# Tennessee Gateway Examinations

## Type of test
The Gateway Examinations are end-of-course, criterion-referenced exams. They are also standards-based exams because they align with the state’s content standards.

## Purpose
The purpose of the test is to:
- Provide schools with student academic diagnostic information.
- Determine prospective high school graduates’ mastery of the state curriculum.
- Encourage districts and schools to identify and serve students at risk of academic failure.
- Provide data to state policymakers on student attainment of state education goals to inform educational policy decisions.
- Increase alignment of local curriculum and programs of instruction with state education standards.
- Promote equity of opportunity across all student groups.
- Meet a state mandate.

## Major changes/pending changes in exit exam policy
The state high school curriculum has undergone changes that will be effective in the 2009-10 school year. These changes will require an alignment of the end-of-course assessments. The Gateway requirements will be “sunset” beginning with 9th-grade students in 2009-10, requiring that cohort and after to pass 10 end-of-course assessments during their high school years that count for 25% of the student’s grade.

## Test used by colleges or universities for undergraduate admission?
Neither public universities nor community colleges use the Gateway Exam to determine undergraduate admissions or course placement. However, students cannot be admitted to a public university or community college without having received a high school diploma.

## Year first administered
2001-02

## Year diplomas first withheld
2005

## Subjects tested
English I, English II, English III, Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, Biology I, chemistry, physics, and U.S. history

Beginning with students entering 9th grade in 2009-10 and after, students will be required to pass all 10 subjects to receive a regular high school diploma. All of the subjects except physics are currently required for graduation.

## Types of questions
Multiple-choice
### Grade first administered

Varies. Students take the exams after completing the course associated with the exam. Most students take the exams in high school, although students who take Algebra I in 7th or 8th grade may take the exam when they complete the course.

### Grade(s) exam aligned to

10th-grade standards

### Number of retakes allowed before end of grade 12

Three administrations each year; students may continue to retake the test at each administration until they pass.

### Retakes after grade 12

Students who have met all graduation requirements except passing the exit exams may retake the exams after completing 12th grade with no limit on age or number of retakes and still receive a regular diploma.

### Alternate paths to graduation for general education students

The state does not allow students to earn a regular diploma by passing a substitute test or submitting a waiver or appeal. However, students who do not receive a regular diploma because they could not pass the exit exams are eligible to receive a certificate of attendance. In 2006-07, 4% of general education students received a certificate of attendance.

### Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities

A special education diploma is available for students with disabilities who do not receive a regular diploma because they could not pass the exit exams. Fewer than 1% of students with disabilities received the special education diploma in 2007.

### Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners

No, but English language learners who do not receive a regular diploma because they could not pass the exit exams are eligible for the certificate of attendance available to all students.

### Exit exam used for No Child Left Behind (NCLB)?

Tennessee uses the results from the first time a student takes the graduation exams to meet the requirements of NCLB. Starting in 2007-08, the science test will also be used to meet NCLB requirements.

### Same cut score for graduation and NCLB?

Yes

### Types of assistance provided by the state to all districts to raise initial pass rates for all students on the high school exit exam

The state offers technical assistance to help:

- Teachers administer the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, and train-the-trainer workshops.
- All teachers prepare students for the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, and train-the-trainer workshops.
- Teachers become more proficient in their content area, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops.
- Schools identify and target students for assistance, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance.

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- Schools implement comprehensive school reform, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops.
- Districts improve professional development for teachers, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance.
- All districts improve the instructional leadership provided by administrators, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance.

The state also provides state-developed courses specifically designed to prepare students for the exam and exam preparation materials for students and teachers.

### Types of assistance or remediation provided by the state to all districts to help students who have failed their initial attempt to pass the exit exam

The state does not provide assistance or remediation to all districts to help students who have failed in their initial attempt to pass the exit exam.

### Does the state provide funding for remediation?
Yes. Funding for school districts is available in the Basic Education Program.

### Are districts mandated by law to provide remediation?
Yes. School districts must provide an opportunity for remediation to any student not passing the Gateway Exams.

### Does the state have reciprocity with other states?
No

### Evaluations of the state exit exam
Yes. The state had an external evaluation of the state exit exam conducted by Norman Webb in 2005. The results of the evaluation are publicly available as part of the Peer Review for Assessments documentation.

### State test contractor
Pearson Educational Measurement

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### Initial pass rates, 2007

**Percentage of Students Passing on the First Try, 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>English II</th>
<th>Algebra I</th>
<th>Biology I</th>
<th>All Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language learners</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free or reduced-price lunch eligible</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cumulative pass rates, 2007

**Percentage of Students Passing on the First Try, 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Algebra I</th>
<th>Biology I</th>
<th>All Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language learners</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students with disabilities</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free or reduced-price lunch eligible</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>78%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>