

# Wisconsin ELA Performance Level Descriptors

The following PLD statements for the ACT ELA score were drafted by a panel of Wisconsin educators at the workshop in Madison on November 1–3, 2017.

	PL 1: Below Basic	PL 2: Basic	PL 3: Proficient	PL 4: Advanced
Reading	<p>Students performing at the <i>Below Basic</i> Level are able to comprehend a range of literary and informational texts at the <i>More Challenging*</i> level.</p> <p>To demonstrate close reading of these literary and informational texts (RL11-12.1-3, RI11-12.1-3), students performing at this level are working toward being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate explicitly stated information</li> <li>• Make inferences supported by clear textual evidence</li> <li>• Understand the relationships between characters or individuals in a text</li> <li>• Determine the central idea or ideas of a paragraph or whole text</li> </ul> <p>These students are developing their understanding about author’s craft and text structure (RL11-12.4-6, RI11-12.4-6), and with guidance and support they can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide synonyms for a somewhat technical word or phrase in an informational text</li> </ul>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Basic</i> Level are able to comprehend a range of literary and informational texts at the <i>More Challenging*</i> to <i>Complex*</i> text-complexity levels.</p> <p>To demonstrate close reading of these literary and informational texts (RL11-12.1-3, RI11-12.1-3), students performing at this level are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make inferences about a character’s attitude in a somewhat challenging literary text or the significance of a phrase in an informational text</li> <li>• Find explicit textual evidence to support understanding of an author’s perspective</li> <li>• Make inferences about an individual’s or fictional character’s motivation to perform a specific action</li> <li>• Determine the most important central idea from an informational text</li> <li>• Determine the main point stated in an introductory paragraph</li> </ul>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> Level are able to comprehend a range of literary and informational texts at the <i>More Challenging*</i> to <i>Highly Complex*</i> text-complexity levels.</p> <p>To demonstrate close reading of these literary and informational texts (RL11-12.1-3, RI11-12.1-3), students performing at this level are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make logical inferences based on a challenging portion of an informational or literary text to determine an author’s attitude toward a central idea</li> <li>• Make inferences to support conclusions about important details in literary or informational text (e.g., the narrator’s thoughts or recollections)</li> <li>• Determine the central idea or theme of a paragraph or the whole text</li> <li>• Analyze an interaction between characters or objects to determine the cause of an effect</li> </ul>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> Level are able to comprehend a range of literary and informational texts at the <i>More Challenging*</i> to <i>Highly Complex*</i> text-complexity levels.</p> <p>To demonstrate close reading of these literary and informational texts (RL11-12.1-3, RI11-12.1-3), students performing at this level are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate and paraphrase explicitly stated details in particularly dense passages</li> <li>• Using complex text, make logical inferences based on several pieces of evidence to support generalizations about ideas discussed in the text</li> <li>• Paraphrase the central idea or theme in a paragraph with highly complex and information-dense sentences</li> <li>• Analyze a complex thought or mental state expressed by a narrator or character, using passage evidence to support the interpretation</li> </ul>

