WiDA™

Can Do Descriptors
KEY USES EDITION

Grades 9-12

The WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition, Grades K–12

The WIDA Can Do Descriptors provide examples of what language learners **can do** at various stages of English language development in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The *WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition* is one component of the WIDA Standards Framework (shown at right). The framework, as a whole, supports the implementation of the WIDA English Language Development Standards in the instruction and assessment of language learners. We encourage educators to use the *WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition* in conjunction with the other components of the framework, along with the previous edition of the Can Do Descriptors. For more information on the WIDA Standards Framework, visit www.wida.us.

The *WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition* provides examples of academic language use for four specific communicative purposes. These purposes, referred to as **Key Uses,** were identified based on reviews of literature and a language analysis of college and career readiness standards:
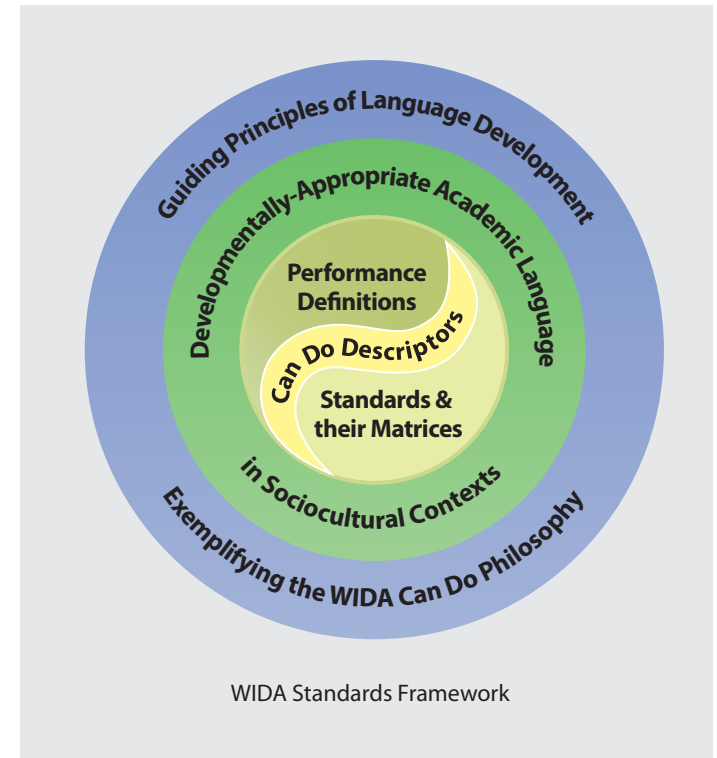
Recount: To display knowledge or narrate experiences or events. Example tasks for the Key Use of **Recount** include telling or summarizing stories, producing information reports, and sharing past experiences.

Explain: To clarify the "why" or the "how" of ideas, actions, or phenomena. Example tasks for the Key Use of **Explain** include describing life cycles, sharing why or how things work, stating causes and effects, and sharing results of experiments.

Argue: To persuade by making claims supported by evidence. Example tasks for the Key Use of **Argue** include stating preferences or opinions and constructing arguments with evidence.

Discuss: To interact with others to build meaning and share knowledge. Example tasks for the Key Use of **Discuss** include participating in small or large group activities and projects.

The *WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition* and the example descriptors are not exhaustive but are meant to help guide the planning and conversation around meaningful participation of language learners in stardards-based contest curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Guiding Principles of Language Development
Developmentally-Appropriate Academic Language
Performance Definitions
Can Do Descriptors
Standards & their Matrices
in Sociocultural Contexts
Exemplifying the WIDA Can Do Philosophy

WIDA Standards Framework

Organization of the WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition, Grades K–12

The *WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition* is organized by grade-level bands (K, 1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12) that correspond to those in ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. Within each grade-level band, the descriptors are organized by Key Use (Recount, Explain, Argue and Discuss) and within each Key Use, there are example descriptors for WIDA's six levels of language proficiency (ELP Levels 1–6).

The descriptors in Level 6 represent the language performance of students who have met all the criteria for Level 5. Unlike the descriptors at Levels 1–5 that provide examples of performance at the end of the level, the descriptors at Level 6 are examples of performance within Level 6.

For three of the Key Uses (**Recount, Explain,** and **Argue**) you'll see descriptors for the four language domains (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing). The descriptors for the Key Use **Discuss** are only shown for oral language. The Key Use **Discuss** highlights the importance of oral language development for meaningful participation of all language learners, regardless of their level of language proficiency.

