

Introducing Starting Points Reading

What is Starting Points Reading?

Starting Points Reading is one of two online, adaptive assessment options designed for learners who are at or below koru/step one of the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy. To complete **Starting Points Reading** a learner must understand a range of spoken and written English, including basic questions and directions. Therefore this option is not suitable for ESOL learners who are at very early stages of learning English.

Starting Points Reading is suitable for learners who are at foundation stages of learning to read. These include both English language learners (ESOL) and learners who have grown up in Aotearoa/New Zealand and have English as their first language. Some of these learners are likely to have reading and/or other learning differences. This option is based on the Starting Points Assessment Guide, and focuses on reading.

Starting Points assessments are designed for use in a supported one-to-one situation, ideally using a tablet. More confident learners may be able to complete the assessments independently on a tablet, PC or laptop. A key feature of the Starting Points options is that the learners listen and respond to spoken language. In a group situation, learners may need to use headphones so as not to disturb others.

Starting Points Reading – trial status

Starting Points Reading has been released under *trial status*. It includes both new item content and a new framework informed by existing Starting Points resources and extensive sector piloting. Because of this, items have a provisional difficulty rating. Once trial data is collected we will update items with their final values and finalise the reporting framework.

*As it is a new assessment type and still under trial, the reporting framework for **Starting Points Reading** has yet to be finalised.* However you will be able to see how your learners responded to each question, via the Learner Assessment Report.

Also, TEC usage guidelines for the Starting Points options only relate to the use of the new options with learners where appropriate. At this time (March 2016) there are no set step or level targets for learners to reach.

TEC will update their guidelines for expected use once both **Starting Points Listening** and **Starting Points Reading** move out of trial status. There will be communication with the sector when this occurs.

What do we need to know?

Starting Points Reading provides information about a learner's level of ability in the foundational skills for learning to read. These include the 'building blocks' of reading and writing¹:

- phonological awareness
- letter-sound relationships
- vocabulary².

Phonological awareness is a vital first step in 'cracking the code' of written language. Because it is about hearing the sounds of the language rather than reading them, it is usually assessed in a face-to-face situation. However, the audio-based format developed specifically for **Starting Points Reading** allows aspects of phonological awareness to be assessed online.

Information from **Starting Points: Reading** may provide educators with an indication of areas in which further diagnostic or specialised testing might be appropriate, for example to support learners with reading difficulties.

Further information about **Starting Points Reading**:

- **Starting Points Reading** assessments are available online only. They are designed to be completed using a tablet, although a desktop or laptop computer could also be used.
- To complete **Starting Points Reading**, a learner must understand a range of spoken and written English, including basic questions and

¹ TEC (2008). *Starting points: Supporting the learning progressions for adult literacy*. Wellington: Author.

² In *Starting Points Reading* the focus is first on **sight vocabulary** (at Starting Points levels) and then on **reading vocabulary** (at koru/steps 1-2+). **Receptive vocabulary** is assessed in *Starting Points: Listening* and the *Vocabulary* option of the main Assessment Tool.

directions. Therefore, this option is not suitable for ESOL learners who are at very early stages of learning English.

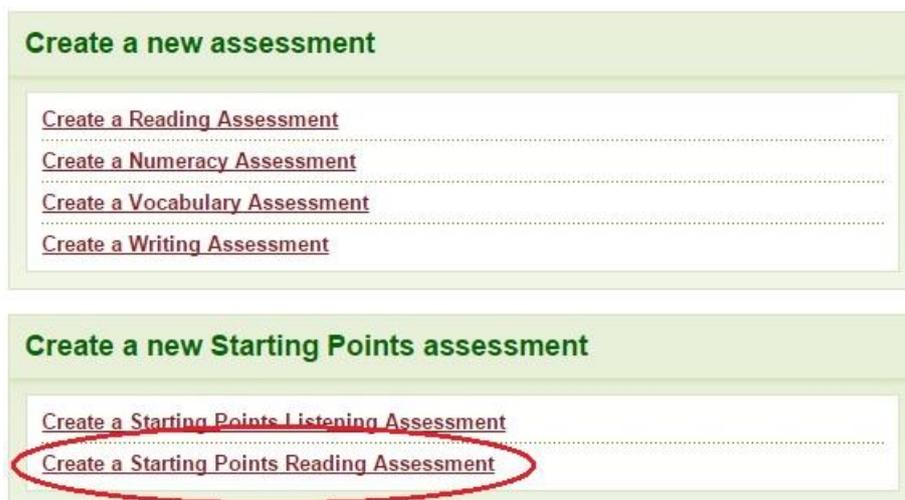
- **Starting Points Reading** covers the range from foundational skills to koru/step 2+ on the Learning Progressions for reading. At koru/steps 1 and 2+, the focus changes to reading vocabulary and comprehension. A score at step 2+ indicates that a learner may be ready to transition to the mainstream reading option in the Assessment Tool.
- The web address for the Starting Points assessment homepage is <https://assess.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/StartingPointsLogin.aspx>
- Starting Points assessments are created via the link on the Home and Assessments tabs.
- **Starting Points Reading** assessments have a new 'Discontinued' feature that will end the assessment after seven incorrect answers.