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<b>Reading</b>	<p>They are working toward being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret the meaning of common text structures</li> <li>• Understand text purposes and the purpose of specific textual elements</li> <li>• Identify authorial perspective and narrative point of view</li> </ul> <p>Students performing at this level are developing skills for integrating knowledge and ideas from across texts and multiple related texts (RL11-12.7-9, RI11-12.7-9). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare characters in two short narratives to evaluate how the characters are portrayed</li> </ul> <p>They are working toward being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare details in multiple texts and draw inferences about differences in text meaning and authorial perspective</li> <li>• Identify an author's claim and supporting evidence in a text</li> <li>• Identify that the same story is being told differently</li> <li>• Identify main idea of same-period foundational literature and informational texts</li> <li>• Identify an argument in seminal US texts</li> </ul>	<p>These students are able to use knowledge about the author's craft and the text structure (RL11-12.4-6, RI11-12.4-6) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infer the meaning of a multiple-meaning word based on context when a less common meaning is intended</li> <li>• Interpret a figure of speech, drawing on context to determine meaning</li> <li>• Determine the author's primary purpose for including a detail</li> <li>• Determine the purpose of key textual elements (e.g., the function of a paragraph)</li> <li>• Analyze the author's credibility based on textual details</li> <li>• Identify key elements that shape the narrator's perspective</li> </ul> <p>Students performing at this level integrate knowledge and ideas from across texts and multiple related texts (RL11-12.7-9, RI11-12.7-9). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine which claim a piece of textual evidence supports</li> <li>• Draw inferences about two different authors' perspectives and points on which they would agree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infer how changes to a story or text would produce specific effects on the reader</li> </ul> <p>These students are able to use knowledge about the author's craft and the text structure (RL11-12.4-6, RI11-12.4-6) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infer the meaning of a key phrase when the person or thing referred to is ambiguous and requires careful interpretation of context</li> <li>• Interpret a relatively uncommon usage of a word or phrase</li> <li>• Determine the main purpose of an informational text with a specialized purpose (e.g., literary criticism) and academic language</li> <li>• Analyze the effect on meaning produced by a specific detail in a narrative text</li> <li>• Analyze how an author of an informational text uses quotations or other elements to support a larger idea or theme in the text</li> <li>• Analyze how a textual element such as a description contributes to the author's larger purpose in an academic informational text</li> </ul>	<p>These students are able to use knowledge about the author's craft and the text structure (RL11-12.4-6, RI11-12.4-6) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret an author's use of a word or phrase to determine how the choice of language shapes the meaning of the text</li> <li>• Analyze an instance where the author uses two different rhetorical devices to explore a complex idea, and explain how the devices relate to each other</li> <li>• Determine how a sentence or paragraph contributes to the overall structure of an argument in a complex academic informational text</li> <li>• Determine the point of view associated with a thought or statement and interpret the tone in a complex narrative</li> </ul>

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<b>Reading</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify common details in two narratives from among several other elements that differ between texts</li> </ul> <p>These students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize that stories can be told in different ways and still retain their meaning</li> <li>Identify theme in same-period foundational literature and informational texts</li> <li>Explain the argument and claims in seminal US texts</li> </ul>	<p>Students performing at this level integrate knowledge &amp; ideas from across texts and multiple related texts (RL11-12.7-9, RI11-12.7-9). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delineate the author’s specific claims and evidence used to support those claims</li> <li>Differentiate between facts and reasoned judgements</li> <li>Analyze elements that are structurally or conceptually similar</li> <li>Compare how passages present information and analyze differences</li> </ul> <p>These students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze multiple versions of a literary text</li> <li>Demonstrate knowledge of theme in same-period foundational American literature and informational texts</li> <li>Analyze the reasoning in argument and specific claims including validity and sufficiency of evidence in seminal US texts</li> </ul>	<p>Students performing at this level integrate knowledge and ideas from across texts and multiple related texts (RL11-12.7-9, RI11-12.7-9). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze multiple sources of information that take similar approaches toward a historical figure, event, or place</li> <li>Analyze a text to determine what evidence it contains in support of a claim or claims not made in the text itself</li> </ul> <p>These students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate and evaluate multiple versions of a literary text</li> <li>Synthesize thematic issues from multiple foundational American literary and informational texts</li> <li>Evaluate the reasoning of arguments and specific claims including validity and sufficiency of evidence in seminal US texts</li> </ul>

\* *More Challenging, Complex, and Highly Complex* refer to levels on ACT’s qualitative text complexity rubrics for literary and informational texts. The rubrics are published with ACT’s College & Career Readiness standards [here](#).

