

Administering the Canadian Adult Reading Assessment CARA

Overview

- The assessment is based on the theory that reading is viewed as the ‘active construction of meaning from cues in the text, and from the reader’s background knowledge.’
 - The passage topics were chosen by students across Canada, to recognize diversity among individuals.
 - The student’s score is derived from their performance on comprehension, whereas other inventories obtain a score from their performance in word recognition and comprehension.
 - The comprehension questions contain a high percentage of inference questions, to acknowledge the significant role of background knowledge in understanding text.
 - CARA can be used for placement or diagnosis.
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Description of CARA

Graded Word Lists: Level 1 to Level 9 (readability Grades 1 to 12)

Level 1: 4 easy & 5 hard passages.

Levels 2 - 9: 5 passages in each for the student to choose from

3 Informational passages: health, food, sports, animals, personal development, history & cultures.

2 Narrative passages: romance, adventure, true crime, and mystery.

- The *narrative* and *informational passages* are parallel in terms of difficulty, so that comparisons can be made in how a learner reads these different genres.
 - Each passage is followed by a set of factual and inference questions that reflect an awareness of background knowledge and text information.
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Ways to use CARA

As a placement tool:

- to identify the individual's *Independent*, *Instructional* and *Frustration* reading levels. this can be used to determine effective placement in reading material.

As a diagnostic tool:

- Identify the learner's reading level.
- Analyse reading errors, re-telling and responses to Comprehension questions.
- Gain knowledge of how the student processes print (Word Identification) and processes text (Comprehension)
- Develop a learning/instructional program.
- By recording *oral miscues*, you can learn whether they use meaning, language, and/or print cues to predict words.

Before starting the test:

- ✓ Inform the learner who will have access to the test results.
- ✓ Share the purpose and the nature of the test.
- ✓ Reassure the learner that this is not a pass/fail test: it is to record how the student reads, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and provide the right tutoring.

Five steps for administering CARA:

1. Determine the purpose of the assessment: placement or diagnosis.
2. Photocopy the instructor's manual.
3. Determine entry level.
4. Administer the graded passages. (This depends on whether CARA is being used for placement or diagnosis.)
5. Check the student's comprehension for each passage.

Determining the entry level

Administer the graded word list

- ✓ Ask the learner to read the graded word list.
- ✓ Ask the learner to choose a list to read or they can start from the beginning.
- ✓ Explain that they need to read the words aloud, and that they can take a guess if they do not know a word, or they can simply skip a word.
- ✓ Record what the learner says.
- ✓ Any word that is pronounced incorrectly should be written as the learner pronounced it.

Use the following to record the learner's responses:

- ✓ **check mark** for correct response,
- " for no response
- dk** for do not know
- y-e-s** for when they sound out the letters.

After the learner reads each list, calculate their score.

- Use the learner's performance on the graded word lists to determine an entry level for the reading of the passages.
- In general - use the highest word list the learner scored 90 % accuracy in to administer the corresponding passage i.e., Level 1 Word List = Level 1 easy passages.
- If the learner's score is below 90% on the first list, drop down to a lower level until they achieve 90%.
- Then ask the learner to keep reading more difficult lists until they score 70%. *

IMPORTANT: if the learner can identify only 50% or fewer of the words on the Level 1 Word List, you should **not proceed any further** in testing with CARA!

Administering the graded passages

Instructions if using CARA for PLACEMENT:

- Read the titles and introductions of the passages to the student and ask them to select one to read.
- Before the student reads the selection, say, "***here is the passage you chose to read. Please read it silently to yourself. After you have read the passage, I will ask you some questions.***"
- Have the learner silently read each passage and then answer the comprehension questions.

Instructions if using CARA for DIAGNOSIS:

- Decide if the learner should engage in a prepared oral reading and/or silent reading.

Prepared oral reading: this method is recommended for the learner who has difficulty with word identification, because this type of administration allows you to record the learner's oral miscues or errors. For this type of reading, **the learner reads the passage twice** – the first time silently and the second time orally.

- Before reading the selection, say

“Here is a passage I would like you to read. Please read it silently to yourself. When you have finished, please read it aloud to me. While you are reading, I will record the way in which you read. After you have read the passage, tell me about it. Then I will ask you some questions.”

- Remember to read the title and introduction of the passage to the learner **before** they start to read it!
- Record the learner's reading errors or oral miscues* as they read aloud. If the learner is unable to pronounce a word, wait 5 seconds, and then read the word to them.

Silent reading is appropriate for a learner who did not have any difficulty identifying the words on the graded word list.

- Before the learner reads the selection, say.

“Here is a passage I would like you to read. Please read it silently to yourself. After you have read the passage, tell me about it. Then I will ask you some questions.” Read the title and introduction of the passage to the student before they start to read.

- Be sure to read the title and introduction of the passage to the learner before they start to read it.
- After each passage has been read, you will ask for a retelling before asking the comprehension questions.

Combination: You may wish to record the learner's oral miscues and to obtain a score for silent reading comprehension – in this instance you may ask them to read, for example, a passage in Level 3 silently, and then have them engage in prepared oral reading for a different Level 3 passage.

Retelling: Remove the passage from the learner's line of vision and ask for a retelling and say

“Tell me what you have read, using your own words.” or “Tell me as much information as you can about what you have just read.”

Checking comprehension for each passage

- Each passage is followed by six to ten comprehension questions.
- If you are using CARA for **placement**, ask the questions after the student has read the passage.
- If you are using CARA for **diagnosis**, ask the questions after the retelling.

Say, ***“Now I am going to ask you some questions about the passage you have just read.”***

- Write down or underline the learner’s responses.
- In the left-hand column an incorrect answer = 0, a correct answer = 1 and a partially correct answer = ½
- For questions with two or more responses, one correct response = ½ point.
- Additional information can be elicited by saying, ***“Can you tell me more?”***
- Sometimes a learner will find it difficult to answer inference questions because the passage did not contain the answer. They may say that “it didn’t say.” If this happens, you should provide the learner with a prompt by saying, ***“This is a ‘what do you think’ question.”***

NOTE: If the learner achieves 100% comprehension on the first two passages, you can skip a level and move to a higher one. If the learner’s comprehension score is at frustration level on the first passage they read, have them read a passage at a lower level.