

<b>STEC Guidance 2026 Oral Passage Understanding Scale</b>	
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<b>Publisher:</b>	WPS
<b>Date of Standardisation:</b>	2018
<b>Age Range:</b>	5.0 – 21.11
<b>Access:</b>	Specialist Teacher Assessors, Ed Psychs.
<b>Date Published:</b>	2019
<b>Age Range:</b>	2 years 6 months to 90+ years
<b>Access Level:</b>	Level B (requires relevant professional qualification or membership in a recognised professional body)
<b>Cost</b>	£399

### **Test Overview**

#### **What is its purpose or design?**

OPUS is administered individually. It is designed to **assess the comprehension of spoken language**. The passages used in the OPUS were taken from published works or were designed to reflect the type of material an individual is likely to encounter in everyday life.

The examiner reads aloud a set of passages according to the examinee's age and asks oral questions based on these passages that the examinee's responds to orally.

#### **Parallel forms:**

There are no parallel forms.

#### **What types of score does it offer?**

Standard scores with a mean of 100.

#### **Testing Time:**

Up to 20 minutes.

#### **Ease of Administration:**

Easy to administer and to score. The raw score is firstly converted to an ability score, then to a standardised score. Standardised scores, confidence intervals, percentiles, grade equivalents (for U.S. schools) all provided.

### **Description of the Test**

#### **1. Literal Understanding (Lower levels)**

At the beginning of the scale, the focus is on **basic comprehension**:

- Identifying key facts and details
- Recognising who, what, where, and when

- Recalling explicitly stated information

Example: “Who was the main character?” or “Where did the story take place?”

## **2. Reorganisation / Sequencing**

Next, it looks at how well the listener can:

- Put events in order
- Summarise parts of the passage
- Group related ideas

Example: “What happened first, next, and last?”

## **3. Inferential Understanding**

At this level, the listener goes beyond what is directly said:

- Making inferences and drawing conclusions
- Understanding implied meaning
- Predicting outcomes

Example: “Why do you think the character acted that way?”

## **4. Evaluative Understanding (Higher levels)**

Now the focus shifts to judgment and critical thinking:

- Evaluating ideas or actions
- Forming opinions based on the passage
- Comparing with prior knowledge

Example: “Do you agree with the character’s decision? Why?”

## **5. Appreciative / Critical Response (Top levels)**

The highest level involves deeper engagement:

- Responding emotionally or creatively
- Analysing tone, style, or purpose
- Connecting themes to wider contexts

Example: “What message does the speaker want to convey?”

## **Standardisation:**

### **Sample Size and Diversity**

The standardisation sample of 1517 has appropriate representation of socio-economic backgrounds and gender within the U.S. The representation of age range is strongly skewed towards the younger age group with 213 seven year olds tested in comparison to 30 twenty year olds.

### **Cross-Validation**

The OPUS was developed as a companion to the CASL-2 to assess listening comprehension in an integrated manner. Each CASL-2 test focuses on a single aspect of the language structure, whereas the OPUS examines multiple variable simultaneously.

### **Reliability**

One study of reliability has been undertaken.

## **Points to Consider:**

- ***Language & Vocabulary***

Designed for American English: Some words and concepts may be unfamiliar to UK examinees. This may affect ecological validity, especially for older children and adults. Examiner may need to note potential cultural mismatches when interpreting scores. [STEC contacted WPS about this and their advice was that any words and concepts that may be less familiar to UK examinees 'should not have much impact on test performance. In most cases it can be inferred from context or isn't measured in scoring. Our general recommendation is to use the test as is, but if someone does especially poorly on items that have more cultural context, be sure to mention that in the report.'](#)

- OPUS is reliable, standardised, has a broad age range, is quick to administer, and a good measure of receptive vocabulary.
- It may be helpful to consider that the length of the task (up to 20 minutes) may be challenging for younger children.
- The easel is user-friendly and robust.
- The passages have a large font and so can be read easily.
- The accompanying questions are easy to read with clear correct/incorrect responses.
- The types of error encountered are helpful for subsequent analysis.
- Useful analysis is given for the types of skill measured:
  - 1) Inference: lexical/semantic, syntax, inference from background knowledge, inference from context, inference from figurative language, inference for prediction
  - 2) Memory: memory for non-meaningful information, recall of text details
  - 3) Passage synthesis.
- The OPUS is generally suitable for the age group being assessed because it is developmentally sequenced, with tasks progressing from simple literal comprehension to more complex inferential and evaluative skills, reflecting typical language development. This allows examiners to identify a child's functional level rather than relying solely on chronological age. However, its suitability is somewhat limited by variations in language

complexity and content, which may not always align with children's interests or vocabulary levels, particularly for younger pupils or those with English as an Additional Language.

- The audio files are hard to find on the WPS website and some of them don't work. There is an element of guesswork on the part of the assessor therefore in the pace and tone to be used when reading the passage aloud. WPS have been informed of this and are seeking to address it.
- There are many narrative texts for the older age group which might be off-putting to an assessee who is not necessarily studying English literature.