

Placement Webpage Guide

Use this guide for sharing information with incoming students on math placement policies and FAQs. For examples of other college/university placement pages, please contact your placement consultant.

What is ALEKS?

Westmont College uses ALEKS Placement, Preparation and Learning (ALEKS PPL) Assessment to assist in determining students' readiness for mathematics and science courses. ALEKS PPL is a web-based program that uses artificial intelligence to map a student's strengths and weaknesses. The Placement Assessment is up to 30 questions and generally takes 60-90 minutes to complete. After the Placement Assessment, an individualized Prep and Learning Module is available for students to refresh their knowledge on forgotten topics. Students then have the opportunity to reassess and improve their placement.

ALEKS consists of three parts:

- An Initial Placement Assessment
- The Prep and Learning Module, an individualized, self-paced online review
- Access to *four* additional Placement Assessments

Westmont College encourages each student to spend time in the Prep and Learning Module, even if the desired score is achieved, because time spent in ALEKS will ultimately lead to better preparation and improved grades.

What is the purpose of placement testing? The Placement Assessment results will determine the most appropriate courses for each student as they progress with college coursework.

This is a "Placement Assessment," not a test. The difference is that a Placement Assessment is designed to determine what a student knows and what a student needs to work on. At the end of the ALEKS PPL Assessment, a student will better understand his/her strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. Students then have a chance to brush up on topics that may have been forgotten or not been practiced for some time.

Be honest. It is important that the Placement Assessment is taken seriously and each student gives it an honest effort so that the Placement Assessment truly reflects their current level of knowledge and math preparedness. There is no benefit to cheating on the Placement Assessment – the only result will be that a student enrolls in a class that is too difficult, or not challenging enough, potentially costing time and money. Therefore, while taking the Placement Assessment, students should not consult any outside sources for help (friends/family, internet searches, textbooks, notes etc...). The Placement Assessment aims to accurately measure a student's current mathematical knowledge so that he/she will be successful in mathematics courses. Moreover, Westmont College's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) forbids obtaining any academic credit (including a score on placement assessment) by deceptive means.

Preparation

Why must I take the ALEKS PPL Assessment? The Placement Assessment determines the mathematics and science courses in which you will have the greatest success. Upon completion of the Placement Assessments, your scores will be available to your academic advisor and your science and mathematics professors. These individuals will review your scores and help make appropriate recommendations for course registration.

Who has to take the ALEKS PPL Assessment? All incoming students should take the Placement Assessment.

Where can I take my Placement Assessment? The Placement Assessment can be taken from any computer with an internet connection. We reserve the right to require a student to take a Placement Assessment in a proctored environment.

Is there a fee for using ALEKS PPL? Use of ALEKS is included in your student fees.

Do I need to install any software or plug-ins prior to taking the ALEKS Placement Assessment? No. There are no plug-ins or applets required for your use of ALEKS PPL. As long as you have access to the internet and are using an updated browser, you should not experience difficulties in taking your Placement Assessment. For a list of preferred browsers, please review the ALEKS system requirements on their support site:

http://www.aleks.com/support/system_requirements

What topics are covered during the ALEKS PPL Assessment? ALEKS PPL is an online, adaptive system that covers a broad spectrum of mathematics topics. The length of the Placement Assessment will vary, but can be up to 30 questions. You will see some, but not all, of the math you have learned in high school. It is a Placement Assessment, not a preview of math courses at Westmont College. It is designed to identify if you are prepared for a particular course. After you take your first Placement Assessment, you will have the opportunity to review and master additional topics to reassess and improve your placement.

Topics covered:

- Real numbers (including fractions, integers, and percentages)
- Equations and inequalities (including linear equations, linear inequalities, systems of linear equations, and quadratic equations),
- Linear and quadratic functions (including graphs and functions, linear functions, and parabolas), exponents and polynomials (including integer exponents, polynomial arithmetic, factoring, and polynomial equations), rational expressions (including rational equations and rational functions)
- Radical expressions (including higher roots and rational exponents)
- Exponentials and logarithms (including function compositions and inverse functions, properties of logarithms, and logarithmic equations)
- Geometry and trigonometry (including perimeter, area, and volume, coordinate geometry, trigonometric functions, and identities and equations).

Can I practice using the ALEKS input tools before I begin the Placement Assessment? ALEKS will begin with a brief tutorial to make sure you are comfortable with the math palette tools before your Placement Assessment begins. The tutorial shows you how to enter different types of answers, how to use the ALEKS calculator, and how to graph. If you aren't sure how to input an answer, or need help while taking the ALEKS Placement Assessment, select the **Help** button

below the answer pallet tools. Going to the tutorial during your Placement Assessment will NOT impact your Placement Assessment results.

Taking the Placement Assessment

What is the format of the questions on ALEKS? ALEKS is not a multiple-choice Placement Assessment. It is open-response and requires you to work out solutions with a paper and pencil, then enter them into ALEKS. Be sure to have scratch paper with you.

May I use a calculator while using ALEKS? ALEKS will provide an on-screen calculator if you need one to complete a particular problem. Otherwise, you may not use a calculator.

May I use any other resources during a Placement Assessment? You may only use a pen or pencil, paper, and the resources provided within ALEKS. You should not receive assistance from friends, family, other websites, textbooks, or any other resource not provided by ALEKS. Using outside resources will lead to improper placement advice.

