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 standards-based contest curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audiences</th>
<th>The WIDA Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition can help….</th>
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</table>
| **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...

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<tr>
<td><strong>LISTENING</strong></td>
<td>Process recounts by</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Pointing to pictures described orally in context (e.g., “the big dog”)</td>
<td>• Responding with gestures to songs, chants, or stories modeled by teachers</td>
<td>• Acting out songs, chants, stories and poems with gestures as a whole group</td>
<td>• Role playing in response to illustrated stories read aloud</td>
<td>• Arranging content-related objects or illustrations according to oral discourse with a partner</td>
<td>• Identifying drawings or other visual displays from elaborate descriptions with details</td>
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<td>• Finding familiar people, places, or objects named orally (e.g., “Where’s a chair?”)</td>
<td>• Matching familiar pictures, objects, or movements to oral statements (e.g., “Clap your hands.”)</td>
<td>• Following sequential language for oral directions one step at a time (e.g., “Walk to the door. Now, come to the circle.”)</td>
<td>• Matching extended oral descriptions of content-related topics to illustrations or graphics (e.g., “The bright yellow ball is shining in the sky.”)</td>
<td>• Making patterns from real objects or pictures based on detailed oral descriptions from a model (e.g., “Follow me. Put two blue crayons on your table. Then put two red crayons. Now put two more crayons of another color.”)</td>
<td>• Identifying detailed information in oral discourse through multimedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPEAKING</strong></td>
<td>Recount by</td>
<td>Recount by</td>
<td>Recount by</td>
<td>Recount by</td>
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<td>• Repeating words, simple phrases or expressions from familiar stories as a whole class</td>
<td>• Restating some language associated with illustrated short stories or informational text (e.g., “I see.” “I hear.”)</td>
<td>• Retelling main events in short narrative stories to peers using pictures</td>
<td>• Retelling familiar stories through a series of pictures</td>
<td>• Relating school-based content and personal experiences with peers and adults</td>
<td>• Retelling familiar stories, including key details with prompting and support</td>
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<td>• Participating in group songs, chants, or poems using gestures or physical movement</td>
<td>• Re-enacting various roles when interacting in pairs or in small groups</td>
<td>• Describing attributes of familiar objects, people, and places</td>
<td>• Sharing personal stories or experiences with others (e.g., in multiple languages)</td>
<td>• Rephrasing events from stories or information with a partner (e.g., class rules or routines)</td>
<td>• Describing details about characters, settings, and major events in illustrated stories with prompting and support</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Matching icons and symbols to corresponding pictures</td>
<td>• Dictating personal information scribed by adults (e.g., about self and family members)</td>
<td>• Reproducing content-related information in oral text through drawings</td>
<td>• Reproducing symbols, numbers, and illustrated words from models in context</td>
<td>• Producing familiar words and phrases from environmental print and illustrated text</td>
<td>• Describing everyday experiences using illustrated phrases and short sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identifying labeled real-life classroom objects (e.g., tables, books, door)</td>
<td>• Reproducing icons or environmental print related to self from models</td>
<td>• Acting out familiar rhymes from text read aloud or chanted in small groups</td>
<td>• Drawing and labeling familiar people, objects, or events from models (e.g., word walls, posters, cards)</td>
<td>• Drawing and describing different parts of stories, personal experiences, or events (e.g., written conversations) with a peer</td>
<td>• Producing illustrated stories about self or family (e.g., using one or more languages)</td>
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**KEY USE OF RECOUNT**

