



# Tools and Supports for Students During State Testing

Students can access a variety of tools and supports as they take M-STEP assessments. Tools and supports can help students with disabilities, students learning the English language, and students with many other learning needs.

In most cases, students can use the same (or similar) tools and supports on the M-STEP that they use in the classroom. There are some things that students cannot use, because the use of that tool or support may provide too much help for a student at the time of the test. For example, although a student may be able to use a calculator in the classroom throughout the school day, there are only certain M-STEP test questions on which a calculator can be used.

## Do you know what your child needs?

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has a research-supported policy that during an assessment, students can only use testing tools they truly need and that they use regularly in the classroom. Allowing students to have too many tools and supports during testing that they don't know how to use can cause distractions and decrease a student's performance on a test. But have you talked to your child's teacher to learn about any tools or supports that your child uses during the regular school day? Have you discussed what tools or supports your child will need during the assessment? You should consider talking with your child's teacher to find out more about your child's abilities and what options he or she might have at the time of the M-STEP.

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan, needed assessment supports should already be outlined in those documents.

## How do I know what's allowable?

The MDE makes a comprehensive [Supports and Accommodations Guidance Document](#) available to teachers, which describes allowable tools and supports. You can also follow this link to this document, but if you don't have the time to read all of it, you can review this much shorter list of what students may use at the time of the tests. The M-STEP offers the following tools and supports:

- **For students with visual needs** – tools such as an embedded online magnification tool; also, during testing the on-screen text will get bigger as the size of the computer screen window gets bigger.
- **For students with hearing needs** – supports such as closed-captioning, embedded American Sign Language (ASL) videos, and the opportunity for students to replay audio.
- **For students who have difficulties in focusing** – supports such as allowing students to use noise buffers and to test in a small group or even individually.
- **For students who are in the process of learning English** – tools such as the option to use a word-to-word glossary; students can also be allowed to take the mathematics test in Spanish.

- **For students who need to make notes** – during the test they can use an online digital notepad or use scratch paper.

Again, you should talk to your child’s teacher to find out what might be most appropriate for your child to use during the M-STEP.

The available tools and supports are not always the same across grade levels or test content areas. For example, students taking the English language arts (ELA) test cannot take the test in Spanish, because the ELA assessment tests the student’s knowledge of the English language.

If your child is a student with disabilities, it’s possible he or she uses a highly specialized learning tool in the classroom. Talk with your child’s teachers to find out if this tool can be used for the M-STEP assessments. If necessary, the teachers can contact the MDE Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability (OEAA) to request the use of that tool or support on the test.

## Can my child and I practice using some of the online tools and supports?

Yes! You can do this by using the Chrome web browser to open the [Online Tools Training \(OTT\)](https://wbte.drctdirect.com/MI/portals/mi) (<https://wbte.drctdirect.com/MI/portals/mi>) for M-STEP. The OTT does not work with other web browsers, so if Chrome is not your default browser, copy and paste the link provided. Once you’ve clicked on the link for the OTT, select ‘Online Tools Training’ for the M-STEP. You’ll see a list of options for different tools, supports, and accommodations that you and your child can practice using.



Try to have a bit of fun preparing your student for the M-STEP, and talk to your child’s teachers when you have questions. You can also contact the OEAA at [mde-oeaa@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-oeaa@michigan.gov), or by phone 1-877-560-8378.