **NEXT** to save the response and move to the next question or screen

Speaking Section

The Speaking section consists of one or two samples and three test questions.

- Organize your thoughts before you start to record
- To record a response, click **RECORD**
- When done recording, wait two or three seconds, and then click **STOP** • After recording, click **PLAY** to listen to your recording
- You can then do one of the following:
 - If you want to add to the recording, click **RECORD/ADD TO RECORDING**
 - If you want to delete the recording and start over, click **START OVER**
- Avoid long pauses when you are recording
 - Use the **STOP** and **RECORD/ADD TO RECORDING** buttons as needed
- When the recording is complete, click **NEXT** to save your response and move to the next test question or screen

For the Speaking Section, click **PLAY** after recording to verify that the response was recorded properly.

- If the response is inaudible or of poor quality, **DO NOT CLICK NEXT**.
- You can try recording again, but should contact the test proctor or teacher if there are headset issues, or if a problem persists.
- Never click **NEXT** to bypass the test item –if the problem cannot be resolved during the current testing session, click **STOP TEST** (and resume the test after the problem is resolved).

Following these procedures will prevent having a speaking response that cannot be graded. Keep in mind that Avant graders hear exactly what you are able to hear.

Completing the STAMP 4S Assessment

- If you are not completing the test in one session, follow the instructions from your teacher or proctor about when to click Stop Test.
- You have not completed STAMP 4S until you see a screen that says "Test Complete."
- If you need to finish the test at another time, plan to do so within 14 days of starting the test (or within the timelines specified by your teacher or proctor).

Resuming the STAMP 4S Assessment

To resume a test, log in exactly as you did the first time using the same credentials. The test should restart at the point where you left off. If the Student Profile screen appears instead, STOP the test. This indicates that the name entered in the Login Name field this time is different than originally entered. Try logging in again or contact your test proctor or teacher for assistance.

Need Help?

Students: Contact your assessment Administrator or Proctor

Administrators: Email: support@avantassessment.com
 Phone: Within the U.S.: 1-888-713-7887
 Outside the U.S.: +541-338-8090

After hours, please leave a voicemail message.

Avant Assessment, LLC
 940 Willamette Street, Suite 530
 Eugene, Oregon 97401

Support Representatives available
 Monday – Friday from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 Pacific Time (March, April, and May),
 and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time
 during the rest of the year

STAMP4S Benchmarks & Rubric Guide



Overview

Test takers receive a score (Benchmark Level) for each section of the test. The Reading and Listening items are scored automatically by the computer. The Writing and Speaking items are scored by Avant's Valid-certified raters who use a Scoring Rubric (a scoring tool that lists the criteria for meeting Benchmark Levels). The rubric outlines in detail what expectations are placed upon the test takers for performance at any given level. Test takers who hope to score at a specific level know the characteristics of the work they must produce to achieve that level.

Benchmark Scale

Scoring is done using Benchmark Levels 1-9 for Reading and Listening and Benchmark Levels 1-8 for Writing and Speaking. The levels are associated with Benchmark Categories of Novice, Intermediate and Advanced as shown in the Level Keys below. Similar to ACTFL's low, mid and high designations, these designations will assist in seeing a further breakdown of the test taker's ability. While they are similar to ACTFL's levels, there is not a direct correlation. Because it takes a great deal of time and practice for students to acquire the skills necessary to move from Novice to Intermediate, student growth can be tracked using the numeric levels within the categories.

This Benchmark Scale relates to the ACTFL scale as shown below.

The numbers 1-9 relate to the ACTFL scale in the following manner:					
Reading and Listening Level Key			Writing and Speaking Level Key		
Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
1 - Novice-Low	4 - Intermediate-Low	7 - Advanced-Low	1 - Novice-Low	4 - Intermediate-Low	7 - Advanced-Low
2 - Novice-Mid	5 - Intermediate-Mid	8 - Advanced-Mid	2 - Novice-Mid	5 - Intermediate-Mid	8 - Advanced-Mid/High
3 - Novice-High	6 - Intermediate-High	9 - Advanced-High	3 - Novice-High	6 - Intermediate-High	
				NR - Not Ratable	

Reading and Listening Benchmarks

Each Reading and Listening test item has an associated level. Because the Reading and Listening sections are computer-adaptive, the test taker experiences questions at various levels. The algorithm used to determine the test taker's scores for Reading and Listening looks at the number of questions that were answered correctly at each test item level.

The chart on the next page shows topics typically associated with the Benchmark Levels for Reading and Listening test items. It also shows the Reading and Listening characteristics associated with the levels.

Keep in mind that topic is not the only criteria for determining the level for STAMP 4S test items. A Novice-level test taker is likely to know learned phrases and basic vocabulary about topics that may be listed under Intermediate or Advanced.

Also, test items may have elements of multiple topics. For example, a Novice-level question about Calendar/Time might reference Holidays/Celebrations.

The topics may be used as a guide for instruction, but are not a complete scope and sequence.