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

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<tr>
<td>Process explanations by</td>
<td>Identifying illustrated activities described orally</td>
<td>Matching real-life objects to illustrations about their use based on oral statements</td>
<td>Identifying language associated with features of objects or print (e.g., “Show me a word in the title.”)</td>
<td>Drawing individual phases or steps to “how” questions (e.g., “How does a caterpillar change into a butterfly?”)</td>
<td>Identifying illustrations related to cause and effect from oral information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Following modeled actions to show likes or dislikes (e.g., using “or” words and phrases, “read” or “write”)</td>
<td>Identifying people and places associated with everyday events described orally (e.g., “It is Monday. You are at school.”)</td>
<td>Following peer-modeled oral commands with a partner</td>
<td>Pointing out illustrated details that match oral descriptions of cycles or procedures</td>
<td>Reenacting procedural information obtained from videos or other media (e.g., “Show me how to make day and night.”)</td>
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<td><strong>SPEAKING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain by</td>
<td>Identifying familiar objects used in everyday routines and activities with a partner (e.g., in the home language and English)</td>
<td>Describing uses of everyday objects or roles of familiar people (e.g., “Teacher reads.”)</td>
<td>Comparing sizes of familiar phenomena (e.g., bigger than/smaller than, longer/wider)</td>
<td>Describing classroom routines (e.g., putting away puzzles)</td>
<td>Providing details related to classroom activities and tasks in small groups (e.g., how we work together)</td>
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<td>Rehearsing and acting out key steps in procedures or classroom routines following models (e.g., “Put away toys. Get in line.”)</td>
<td>Stating attributes and classifying objects into illustrated categories to show how they go together (e.g., shapes, colors, sizes)</td>
<td>Stating reasons for classroom routines or procedures with a partner (e.g., expected behaviors)</td>
<td>Comparing and contrasting placement of real-life objects and phenomena (e.g., “on the table” v. “under the table”)</td>
<td>Describing steps in familiar cycles and processes (e.g., getting in a circle to play a game)</td>
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**KEY USE OF EXPLAIN**

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

**READING**

- **Process explanations by**
  - Matching illustrations with modeled language with a partner
  - Identifying steps in procedures from illustrations and icons (e.g., “It goes up. It comes down.”)

- **Process explanations by**
  - Identifying illustrated words or icons to show why (e.g., in play-based activities)
  - Following illustrated directions with a peer (e.g., to form shapes or patterns)

- **Process explanations by**
  - Pointing out causes or motives in illustrated stories read aloud
  - Showing relationships depicted in informational text with real-life objects (e.g., “5 is more than 3.”)

- **Process explanations by**
  - Demonstrating the relationship between objects, people, or animals from detailed descriptions read aloud using gestures (e.g., “the big tall giraffe and the teeny tiny mouse”)
  - Classifying how to resolve situations faced by characters or in content-related text using graphic organizers

- **Process explanations by**
  - Matching familiar descriptive phrases to objects or illustrations with a partner (e.g., steps in morning routines)
  - Comparing how to do something in different ways from illustrated stories (e.g., making fruit salad)

- **Process explanations by**
  - Drawing sketches or models to show how to solve problems read from illustrated informational text
  - Locating descriptive language related to “how” or “why” in illustrated text in small groups

**WRITING**

- **Explain by**
  - Describing familiar routines by drawing pictures and dictating to adults (e.g., in one or more languages)
  - Drawing what comes next (e.g., in stories or experiments)

- **Explain by**
  - Connecting oral language to print (e.g., through language experience)
  - Reproducing labeled pictures or photographs to describe processes or procedures (e.g., producing an album)

- **Explain by**
  - Describing familiar events or phenomena using sentence starters and drawings
  - Identifying self as an author through pictures and invented words (e.g., by keeping a journal)

- **Explain by**
  - Describing how to do something through a sequence of pictures and words
  - Composing group drafts on different processes based on oral input or experiences modeled by teachers

- **Explain by**
  - Describing uses of tools or objects with a peer (e.g., from illustrated phrase walls)
  - Sequencing content-related processes by drawing and describing objects (e.g., from seeds to plants)

- **Explain by**
  - Stating steps of familiar routines or events by drawing, dictating, and writing
  - Responding to “how” questions and suggestions from peers, with guidance from adults, to add details to text

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**LISTENING**

**Process arguments by**
- Identifying personal choices (e.g., “Show me your favorite…”) from different examples
- Classifying everyday objects by descriptive features (e.g., red ones, blue ones)
- Discriminating between words and phrases related to personal choices (e.g., “The park or the zoo?”)
- Identifying oral preferences stated by others (e.g., choosing pictures or objects)
- Acting out opposites using gestures (e.g., through songs or chants)
- Responding non-verbally to show agreement or disagreement with opinions of others (e.g., thumbs up, thumbs down)
- Drawing to make predictions from illustrated stories read aloud (e.g., “What happens next?”)
- Classifying fact from fiction in oral discourse (e.g., through physical responses or sorting pictures)