Creating a **Starting Points Reading** assessment

Starting Points Reading assessments are created in a similar way to **Starting Points Listening** assessments and are only available online.

To create a **Starting Points Reading** assessment, click on the appropriate link on either the Home or Assessments tab.

Fig.1



Assessments are then created in the usual manner. Note: Audience, Assessment Type, and Assessment Status are fixed values.

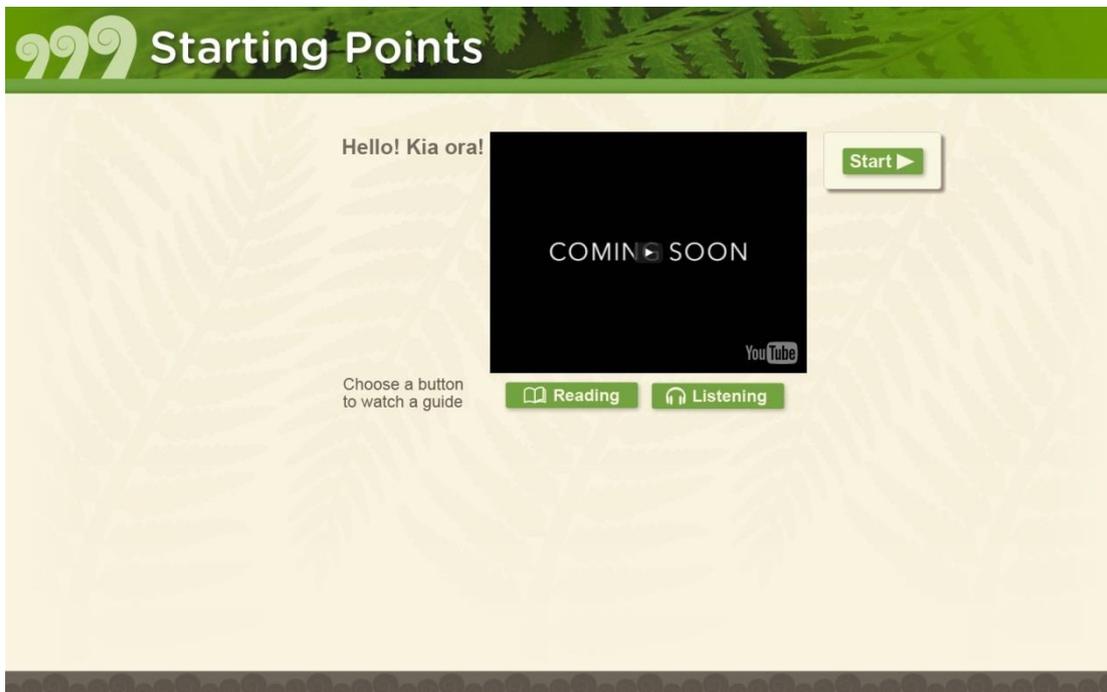
Fig. 2

The screenshot shows a web interface for creating an assessment. At the top is a green navigation bar with links for Home, Assessments, Learners, Educators, Groups, and Administration. Below this is the title 'Create a Starting Points Reading Assessment'. The form includes several fields: 'Assessment Name (Required)' with a text input box; 'Audience (Required)' with a radio button for 'Starting'; 'Assessment Type (Required)' with a radio button for 'Adaptive'; 'Assessment Strand (Required) (See Note)' with a radio button for 'Reading Comprehension'; and 'Your Notes' with a larger text input box. At the bottom, there are three buttons: a red 'Cancel' button, a blue 'Add more Learners (You can do this later) or' button, and a grey 'Save Assessment' button.

Sitting a Starting Points Reading assessment

Learners will sit their assessments online using a six digit alphanumeric code. When they enter their code into the Assessment Tool they will be taken to the Starting Points homepage (see below). 'How-to' videos will be uploaded to the embedded YouTube video player later in 2016.

Fig.3



Once the learner clicks 'Start' they will be prompted to confirm their name and then start the assessment. Starting Points assessments do not use practice questions.

