

PIRLS/prePIRLS 2011 Number of Items in the Assessments

Distribution of PIRLS 2011 Items by Purpose and Process

When developing items for PIRLS 2011, every attempt was made to achieve the target percentages across the reading purposes, processes of comprehension, and item formats outlined in the *PIRLS 2011 Assessment Framework*. Target percentages included “trend items” (items previously used in PIRLS 2001 or PIRLS 2006 and retained for use in 2011 as a basis for measuring trends) as well as items newly developed for PIRLS 2011. The results of these efforts are shown in the exhibits below. Each multiple-choice item is worth 1 score point. Constructed-response items can be worth 1, 2, or 3 points, depending on the complexity of the items.

A balance across the reading purposes was achieved automatically, because reading purpose is determined at the passage level, with half the passages assessing the literary purpose and half the informational purpose. Within the items for each passage, an attempt was made to achieve a balance of items across item formats and the processes of comprehension that reflected the target percentages described in the PIRLS 2011 Framework. This allows PIRLS to maintain relatively stable item percentages across blocks from previous assessments (trend) and newly developed items.

The *PIRLS 2011 Assessment Framework* specifies that no more than 50 percent of the score points be from multiple-choice items—a goal that was achieved in the 2011 assessment. However, the results in the following tables show that the percentage of “examine and evaluate” items was below target, and the percentage of “interpret and integrate” items above target. Examining and evaluating content, language, and textual elements is a demanding task for fourth grade students, and it is difficult to devise items eliciting these skills at a fourth grade level. However, because “interpreting and integrating” and “examining and evaluating” are both higher-level comprehension processes, the PIRLS reporting strategy combines these items into a single subscale. Therefore, though there is an imbalance between these processes, when combined they still comprise half of the overall assessment and provide a stable measure of higher-order reading comprehension skills.

PIRLS 2011 Assessment Items by Item Format

Item Format	Total Items	Achieved Percentage of Score Points	Target Percentage of Score Points
Multiple-choice	74 (74)	42%	50%
Constructed-reponse (1 point)	28 (28)		
Constructed-reponse (2 points)	26 (52)	58%	50%
Constructed-reponse (3 points)	7 (21)		
Total	135 (175)		

Score points are shown in parentheses.

PIRLS 2011 Assessment Items by Purpose

Reading Purpose	Number of Trend Items in PIRLS 2011	Percentage of Trend Score Points	Number of New Items in PIRLS 2011	Percentage of New Score Points	Total Items	Achieved Percentage of Score Points	Target Percentage of Score Points
Literary	39 (52)	51%	33 (39)	53%	72 (91)	52%	50%
Informational	36 (49)	49%	27 (35)	47%	63 (84)	48%	50%
Total	75 (101)		60 (74)		135 (175)		

Score points are shown in parentheses.

PIRLS 2011 Assessment Items by Process

Reading Comprehension Process	Number of Trend Items in PIRLS 2011	Percentage of Trend Score Points	Number of New Items in PIRLS 2011	Percentage of New Score Points	Total Items	Achieved Percentage of Score Points	Target Percentage of Score Points
Focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information	19 (22)	22%	14 (16)	22%	33 (38)	22%	20%
Make straightforward inferences	26 (28)	28%	20 (21)	28%	46 (49)	28%	30%
Interpret and integrate ideas and information	20 (38)	38%	18 (28)	38%	38 (66)	38%	30%
Examine and evaluate content, language, and textual elements	10 (13)	13%	8 (9)	12%	18 (22)	12%	20%
Total	75 (101)		60 (74)		135 (175)		

Score points are shown in parentheses.

Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.

Distribution of prePIRLS 2011 Items by Purpose and Process

The item specifications for prePIRLS 2011 were based on those used in PIRLS, with modifications as needed to make the assessment appropriate for prePIRLS students. For example, since prePIRLS was developed for students who are still learning to read, the *PIRLS 2011 Assessment Framework* specified a greater emphasis on the processes of retrieval and straightforward inferencing. In addition, because the prePIRLS pilot test suggested that reading the options for a multiple-choice item may be more difficult for prePIRLS students than providing a short response to a constructed-response item, there is a slightly higher target percentage of constructed-response items in prePIRLS than PIRLS. As shown in the exhibits below, the distribution of items across the reading purposes and processes of comprehension are quite close to the target percentages outlined in the *PIRLS 2011 Assessment Framework*.

prePIRLS 2011 Assessment Items by Item Format

Item Format	Total Items	Achieved Percentage of Score Points	Target Percentage of Score Points
Multiple-choice	57 (57)	43%	40%
Constructed-reponse (1 point)	56 (56)	57%	60%
Constructed-reponse (2 points)	9 (18)		
Constructed-reponse (3 points)	1 (3)		
Total	123 (134)		

Score points are shown in parentheses.

prePIRLS 2011 Assessment Items by Purpose

Reading Purpose	Total Items	Achieved Percentage of Score Points	Target Percentage of Score Points
Literary	63 (67)	50%	50%
Informational	60 (67)	50%	50%
Total	123 (134)		

Score points are shown in parentheses.

prePIRLS 2011 Assessment Items by Process

Reading Comprehension Process	Total Items	Achieved Percentage of Score Points	Target Percentage of Score Points
Focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information	57 (60)	45%	50%
Make straightforward inferences	35 (36)	27%	25%
Interpret and integrate ideas and information	17 (23)	28%	25%
Examine and evaluate content, language, and textual elements	14 (15)		
Total	123 (134)		

Score points are shown in parentheses.