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<b>Language</b>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Below Basic</i> level demonstrate minimal command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and punctuation. They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify subject-verb agreement in a simple sentence (L11-12.1)</li> <li>Use commas correctly in basic phrases (L11-12.2)</li> <li>Identify simple forms of parallelism (L11-12.1)</li> </ul> <p>These students demonstrate limited knowledge of language when making choices for meaning and style (L11-12.3). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense between simple clauses in a sentence or between simple adjoining sentences</li> <li>Identify vague, clumsy, and confusing writing that creates obvious logic problems</li> </ul> <p>They demonstrate understanding of familiar vocabulary and the ability to determine meaning of words, phrases, and simple figurative language (L11-12.4-5). They are able to:</p>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Basic</i> level demonstrate inconsistent command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and punctuation (L11-12.1-2). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure subject-verb agreement when there is some text between the subject and verb (L11-12.1)</li> <li>Understand how commas are used to set off phrases</li> <li>Use pronoun case correctly</li> <li>Identify simple parallel structure</li> <li>Use appropriate prepositions in simple contexts (L11-12.2)</li> </ul> <p>These students use knowledge of language to make somewhat effective choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully (L11-12.3). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize and correct obvious disturbances in sentence structure (e.g., awkward-sounding fragments, fused sentences, lack of parallelism within a simple series of words or phrases)</li> </ul>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> level demonstrate consistent command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and punctuation (L11-12.1-2). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize subject-verb agreement when predicate includes a direct object (L11-12.1)</li> <li>Understand how commas are used to create clarity in a sentence (e.g., nonessential elements, introductory clauses or phrases) (L11-12.2)</li> <li>Use pronouns correctly, including instances in which the pronoun and antecedent occur in separate clauses or sentences (L11-12.1)</li> <li>Use apostrophes to form possessive nouns and pronouns (L11-12.2)</li> <li>Use parallel structure (L11-12.1)</li> </ul> <p>These students use knowledge of language consistently to make effective choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully (L11-12.3). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vary sentence patterns for meaning</li> </ul>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> level demonstrate thorough command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and punctuation (L11-12.1-2). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure subject-verb agreement in challenging situations (e.g., when the subject-verb order is inverted or when the subject is a noun phrase, noun clause, or an indefinite pronoun) (L11-12.1)</li> <li>Use punctuation, including semicolons, colons, and dashes, to create sophisticated sentences (L11-12.2)</li> </ul> <p>These students use knowledge of language skillfully to make sophisticated choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully (L11-12.3). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize and correct subtle disturbances in sentence structure (e.g., dangling or misplaced modifiers where the intended meaning is clear but misused; faulty subordination of clauses)</li> <li>Delete or revise redundant and wordy material in a sophisticated sentence</li> </ul>

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<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine meaning of familiar words and phrases based on the context of the sentence (L11-12.4)</li> <li>Identify simple figurative language (L11-12.5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delete redundant and wordy material when the problem is contained within a single phrase</li> <li>Revise obviously awkward or clumsy writing to improve clarity</li> </ul> <p>Students demonstrate understanding of familiar and some general academic vocabulary, and the ability to determine meaning of words, phrases, and simple figurative language (L11-12.4-5):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine meaning of general academic words and phrases based on the context of the sentence (L11-12.4)</li> <li>Determine meaning of familiar multiple-meaning words based on the context of the sentence (L11-12.4)</li> <li>Interpret simple figurative language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize and correct disturbances in sentence structure (e.g., sentences with faulty placement of phrases, faulty coordination and subordination of clauses, or lack of parallelism)</li> <li>Delete or revise redundant and wordy material when the content of the entire sentence or paragraph must be considered</li> <li>Recognize and correct expressions that deviate from formal English</li> <li>Choose punctuation for effect</li> </ul> <p>Students demonstrate understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary, as well as the ability to determine the meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language (L11-12.4-6). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine meaning of uncommon words based on the context of the sentence or paragraph (L11-12.4)</li> <li>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (L11-12.5)</li> <li>Use general academic vocabulary and some domain-specific vocabulary (L11-12.6)</li> </ul>	<p>These students demonstrate sophisticated understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary, as well as the ability to determine meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language in complex text (L11-12.4-6). They are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine meaning of a word or phrase when the vocabulary and syntax are fairly sophisticated (L11-12.4)</li> <li>Use sophisticated academic and domain-specific vocabulary (L11-12.6)</li> <li>Distinguish both connotative and denotative meanings of multiple-meaning words (L11-12.5)</li> </ul>

