

STAMP: Test Taker Guide

STAMP Overview

What is STAMP?

- **STAMP (STAndards-based Measurement of Proficiency)** is a web-based test that assesses foreign language proficiency.
- The STAMP test has three sections – reading, writing and speaking. Your teacher or proctor will let you know if you will be testing all three skills or if a two-skill test will be used.
- STAMP informs test takers and teachers about learning progress and program effectiveness.
- Test items are based on real-world, every-day situations.

How does STAMP assess proficiency?

STAMP 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. The reading section measures proficiency at benchmark levels 1-5. The writing and speaking sections measure proficiency at levels 1-6. Each level in the scale describes a stage in your development of proficiency.

This chart shows topics that test takers at levels 1-5 are expected to be familiar with. Every level assumes knowledge of all previous levels.

Level 1 novice-low	Level 2 novice-mid	Level 3 novice-high	Level 4 intermediate-low	Level 5 intermediate-mid
Self Calendar/Time Colors/Shapes Pets/Animals School/Classroom Weather/Seasons	Clothing Food/Beverage Family/Friends Home Places/Geography	Community Daily Routines Leisure/Activities Shopping/Stores	Health Holidays Celebrations Occupations Professions Transportation Travel/Vacations	Future Plans Culture Contemporary Issues (Current Events, Economics, Culture, Literature, Science, Social Science, etc.)

Additional factors affect the scoring of items in the writing and speaking portions of the STAMP test. The Scoring Guide below appears during the writing and speaking portions of the STAMP test.

<u>Text Type</u>	<u>Comprehensibility</u>	<u>Language Control</u>
6 - Paragraph Structure	(S+) Easily comprehended by even a non-sympathetic reader, little or no influence of L1 on L2.	(S+) Errors in grammar, spelling, word order or punctuation are rare and do not interfere with meaning.
5 - Connected Sentences	(S) Easily comprehended by a sympathetic reader, occasional influence of L1 on L2.	(S) Errors in grammar, spelling, word order or punctuation, while present, do not interfere with overall meaning.
4 - Strings of Sentences	(W) Comprehended with some effort from a sympathetic reader, heavy influence of L1 on L2.	(W) Errors in grammar, spelling, word order and punctuation occur often and demonstrate set patterns of errors throughout the text.
3 - Simple Sentences	(W-) Mostly incomprehensible even by a sympathetic reader, extreme influence of L1 on L2.	(W-) Errors in grammar, spelling, word order and punctuation are prevalent and show clear lack of control of even basic structures.
2 - Phrases		
1 - Words		

The numbers on the left are the Benchmark Levels. Notice that the chart includes Level 6 (pre-advanced) which is only available for the writing and speaking sections of the test.

The main factors that affect scoring of the writing and speaking sections of the test are **text type**, **comprehensibility** and **language control**. The chart shows the criteria for achieving each level.

Key to Scoring Guide abbreviations:

- S+ Very strong
- S Strong
- W Weak
- W- Very weak
- L1 Learner's primary language
- L2 Learner's secondary language

Your teacher or proctor may provide you with additional documentation on STAMP Scoring Rubrics and STAMP Benchmarks, or you can access that information on the Avant Assessment website:

<http://www.avantassessment.com/products/doc/rubrics.pdf>

<http://www.avantassessment.com/products/doc/benchmarks.pdf>

Preparing for the STAMP test

- The STAMP test is not a test that you study for, but you may want to prepare for the test by practicing writing and speaking.
- Use the STAMP Practice Test to familiarize yourself with the layout of the test and the types of prompts that you will be expected to respond to. Go to www.stamptest.net to take the STAMP Practice test.

The Rules

- The STAMP test must be taken in a proctored environment, with a proctor who is authorized by the organization sponsoring the test.
- Attempts to access the test outside of the scheduled testing period will be reported.
- No paper, pens, pencils, cell phones, PDAs, etc, are allowed in the testing area.
- No additional applications (such as Word, email, chat) or Web browser windows are allowed to be open during testing.
- No outside resources, such as dictionaries, textbooks, friends or other support materials are allowed.
- Avant graders review all written and spoken responses. Any inappropriate responses (vulgar, violent, etc.) will not be scored and will be reported to your test administrator.

Logging into STAMP

- Your teacher or proctor will provide the **URL** for the STAMP login page.
- Your teacher or proctor will provide the **Test Code** and **Password** right before you start the test.
- You will also enter your name on the login page. Unless your teacher or proctor suggests a different format, provide your **First Name** followed by one space, then your **Last Name**. Capitalize the first letter of your first name and the first letter of your last name. Add your middle initial if there is a chance of duplicate names. Be sure you remember how you entered your name. If you need to resume the test at a later date, you will have to re-enter your name **exactly** as you did the first time. Make sure there are no typos or additional spaces.

- After you log in, the Student Profile screen will appear. A student ID number is required on this screen. Follow directions from your teacher or proctor for entry into this field.

Taking the STAMP Test

The test will flow in the following order: reading section, writing section, and speaking section. If you will be taking a two-skill test, the system will automatically skip the section you won't be using (either writing or speaking).

Reading section

Each test taker will follow a unique path as he/she moves through the reading section of the test. The test is computer-adaptive, meaning that each new question is selected based on previous responses. You may see easier or more difficult questions based upon your earlier answers. Because of this, each test taker may be given a different number of questions. This section typically takes 30-45 minutes to complete.

- Read the question and answers before you attempt reading the passage (this will help guide your reading and help you move through the test more quickly).
- Do not translate each word of the passage – translating each word is not reading for comprehension **and** it will take more time that you can better use in later sections.

Writing and Speaking sections

- Provide your response using the target language. Do not use English!
- Write or record at your highest possible level.
 - View the Scoring Guide that is located under each test item to review what is required for each level.
- Provide all of the information requested in the prompts and stay on-topic.
- Pace yourself. Do not spend so much time on the first item that you do not have time for the remaining items. Complete responses for all three items are needed to accurately determine your proficiency level.
- In these sections, test takers need to click **SAVE** or **SUBMIT** within 30 minutes of accessing a test item, otherwise the test will time out and samples will be lost.

Writing section

The writing section consists of a sample and three test questions. Completing this section typically take 15-20 minutes.

- For some languages, a “floating keyboard” appears for use in selecting special characters associated with the language.
- For writing in character-based languages (Chinese or Japanese, for example), 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 STAMP test will timeout after 30 minutes without clicking **SAVE** or **SUBMIT**, but saving more frequently guards against any connectivity issues. If you get logged out of the test, log in again immediately to continue from the point of your last SAVE.
- Click **SUBMIT** when you're finished with each test question.

Speaking section

The speaking section consists of a sample and three test questions. Completing this section typically take 20-25 minutes.

- To record a response, click **RECORD**. Click **STOP** when done recording. 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**.
 - When the recording is complete, click **SUBMIT** to move to the next test question.

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT:

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 **SUBMIT**.
- 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 **SUBMIT** 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 speaking responses that cannot be graded. Keep in mind that Avant graders hear exactly what you are able to hear.

Completing the STAMP test

- 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 until you see a page that reads "Congratulations! You have completed the STAMP test. Check with your instructor for results." A survey is also presented on this screen.
- If you need to finish the test, plan to do so within 14 days of starting the test (or within the timelines specified by your teacher or proctor).
- To resume a test, log in exactly as you did the first time. 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 Your Full Name field this time is different than it was originally entered. Try logging in again or contact your proctor or teacher for assistance.

We hope you enjoy taking STAMP and encourage you to let your teacher know how you felt about the experience. Thank you!