Potential Uses for the WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition

Audiences	The WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition can help….
Educators who work with language learners, including coaches, teachers *(e.g., general education, gifted and talented, special education, Title I),* language specialists, and support staff.	• Differentiate curriculum, instruction, and assessments designed in English based on language learners' levels of English language proficiency • Collaborate and engage in instructional conversations about the academic success of language learners in English environments • Advocate for equitable access to content for language learners based on their level of language proficiency
Administrators and school leaders	• Communicate with other educators about students' English language development • Support the WIDA Can Do Philosophy throughout schools and districts • Advocate for equitable access to content for language learners based on their level of language proficiency

Stakeholders are encouraged to use the Can Do Descriptors beyond the audiences and purposes identified above to advocate on behalf of language learners.

By the end of each of the given levels of English language proficiency* English language learners can...

KEY USE OF RECOUNT

		ELP Level 1 **Entering**	ELP Level 2 **Emerging**	ELP Level 3 **Developing**	ELP Level 4 **Expanding**	ELP Level 5 **Bridging**	ELP Level 6 **Reaching**
LISTENING		**Process recounts by** • Matching everyday oral content-related words and phrases to pictures, diagrams, or photographs • Selecting resources, places, products, or figures from oral statements and visual supports	**Process recounts by** • Matching oral descriptions of characters or main events in content-related topics • Following modeled oral commands	**Process recounts by** • Identifying main ideas from short content-related oral presentations • Classifying examples of genres read aloud *(e.g., types of narration)*	**Process recounts by** • Following the steps of content-related tasks or assignments given orally • Identifying details from oral discussions *(e.g., when, who, where, what, and why)*	**Process recounts by** • Reconstructing past experiences or series of events based on oral discourse • Recognizing nuanced meanings of words and phrases in extended oral discourse	**Process recounts by** • Categorizing perspectives of multiple speakers • Identifying important information on specific events and concepts from lectures and presentations
SPEAKING		**Recount by** • Naming and briefly describing content topics using visual support *(e.g., posters, diagrams, pictures)* • Answering select yes/no or Wh- questions	**Recount by** • Restating information using content-specific terms • Providing examples of content-related information previously studied	**Recount by** • Posing and responding to questions in small group discussions • Describing the sequence of processes, cycles, procedures, or events with details	**Recount by** • Presenting factual information on content-related topics to the class • Paraphrasing and summarizing content-related ideas in large and small groups	**Recount by** • Engaging in extended discussion of effects, impacts, or events related to content topics • Giving multimedia oral presentations on content-related material learned from various sources	**Recount by** • Adjusting presentation style, degree of formality, word choice, tone, and information to the context and audience • Presenting information that follows discipline-specific organization *(e.g., orientation to topic, sequence of events, conclusion)*

Except for Level 6, for which there is no ceiling.

By the end of each of the given levels of English language proficiency* English language learners can...

KEY USE OF RECOUNT

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 2 Emerging	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 4 Expanding	ELP Level 5 Bridging	ELP Level 6 Reaching
READING	**Process recounts by** • Matching key content-related terms and ideas to images, graphs, icons, or diagrams • Sequencing illustrated text of narrative or informational events	**Process recounts by** • Identifying patterns specific to narrative or informational text *(e.g., orientation, presentation of events, conclusion)* • Locating main ideas in a series of related sentences	**Process recounts by** • Recognizing lexical chains that show how characters and ideas are labeled across the text • Identifying detailed descriptions, procedures, and information in paragraphs	**Process recounts by** • Identifying how the authors make language choices and adjusts for audience and purpose • Reflecting on various accounts of a subject told in different media *(e.g., print and multimedia)*	**Process recounts by** • Identifying how text structure supports comprehension and retrieval of information and details • Identifying the central idea or theme and how it is supported by clear descriptions and extended details	**Process recounts by** • Analyzing and comparing how authors use language for specific purposes and audiences • Identifying how authors develop and maintain cohesion by connecting ideas or events in extended texts
WRITING	**Recount by** • Listing content words or phrases that relate to the topic • Including images, diagrams, and charts to add details to the topic	**Recount by** • Following patterns specific to narrative or informational text *(e.g., orientation, presentation of events, conclusion)* • Sequencing narratives or informational text using linking words and phrases	**Recount by** • Summarizing content-related material • Including important information and related details	**Recount by** • Creating narrative or informational extended text of past events or experiences *(e.g., lab reports, current events)* • Connecting main points, events, and central ideas to conclusions	**Recount by** • Sequencing using language that creates coherence • Organizing information according to content-specific expectations	**Recount by** • Summarizing content-related notes from lectures or readings • Producing research reports using multiple sources of information