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<b>Writing</b>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Below Basic</i> Level attempt to write arguments that respond to substantive topics (W11-12.1), informative/explanatory texts (W11-12.2), and narratives (W11-12.3).</p> <p>In students' arguments, the central claim may be missing or minimal in focus and may not engage with other claims and counterclaims (W11-12.1a). If evident, the central claim shows limited clarity, thought, and/or purpose. Attempts at analysis are incomplete, unfocused, or merely restatements of other claims and counterclaims (W11-12.1a).</p> <p>Students generate ideas and claims, but these often show a lack of supporting evidence and can be weak, confused, disjointed, or irrelevant. Reasoning and illustration are often lacking in clarity or do not fully clarify the central claim (W11-12.1b).</p> <p>Their writing shows a rudimentary organizational structure. Ideas are inconsistently grouped, or the relationships may be unclear. Transitions between and within paragraphs are sometimes abrupt or poorly signaled</p>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Basic</i> Level are able to write limited arguments on substantive topics (W11-12.1), limited informative/explanatory texts (W11-12.2), and simple narratives (W11-12.3).</p> <p>Students' arguments contain a progression of ideas and address multiple claims and counterclaims (W11-12.1a). The central claim, if evident, shows narrow clarity, thought, and/or purpose. Attempts at analysis may be incomplete, unfocused, or merely restatements of other claims and counterclaims (W11-12.1a).</p> <p>Students develop ideas and claims, but these often show a lack of supporting evidence and can be disjointed or irrelevant. Reasoning and illustration may lack clarity or relevance of the central claim (W11-12.1b).</p> <p>Their writing uses an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped, but the structure is formulaic and the relationships may be unclear. Transitions between and within paragraphs are signaled (W11-12.1c). A concluding statement or section may be</p>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> Level are able to write arguments on substantive topics (W11-12.1), informative/explanatory texts (W11-12.2), and narratives (W11-12.3).</p> <p>Students' arguments include a focused central claim, which engages with other claims and counterclaims (W11-12.1a). The analysis recognizes implications, complexities, and tensions in anticipation of the audience's knowledge and possible biases (W11-12.1a/b).</p> <p>Students develop ideas by supporting claims and refuting counterclaims with relevant evidence, but sometimes evidence is simplistic. Reasoning and illustration largely clarify the relationships among the claims (W11-12.1b).</p> <p>Their writing exhibits a clear organizational strategy. The structure logically sequences and groups reasons and evidence. Cohesive transitions between and within paragraphs clarify the relationships between claims and evidence (W11-12.1c/W11-12.2c/W11-12.3c). Texts conclude logically from the central claim (W11-12.1e).</p>	<p>Students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> Level are able to write complex arguments on substantive topics (W11-12.1), informative/explanatory texts (W11-12.2), and narratives (W11-12.3).</p> <p>Students' arguments engage with multiple claims and counterclaims, reflecting nuance and precision (W11-12.1a). The central claim establishes and creates a thoughtful context for analysis, which examines implications, complexities, and tensions in anticipation of the audience's knowledge and possible biases (W11-12.1a/b).</p> <p>Students develop ideas and support claims with persuasive evidence that deepens insight and broadens context. Reasoning and illustration are well integrated and enhance the significance of the central claim. By considering complications, students at this level enrich ideas and analysis (W11-12.1b).</p> <p>Their writing exhibits a skillful organizational strategy. The structure demonstrates a logical progression of reasons and evidence that increases the effectiveness of the central claim. Transitions between and within</p>