**SPEAKING**

**Argue by**
- Stating personal likes from oral prompts (e.g., sports, food, animals)
- Naming choices from models (e.g., “Apple or banana?”)
- Stating personal preferences (e.g., “I like this.”)
- Agreeing or disagreeing with familiar questions (e.g., “Are you ready?” “Yes I am.”)
- Stating personal preferences or opinions (e.g., “Recess is best.”)
- Predicting everyday situations or events from illustrations
- Expressinglikes, dislikes, or preferences with reasons (e.g., “I like ___ because ___.”)
- Giving reasons for classifying familiar objects with classmates (e.g., in open sorts)
- Offering personal opinions about content-related ideas in small groups
- Giving reasons for content-related information when modeled (e.g., “These animals go together because they have spots.”)
- Agreeing or disagreeing with reasons for categorizing content-related information with a partner
- Stating personal opinions with justification for content-related ideas or topics

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### Key Use of ‘Argue’

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<td>- Pointing to labeled pictures or objects of personal preferences</td>
<td>- Classifying labeled pictures of personal choices from stories according to different character traits</td>
<td>- Predicting next steps, actions, or events in informational text and stories read aloud (e.g., by pointing to pictures)</td>
<td>- Interpreting pictures in informational text as true or false in small groups</td>
<td>- Evaluating situations in picture books and matching them to related reasons for choices</td>
<td>- Identifying different points of view from illustrated text with prompting and support</td>
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<td>- Matching illustrations to words of personal interest as modeled</td>
<td>- Making choices from illustrated descriptions read aloud and sharing with peers (e.g., based on “or” phrases)</td>
<td>- Indicating agreement or disagreement with authors’ points of view of text read aloud with a partner</td>
<td>- Comparing choices of different characters in illustrated text read aloud (e.g., using T charts)</td>
<td>- Agreeing or disagreeing with actions of characters in illustrated text read aloud</td>
<td>- Identifying similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., pasting or matching words found in both sources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>Argue by</td>
<td>Argue by</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Illustrating likes or dislikes from real-life objects or pictures</td>
<td>- Drawing and reproducing words about preferences (e.g., from charts or posters)</td>
<td>- Agreeing or disagreeing with choices (e.g., producing “yes” or “no”) from models</td>
<td>- Producing statements about choices using different models as examples (e.g., “I want to ____.”)</td>
<td>- Making requests to indicate preferences (e.g., “Can I have …?”)</td>
<td>- Composing opinion pieces using content-related language with prompting and support</td>
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<td>- Drawing or making collages about personal interests or content-related topics in small groups</td>
<td>- Stating personal choices from models (e.g., labeling photos or drawings of self)</td>
<td>- Completing text about personal opinions on different topics (e.g., “I like ___.”)</td>
<td>- Building short sentences from personal preferences using pictures or photos with partners</td>
<td>- Listing reasons for content-related choices with guidance and support (e.g., “Why do you like number 5?”)</td>
<td>- Making claims using content-related language about topics or books (e.g., dictated to adults)</td>
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<td><strong>Discuss by</strong></td>
<td>• Attending to the speaker to demonstrate understanding</td>
<td>• Addressing others according to relationship (e.g., student-student, student-teacher)</td>
<td>• Working together collaboratively (e.g., taking turns, listening to others)</td>
<td>• Proposing ideas to contribute to conversations</td>
<td>• Asking questions to extend conversations</td>
<td>• Sustaining conversations on a topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Following routines, chants, and songs</td>
<td>• Participating in exchanges between peers (e.g., thumb buddies, turn and talk)</td>
<td>• Using language and body movement to include others in conversations</td>
<td>• Asking questions to request clarification</td>
<td>• Demonstrating active listening to show respect to the speaker</td>
<td>• Building on comments/responses of others</td>
</tr>
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Acknowledgements
The development of the Can Do Descriptors represents the work of many educators in the field. WIDA would like to extend its appreciation to everyone who contributed through their expertise to this work, including the staff at the Center for Applied Linguistics for their ongoing partnership and support.

Please visit www.wida.us to view a full list of educators who participated on the development workshop, national experts who shared their expertise in the development process, and those who participated in the review of the Can Do descriptors.