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By the end of each of the given levels of English language proficiency* English language learners can…

KEY USE OF EXPLAIN

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 2 Emerging	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 4 Expanding	ELP Level 5 Bridging	ELP Level 6 Reaching
LISTENING	**Process explanations by** • Ordering events or stages of phenomena from oral statements • Identifying words and phrases related to sequence	**Process explanations by** • Sequencing steps in processes or procedures described orally • Comparing information, symbols, or icons on charts or tables described orally	**Process explanations by** • Recognizing relationships in a series of oral statements • Identifying causes for particular events or phenomena in short oral presentations	**Process explanations by** • Identifying components of systems from multimedia • Interpreting cause and effect from oral discourse	**Process explanations by** • Identifying effects and consequences of events and phenomena from class discussions • Identifying interdependence of different parts of systems from multimedia presentations	**Process explanations by** • Recognizing specific language used to enhance clarity and precision • Recognizing and following language related to the same event or phenomenon throughout presentations
SPEAKING	**Explain by** • Ordering events or stages of phenomena with sequential language *(e.g., first, next, step 1)* • Using words and phrases to identify visually supported phenomena	**Explain by** • Naming properties, characteristics or features of illustrated content-related topics • Posing and responding to Wh-questions that relate to phenomena	**Explain by** • Connecting causes to effects in a series of statements • Sequencing processes, cycles, or procedures in short extended discourse	**Explain by** • Describing components of systems in small groups and class discussions • Providing precise words and phrases to provide details, descriptions, classifications, comparisons, causes/effects, or procedures	**Explain by** • Presenting information using an objective, neutral tone in extended discourse • Using nominalization to compress information and maintain coherence *(e.g., "This expansion…," "Weathering…," "An implication…")*	**Explain by** • Providing precision and accuracy in classifications, procedures, processes, and accounts using abstraction, technical language, and a variety of active/passive verb forms • Following discipline-specific organization *(e.g., orienting the reader, details, conclusion)* and supporting presentations with graphs, formulas, quotes or other media

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KEY USE OF EXPLAIN

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 2 Emerging	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 4 Expanding	ELP Level 5 Bridging	ELP Level 6 Reaching
READING	**Process explanations by** • Identifying key words and phrases that describe the topics or phenomena • Recognizing sequence statements and illustrations that describe phenomena	**Process explanations by** • Identifying different types of connectors that show relationships between topics and phenomena • Differentiating between technical and everyday vocabulary that describe phenomena	**Process explanations by** • Identifying how language provides clarity and precision in describing topics or phenomena • Summarizing information with diagrams, models, flow charts, or illustrations	**Process explanations by** • Identifying the interdependence of parts of systems *(e.g., technical, government, chemical)* • Comparing information on phenomena across a variety of multimedia sources	**Process explanations by** • Identifying how authors connect related ideas across paragraphs with abstraction, complex sentences, and technical terms • Tracing the central idea of text and how it develops, including how it is shaped by specific details, extended definitions, facts, quotes, or examples	**Process explanations by** • Recognizing discipline-specific patterns *(e.g., orienting the reader, part-whole classification, neutral/ authoritative tone)* • Identifying authors' precision and accuracy in classifications, comparisons, accounts, or procedures as a result of clear language choices
WRITING	**Explain by** • Producing short responses to questions using word/phrase banks • Labeling charts, graphs, timelines, or cycles to describe phenomena	**Explain by** • Using transitions and connectors to show causal relationships or procedures • Choosing everyday or technical language to describe phenomena	**Explain by** • Choosing words and phrases to provide precise details, descriptions, comparisons, and ordered procedures • Integrating headings, introductory statements, and other features to organize text	**Explain by** • Presenting information objectively by using a neutral tone appropriate to the content area • Integrating images, diagrams, formulas, or charts to describe phenomena	**Explain by** • Synthesizing information and details about phenomena from a variety of sources • Organizing information and details logically and cohesively	**Explain by** • Developing ideas about phenomena with relevant and sufficient facts, extended descriptions, concrete details, or quotations • Maintaining discipline-specific patterns that bridge across key uses *(e.g., explanation to argument in history, explanation to recount for information reports)*

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By the end of each of the given levels of English language proficiency* English language learners can...

