

# Reading Assessment Guide

## Introduction

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SMART reading assessments for Years 3–10 assess students' progress in decoding, making meaning from, and thinking critically about texts. They align with the New Zealand Curriculum English learning area Reading (Years 3 – 8) and Text Studies (Years 9 - 10) strands, and provide reliable information on progress and achievement to inform teaching, next learning steps, and twice-yearly reporting to parents and whānau.

Assessments are low-stakes and designed to describe each student's overall reading progress and achievement while highlighting strengths and gaps. Items vary in difficulty to cover the full range of performance (emerging to exceeding).

## Curriculum Focus by Year Level

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- **Years 3–6:** Assesses word recognition, comprehension, and critical analysis.
- **Years 7–8:** Focuses on comprehension and critical analysis (with word recognition supporting comprehension).
- **Years 9–10:** Draws from text studies, emphasising textual and critical analysis, which includes text features, context, purpose, interpretations, connections, and responses to text.

*For information on what proficient readers are expected to know and be able to do please visit [Tāhūrangi](#).*

## Assessment Structure and Timing

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Each assessment consists of *testlets*, which include a stimulus text and associated items - typically about six items each).

SMART assessments are not timed by the tool, but times are provided as a guide to help teachers prepare for and deliver the assessments.

For Reading the structure and suggested timings are:

- **Year 3:** Approximately 30 items, approximately 30–35 minutes
- **Years 4 to 6:** Approximately 35 items, approximately 40–45 minutes.
- **Years 7 and 8:** Approximately 40 items, approximately 45–50 minutes.
- **Years 9 and 10:** Approximately 40 items, approximately 50–60 minutes.

## Stimulus Texts

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The texts you will find in SMART Reading assessments are high-quality, engaging, and reflect the diversity of New Zealand. They are selected to match year-level expectations in the New Zealand Curriculum, including a mix of non-fiction and fiction, and an appropriate range of text forms and levels of complexity.

### Approximate word count ranges

- **Year 3:** 50–250 words per text (max total ~1000).
- **Years 4 to 6:** 50–300/350 words (max total ~1500).
- **Years 7 and 8:** 100–350 words (max total ~1800).
- **Years 9 and 10:** 100–400 words (max total ~2000).

Text types include a balance of poetry (10–15%) and other literature/informational texts.

## Item Types and Content

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The Reading assessment uses closed-answer item types.

Item difficulty reflects a combination of year-level curriculum expectations, the skills and knowledge being assessed, text complexity, and the level of thinking required. Items are ordered in a sequence that mirrors how a reader would naturally engage with the text.

## Linking between year-levels

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You may notice that some texts and items are included in assessments at two successive year levels (vertical linking) to compare performance and place all students on the same scale. Other items are repeated for the same year group across the two assessment windows (Term 2 and Term 4) to measure progress over the year. All items are designed to be appropriate for students' ages and learning levels.

## Delivery Formats

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Reading assessments are available **online** or **paper-based**. The format does not limit students' ability to demonstrate what they know and can do.

Student equipment includes basic stationery, on-screen tools (online), and approved assistive technologies. Dictionaries and thesauruses are not permitted.

# Key points for successful Reading Assessments:

## 1. Preparation

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Decide paper or digital format.

If you are intending to use devices, ensure students complete the familiarisation tool (NZ Curriculum pathway) using their usual devices.

**For online:** Create the Assessment Session Code, and generate and print student codes. Assessment Session codes need to be created prior to the beginning of the assessment, and can be created at any time before the assessment in the five week window.

**For paper:** Print question papers (reusable where appropriate) and individual answer sheets. These should be stored securely prior to the assessment.

Organise accessibility support as needed.

## 2. Delivering a Reading Session

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Teachers or administrators will create a dedicated assessment session for Reading. Share the session code and individual student codes with students.

Assessments are not timed by SMART, so teachers and schools are able to manage timing and breaks themselves.

**For online delivery:** consider using the *Pause* function if a break is planned. Teachers can monitor live progress on the session dashboard, then finalise the session once all students have submitted.

**For Paper-Based Delivery:** distribute question papers and named answer sheets. No session code is required. After completion, scan and upload answer sheets for integration with online results.

## 3. Post-Assessment

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All results (online or scanned paper) appear together in marking and reporting. Flagged paper-based answers will require teacher review and possibly teacher marking.

Support is available via the Education Service Desk.

# Using SMART results to contribute to Reporting to Parents and Whānau:

SMART results provide valuable evidence to inform teachers' decisions about students' progress and achievement for twice-yearly reporting to parents and whānau.

When used alongside classroom evidence and other assessment information, SMART supports consistent and transparent reporting using student progress descriptors: emerging, developing, consolidating, proficient, or exceeding.