Benchmark Level	Topics	Characteristics
NOVICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self • Calendar/Time • Colors/Shapes • Pets/Animals • School/Classroom • Weather/Seasons • Clothing • Food/Beverage • Family/Friends • Home • Places/Geography • Community • Daily Routines • Shopping/Stores • Leisure/Activities 	<p>Students who are reading or listening at Novice proficiency are characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance of learned phrases and basic vocabulary • Ability to recognize the purpose of basic texts • Can understand a core of simple, formulaic utterances
INTERMEDIATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Holidays/Celebrations • Occupations/Professions • Transportation Travel/Vacations • Future plans • Culture • Contemporary Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current events • Economics • Literature • Science • Social Science • History • <i>Plus more in-depth aspects of Novice topics</i> 	<p>Students who are reading or listening at Intermediate proficiency are characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reading, ability to understand the main ideas and explicit detail in everyday language • Ability to use language knowledge to understand information in everyday materials • Can follow short conversations and announcements on common topics and answer questions about the main idea and explicitly stated details
ADVANCED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts • Politics • Religion • Math • <i>Plus more in-depth aspects of Novice and Intermediate topics</i> 	<p>Students who are reading or listening at Advanced proficiency are characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand and use language for straightforward informational purposes • Can understand the content of most factual, non-specialized materials intended for a general audience • Can understand the content of most spoken factual, non-specialized language

The STAMP4S Scoring Process for Writing and Speaking Items

Scoring for the STAMP 4S Writing and Speaking responses is done using the following three-step process and associated rubric.

- STEP 1** | Overall evaluation of the response to assess for Ratability — is the response on topic and appropriate for the given prompt/task? If the response is off topic, contains any profanity or includes any menacing or threatening language, the response will be treated as unresponsive or non ratable and the test taker will receive a "0" score for that task.
- STEP 2** | Evaluation of each ratable response to determine a Benchmark Level based upon the Text-Type characteristics, followed by rating of Language Control factors (see next page).
- STEP 3** | The system will then post ratings for each response, which are used to calculate the final score for the domain.

Note: 20% of all test taker scores are rated by a second rater to assist in tracking rater accuracy and reliability.

The same rubric is used for all Speaking and Writing items. Once rated, the average ratings across all Speaking and Writing items will appear on the summary report page and scores for each sample will appear on the detailed score page.

STAMP4S Scoring Rubric

Benchmark	Text Type Characteristics	Language Control
LEVEL 1 Novice-Low	WORDS - Produces words in target language with no connection. Does not have the extended vocabulary or the ability necessary to formulate even simple phrases to address the prompt.	Limited language control. Inability to create more than individual words. L1 (first language) influence may be strong. Errors are expected at this level, but the student must be able to produce at least two comprehensible words.
LEVEL 2 Novice-Mid	PHRASES - Language production is beyond simple words, but clearly shows the lack of ability to construct complete sentences.	May make frequent errors, but usually comprehensible to a sympathetic reader/listener. L1 (first language) influence may be present.
LEVEL 3 Novice-High	SIMPLE SENTENCES - Short, common expressions or memorized statements that may be combined together. Able to create at least two complete simple sentences.	Good accuracy for high frequency expressions. Usually comprehensible to a sympathetic reader/listener. Grammatical (syntax, spelling, conjugation) errors are expected at this level but sentences must make sense to be acceptable.
LEVEL 4 Intermediate-Low	STRINGS OF SENTENCES - Variety of sentences that utilize different verbs to create independent thoughts, mostly composed of a recombination of learned simple sentences with some added detail.	Good accuracy with formulaic sentences with some added detail. Errors may occur as student attempts higher level skills. Good Language Control is expected with the majority of the response.
LEVEL 5 Intermediate-Mid	CONNECTED - Logical organization of ideas and flow of sentences or statements. The lower end must have at least 3 unique and non-formulaic sentences while the upper end is moving toward connected sentences with complexity, syntactical control and limited errors.	Good accuracy evident with possible errors that don't affect the overall meaning. Delivery may be somewhat choppy. May have repetitive use of concrete vocabulary with occasional use of expanding terms. Accuracy for complex sentences is emerging.
LEVEL 6 Intermediate-High to Pre-Advanced	PRE-PARAGRAPH (Pre-Advanced) - Able to demonstrate a Pre-Advanced control of the language. Complexity is evident. Transition words and connectors are used correctly and efficiently most of the time to create a flow within the response. The response contains groups of sentences that focus on different aspects of the prompt, and includes transition words or phrases which often introduce the next concept. However, the response does not have adequate inclusion of advanced vocabulary (must have at least 5 Advanced vocabulary terms in the response) to be considered Advanced - but rather, the response contains mostly basic vocabulary, keeping this response in the Pre-Advanced level.	For the most part, the response is well written and well constructed. The sentence structures show Pre-Advanced skill and demonstrate that the student is feeling more comfortable creating a coherent response (groupings accurately stated, transition words and phrases used well, complexity demonstrated, etc.). There may still be errors, but the errors would not be with basic grammar or vocabulary, or may show a pattern of errors with more complex grammar or structures. These errors would indicate a response that is nearing Advanced level control, but still not able to show full control at the Advanced level.
LEVEL 7 Advanced-Low	PARAGRAPH - A connectedness and a flow within the text that includes linking and transitional words and/or phrases. Demonstrates a connection of thoughts that create a coherent and extended discourse.	Language is error free a majority of the time with familiar topics. If errors exist, they are patterned and do not hinder overall meaning. Delivery is mostly fluent with only occasional hesitancy. Some abstract and precise use of vocabulary and terms with familiar topics is evident.
LEVEL 8 Advanced-Mid	EXTENDED PARAGRAPH - Variety of cohesive devices and organizational patterns evident in response. Vocabulary is clear, specific and natural. Language is smooth and natural in delivery and without noticeable errors.	Language is presented with limited errors, if any. Ability to create complex language using precise and extensive vocabulary. Control of the abstract as well as ease of use of idiomatic phrases and concepts. Clear sequential ordering evident (if required) and accurately follows target language conventions.

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Outside the U.S.: +941-338-9050

After hours, please leave a voicemail message.

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during the rest of the year