KEY USE OF ARGUE

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 2 Emerging	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 4 Expanding	ELP Level 5 Bridging	ELP Level 6 Reaching
LISTENING	**Process arguments by** • Matching oral information to pictures, diagrams, or photographs that show points of view • Distinguishing words and phrases related to opinions or facts from oral statements	**Process arguments by** • Recognizing the pros or cons of issues from short oral statements • Identifying claims in oral statements	**Process arguments by** • Organizing information related to different perspectives presented orally • Identifying language choices that represent specific points of view from a series of oral statements	**Process arguments by** • Classifying claims and evidence from oral presentations • Differentiating multiple perspectives presented orally	**Process arguments by** • Identifying how language choices connect to particular audiences • Evaluating the purpose of arguments presented by others	**Process arguments by** • Identifying strengths, limitations, and potential biases from oral presentations • Organizing claims and counter claims presented in debates
SPEAKING	**Argue by** • Relating points of view with visual support *(e.g., posters, photographs)* • Stating pros and cons listed visually on a topic	**Argue by** • Responding to oral or written claims • Offering facts or opinion statements as appropriate to discussion	**Argue by** • Stating claims matched to evidence using a series of related sentences • Suggesting details or reasons to reinforce points of view	**Argue by** • Taking stances and defending them with evidence *(e.g., using data or citations)* • Comparing and contrasting different points of view	**Argue by** • Challenging evidence and claims in debates • Convincing audiences of personal points of view using persuasive language	**Argue by** • Organizing claims and counter claims in debates with evidence from multiple sources • Negotiating differing cultural perspectives in pairs or small groups

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By the end of each of the given levels of English language proficiency* English language learners can…

		ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 2 Emerging	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 4 Expanding	ELP Level 5 Bridging	ELP Level 6 Reaching
KEY USE OF ARGUE	**READING**	**Process arguments by** • Matching media *(e.g., posters, photos, banners)* with point of view words and phrases • Connecting characters/historical figures with positions or stances on various issues	**Process arguments by** • Making connections between statements that make claims and those providing evidence • Distinguishing language that identifies facts and opinions	**Process arguments by** • Identifying their purposes and audiences • Evaluating the strength of evidence statements	**Process arguments by** • Identifying persuasive language across content areas • Following the progression of logical reasoning	**Process arguments by** • Recognizing multiple perspectives and points of view on any given issue • Identifying evidence of bias and credibility of sources	**Process arguments by** • Evaluating word choice and nuance as tools for distinguishing facts, claims, reasoned judgment, and opinions • Identifying the logical connections among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence
	WRITING	**Argue by** • Selecting words and phrases to represent points of view • Listing pros and cons of issues	**Argue by** • Expressing claims with evidence *(e.g., "Socialism is a good government system because…")* • Listing content-related ideas that represent different points of view on issues	**Argue by** • Justifying reasons or opinions with evidence • Summarizing opposing positions with evidence	**Argue by** • Evaluating and challenging evidence presented • Creating persuasive essays or reports making adjustments for specific audiences	**Argue by** • Organizing information to show logical reasoning • Integrating multiple perspectives and evidence from a variety of sources	**Argue by** • Evaluating positive and negative implications associated with various positions *(e.g., historical events, scientific discoveries, individuals)* • Organizing information logically and coherently to represent contrasting views

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By the end of each of the given levels of English language proficiency* English language learners can...

ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 2 Emerging	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 4 Expanding	ELP Level 5 Bridging	ELP Level 6 Reaching
Discuss by • Representing one's ideas using various media • Responding to yes and no questions posed by the group • Using nonverbal signals to demonstrate engagement in conversations	**Discuss by** • Asking and answering questions • Communicating need for clarity of messages • Recognizing intonation used to achieve various purposes of communication	**Discuss by** • Suggesting creative ways to resolve communication issues • Clarifying one's own ideas using a variety of strategies *(e.g., analogies or metaphors, paraphrasing)* • Asking clarifying questions in a respectful manner	**Discuss by** • Demonstrating stamina when building ideas in a small group • Validating ideas of others • Sorting through one's own ideas to determine relevant ones • Providing and receiving constructive feedback from others tactfully	**Discuss by** • Co-creating novel perspectives on issues • Responding to diverse perspectives and recognizing bias in one's own view • Generating new ideas or questions to sustain conversations	**Discuss by** • Identifying and reacting to subtle differences in speech and register *(e.g., hyperbole, satire, comedy)* • Producing coherent oral discourse appropriate to task, purpose, and audience • Synthesizing and sharing information from a variety of sources and perspectives

ORAL LANGUAGE

KEY USE OF DISCUSS

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