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<b>Writing</b>	<p>(W11-12.1c). A concluding statement or section may be missing or may not connect to the central claim (W11-12.1e).</p> <p>The written use of language is inconsistent and often unclear. Word choice is simplistic and often imprecise. Sentence structures are often unclear. Stylistic choices do not maintain formal voice and objective tone and are not always appropriate for the rhetorical purpose (W11-12.1d).</p> <p>There may be minimal evidence of developing and strengthening writing by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting (W11-12.5).</p> <p>When writing informative/explanatory texts, students should be able to explore ideas, concepts, and information through the selection and organization of content, which will be limited (W11-12.2).</p> <p>Students should be able to explain a topic by listing facts or other information, which may consider the audience's knowledge of the topic (W11-12.2b) using simple vocabulary to</p>	<p>present but may not support the central claim (W11-12.1e).</p> <p>The written use of language conveys meaning somewhat clearly. Word choice is general and occasionally precise. Sentence structures are usually clear but have limited variety. Stylistic choices may not maintain formal voice or objective tone and may not be appropriate for the rhetorical purpose (W11-12.1d).</p> <p>Students may demonstrate command of conventions of standard English grammar and usage (L11-12.1).</p> <p>Students may produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (W11-12.4).</p> <p>There is some evidence of developing and strengthening writing by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting (W11-12.5).</p> <p>When writing informative/explanatory texts, students should be able to examine ideas, concepts, and information through the selection,</p>	<p>The written use of language is consistent and clear. Word choice is adequate and sometimes precise. Sentence structures are clear and demonstrate some variety. Stylistic choices maintain formal voice and objective tone and are appropriate for the rhetorical purpose (W11-12.1d).</p> <p>While their language use is not perfect, students largely demonstrate command of conventions of standard English grammar and usage (L11-12.1).</p> <p>Students produce mostly clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (W11-12.4).</p> <p>There is evidence of developing and strengthening writing by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting (W11-12.5).</p> <p>When writing informative/explanatory texts, students should be able to examine ideas, concepts, and information clearly through the selection, organization, and analysis of content (W11-12.2).</p>	<p>paragraphs consistently clarify the relationships among claims and counterclaims (W11-12c). Texts culminate in a conclusion that follows logically from the central claim (W11-12.e).</p> <p>The written use of language enhances the overall effect. Word choice is skillful and precise. Sentence structures are varied in a meaningful way. Stylistic choices are purposeful in voice and tone (W11-12.1d).</p> <p>Students demonstrate command of conventions of standard English grammar and usage (L11-12.1).</p> <p>Students produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (W11-12.4).</p> <p>There is strong evidence of developing and strengthening writing by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting (W11-12.5).</p>

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<b>Writing</b>	<p>communicate ideas (W11-12.2d).</p> <p>When writing narratives, students should be able to write fragmented real or imagined texts, possibly using literary techniques, details, and sequences, although these attempts may be incorrect (W11-12.3).</p> <p>Students should be able to use limited narrative and linguistic techniques to describe a progression of events, which may orient the reader (W11-12.3a/b/c).</p>	<p>organization, and analysis of content, which may be limited (W11-12.2).</p> <p>Students should be able to develop a topic by selecting facts or other information, which may be appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic (W11-12.2b) using general vocabulary and/or an attempt at figurative language to communicate ideas (W11-12.2d).</p> <p>When writing narratives, students should be able to write simple texts about real or fictional events, possibly using literary techniques, details, and sequences (W11-12.3).</p> <p>Students should be able to use a variety of narrative and linguistic techniques to create a progression of events, which contributes to a story that may engage and/or orient the reader (W11-12.3a/b/c).</p>	<p>Students should be able to develop a topic adequately by selecting relevant facts or other information appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic (W11-12.2b), using specific vocabulary and/or some figurative language to communicate ideas effectively (W11-12.2d).</p> <p>When writing narratives, students should be able to develop texts about real or fictional events using literary techniques, specific details, and sequences (W11-12.3).</p> <p>Students should be able to use a variety of narrative and linguistic techniques to create a smooth progression of experiences and events, which contributes to a coherent story as a whole that engages and orients the reader (W11-12.3a/b/c).</p>	<p>When writing informative/explanatory texts, students should be able to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content (W11-12.2).</p> <p>Students should be able to develop a topic thoroughly by selecting significant facts or other information appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic (W11-12.2b), using precise vocabulary and figurative language to communicate ideas cohesively (W11-12.2d).</p> <p>When writing narratives, it is projected that students develop real or imagined texts using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, vivid images, and well-structured event sequences (W11-12.3).</p> <p>Students should be able to use a variety of narrative and linguistic techniques to create a complex, purposeful progression of experiences and events, which contributes to a coherent story that builds toward a particular tone and outcome that engages and orients the reader (W11-12.3a/b/c).</p>