Can I review a question after I've answered it? Because ALEKS is adaptive, you cannot change it once you submit an answer. Be sure to carefully check your answer before submitting your response.

What if I see questions I don't know? You will likely be asked questions on material you have not yet learned. On such questions, it is appropriate to answer, **I don't know**. On any question that you have familiarity with, however, it is important to do your best. **I don't know** is interpreted by ALEKS to mean that you do not know how to solve the topic, and this will be reflected in the Placement Assessment results. There is no penalty for incorrectly answering a question on the Placement Assessment, it only helps ALEKS understand what you know and don't know.

Are Placement Assessments timed? No, you are free to complete the Placement Assessment at your own pace. The system will allow you to access your Placement Assessment for 48 hours. If you need to exit the Placement Assessment for any reason, you can log back in and pick up where you left off.

What happens if I do not complete a Placement Assessment in the allotted time? You will have to restart the Placement Assessment.

I am ready to start my ALEKS PPL Assessment. How do I begin? Begin the test by going to this link:
https://secure.aleks.com/shiblogon/sso?sso_account=b846fef&enroll_class_code=PR6HG-W4G3Y

Placement Result

What is my placement result? Your placement result (overall score) is a number between 0 and 100. It represents the percentage of topics ALEKS has identified you have mastered.

Recommended course placement is determined as follows:

Course #	Name	Recommended ALEKS Score Range
PHS 011	Intro. to Physical Science	30 or higher
PHS 007	Intro. to Astronomy	45 or higher
PHY 007	Physics of Music	
SOC 108	Stats and Quant. Res. Methods	45 or higher
ED 150	Math Instruction	
MA 160	Fundamentals of Mathematics	
MA 002	Mathematics of Music	60 or higher
MA 005	Introduction to Statistics	
MA 008	Functions and Models	
PHY 011	Physics for Life Sciences I	
CHM 005	General Chemistry I	
KNS 101	Biomechanics	
MA 009	Calculus I	75 or higher
PHY 021	General Physics I	

Where can I see my score?

- You will receive your score immediately upon completion of your Placement Assessment.
- You can view your ALEKS score by re-entering ALEKS using the same access link you used to take the Placement Assessment.

What if I do not have the recommended score for the course I wanted? This is a perfect opportunity to take advantage of the Prep and Learning Modules offered within ALEKS PPL. An individualized study plan will be created based on your performance on the Initial Placement Assessment. ALEKS will identify what you know and what you are ready to learn next so you can brush up on lost knowledge.

I did not get the recommended score for the class I wanted. Can I take it anyway? Possibly. Discuss your situation with your advisor or the course instructor.

Can I retake the ALEKS PPL Assessment? Yes, you may take up to 5 Placement Assessments. However, to make each attempt worthwhile, it is important that you spend time working in your ALEKS Prep and Learning Module between Placement Assessments so that you can improve your skills.

Can I retake the ALEKS Placement Assessment immediately?

You must wait 48 hours between Placement Assessments. There is generally no benefit to re-taking the Placement Assessment immediately after completing a prior attempt. You cannot improve your results by simply re-taking the

Placement Assessment without spending time in the Prep and Learning Module to refresh material that you may have forgotten.

Prep and Learning Modules

How long do I have access to my Prep and Learning Module? You will have one year of access to your Prep and Learning module. Access to the prep course will not begin until you select **start** at the top of your screen. DO NOT select the Prep and Learning Module until you are ready to start working.

Is there an additional fee for my Prep and Learning Module? Access to a Prep and Learning Module is included along with the additional Placement Assessments.

Must I work in my ALEKS Prep and Learning Module between Placement Assessments?

You can retake the Placement assessment up to four additional times to improve your score. Students are required to work in the Prep and Learning Modules for a specific amount of time prior to each Placement Assessment to increase success.

- 2nd attempt—required to complete 3 hours of work in the Prep and Learning Modules before attempting assessment.
- 3rd attempt—required to complete 3 additional hours of work in the Prep and Learning Modules before attempting assessment.
- 4th attempt—required to complete 5 additional hours of work in the Prep and Learning Modules before attempting assessment.
- 5th attempt—required to complete 8 additional hours of work in the Prep and Learning Modules before attempting assessment.

What are ALEKS Knowledge Checks? While working in a Prep and Learning Module, you will periodically complete a Knowledge Check to make sure you have mastered the topics you gained in Learning Mode. If you do not show mastery during the Knowledge Check, the topics will be added back into your Learning Pie so you can review them again.

Does progress in an ALEKS Prep and Learning Module count toward placement? No. You must complete a new Placement Assessment to change your placement result. Select the placement tab in the upper right corner of the ALEKS page to start a new Placement Assessment.

Can I change to a different Prep and Learning Module later? No. You may only use one Prep and Learning Module. If you are unsure which module to select, use the module recommended by ALEKS or consult with your advisor.

Technical Support

What do I do if my web browser gets stuck or my computer crashes while I'm taking the Placement Assessment?

Simply close the browser, or log out and log back in. ALEKS will resume the Placement Assessment exactly where you left off, with no loss of your previous answers.

Where can I get help with ALEKS?

<http://www.aleks.com/fags/technical>

http://support.aleks.com/assess_placement