Audio note: Many of the Starting Points Reading items include audio. Audio components are signalled by either a 'speaker' icon or an 'ear' icon. Learners click on/touch these icons to hear the audio.



This icon indicates that support audio is available. Clicking or touching on this icon allows the learner to listen to supporting audio (usually a spoken version of an instruction or question).



The 'ear' icon indicates that the learner **must** listen to the associated audio file, in order to be able to answer the question.

Learners will be asked four main types of questions:

- 1- **Multichoice.** The learner selects one of three or four options.

Fig.4



- 2- **Matching.** The learner selects the correct match or matches from a number of options.

Fig. 5



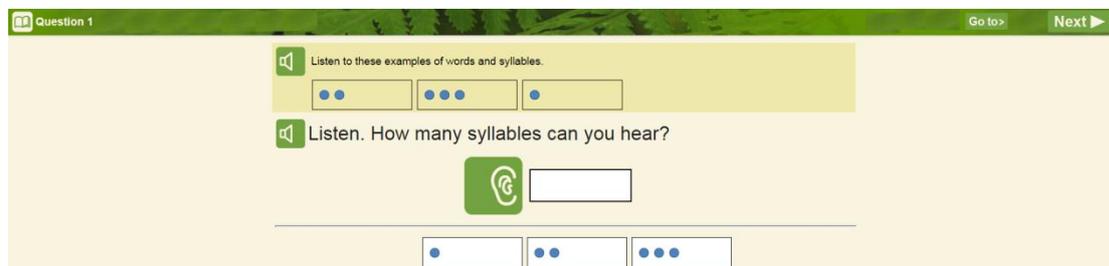
- 3- **Sequencing.** The learner puts a number of words or letters into the correct order.

Fig. 6



- 4- **Syllables.** This question type includes some supporting examples. Learners can play these as often as they wish. To answer the question, learners must listen to a word played and choose whether it has one, two or three syllables by selecting the option with the corresponding number of blue dots.

Fig. 7



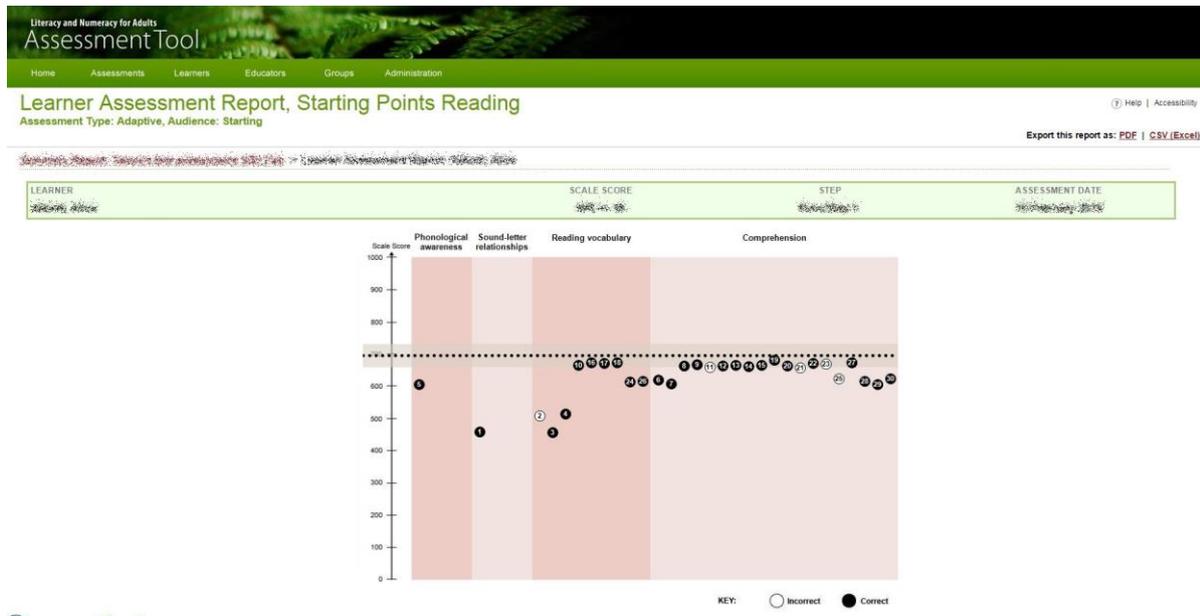
Learners may also see an Image Grid question, where they are required to select the picture that best answers the question.

Fig. 8



At the end of a **Starting Points Reading** assessment the learner will be able to view their results (see below).

Fig. 9



If you have any questions about **Starting Points Reading** please contact us at assessforadults@nzcer.org.nz