# A Guide to the TAKS Vertical Scale Used in Texas

1. **What is a vertical scale score?**
   A vertical scale score is a number that shows how well a student did on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). This score is calculated from the number of questions a student answered correctly on TAKS.

2. **Why is Texas using a vertical scale?**
   Texas legislation requires the Texas Education Agency to use a vertical scale for English TAKS reading and mathematics in grades 3–8. A vertical scale for Spanish TAKS reading and mathematics in grades 3–5 was also developed.

3. **What are the TAKS assessments that will not be reported on a vertical scale?**
   There will **NOT** be a vertical scale developed for the following TAKS tests:
   - grades 4 and 7 writing
   - grades 5, 8, 10 and exit level science
   - grades 8, 10, and exit level social studies
   - grades 9, 10, and exit level mathematics
   - grade 9 reading
   - grade 10 and exit level English language arts

   These grades and subjects will continue to have a scale score of 2100 for Met Standard and 2400 for Commended Performance.

4. **How does the vertical scale score differ from grade to grade?**
   The vertical scale score for Met Standard and Commended Performance is a different number for each grade and subject. For both TAKS reading and mathematics, these numbers increase from grade to grade. The tables below list the vertical scale scores needed to meet the passing standard and to achieve commended performance on TAKS English and Spanish reading and TAKS English and Spanish mathematics.

**TAKS READING VERTICAL SCALE SCORES**

| Performance Standard | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Grade 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English Met Standard | 483 | 554 | 620 | 644 | 670 | 700 |
| English Commended | 659 | 725 | 763 | 797 | 829 | 850 |
| Spanish Met Standard | 503 | 555 | 623 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Spanish Commended | 657 | 694 | 744 | N/A | N/A | N/A |

**TAKS MATHEMATICS VERTICAL SCALE SCORES**

| Performance Standard | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Grade 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English Met Standard | 500 | 554 | 603 | 637 | 670 | 700 |
| English Commended | 640 | 698 | 738 | 783 | 823 | 850 |
| Spanish Met Standard | 503 | 555 | 627 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Spanish Commended | 649 | 692 | 755 | N/A | N/A | N/A |

For students taking English TAKS reading and mathematics in grades 3–8 and Spanish TAKS reading and mathematics in grades 3–5, the vertical scale scores replace the previously used scale scores of 2100 for Met Standard and 2400 for Commended Performance.

**5. A fourth grade student got a vertical scale score of S-641 in reading. What does this mean?**

The letter appearing before the dash shows whether the student took an English (E) or Spanish (S) version of TAKS in grades 3–5. In this case the student took Spanish TAKS. The three numbers appearing after the dash are the student's vertical scale score. A student can get a vertical scale score that generally ranges between 0 and 1000.

To meet the passing standard on the grade 4 Spanish TAKS reading test, a student would need to have a vertical scale score of at least 555. To achieve commended performance on this same test, he or she would need a vertical scale score of at least 694. The fourth grader whose vertical scale score is S-641 met the passing standard on TAKS reading but did not score high enough to achieve commended performance.

**6. What is the main advantage of having a vertical scale?**

The main advantage of having a vertical scale is that a student's vertical scale scores can be compared across different grades for the same subject and language version. The changes in the student's vertical scale scores show the academic progress the student has made over time. For example, to meet the passing standard on the English TAKS grade 5 mathematics test, a student's vertical scale score would need to be at least 603. If a student's vertical scale score on this test is E-595, he or she would not meet the grade 5 passing standard in mathematics. However, if the next year this same student's vertical scale score on the grade 6 mathematics test is E-644, he or she would meet the passing standard, since the vertical scale score needed to meet the standard in grade 6 is 637.

**7. What do vertical scale scores tell us about a student's progress?**

Changes in vertical scale scores across years tell us about a student's progress. However, the amount of change a student needs to make depends on whether or not the student is currently passing the test. A student who is not passing needs to show more progress than a student who is passing or a student who achieves Commended Performance.

To determine whether a student is making sufficient academic progress, it is necessary to identify (1) the initial performance level of that student (i.e., Did Not Meet Standard, Met Standard, and Commended Performance) and (2) the amount of change he or she made over one or more years. Once the amount of change is established, the student's scale score change can be compared to the scale score changes from related groups of students. For example, if a student did not initially meet the standard, that student's scale score change can be compared with the scale score change of (1) all students in the state who initially did not meet the standard, (2) all students in the school who did not initially meet the standard, and (3) all students in the school who had the same initial score.

Comparing this student's vertical scale score from one year to the next helps the student's school and parents monitor progress so that they can provide the student with the ongoing instruction and support needed to be academically successful.

**8. How can schools and parents use the vertical scale to compare performance across grades?**

Scores on the vertical scale will be included on student reports in spring 2011. In addition, students' vertical scale scores from 2010, as well as their TAKS scores in 2009 that have been converted to vertical scale scores, will be available to districts in 2011. Therefore, districts will be able to compare students' 2011, 2010, and 2009 vertical scale scores to evaluate students' progress.

Any vertical scale scores received in 2011 can be compared to the 2010 and 2009 scores as long as the comparison is for the same subject area and language version. For example, vertical scale scores in English TAKS reading can be compared each year, from grade 3 to grade 8, but vertical scale scores in English TAKS reading cannot be compared to vertical scale scores in Spanish TAKS reading or TAKS mathematics.

**9. How are the vertical scale and the Texas Projection Measure (TPM) alike and different?**

The vertical scale allows a comparison between a student's current score and his or her previous scores. The TPM takes a student's current score and prior year score (if available) in the projected subject and uses it to project whether the student will be successful in future years. Both the vertical scale and TPM allow comparisons across years. The difference in the two is that the vertical scale allows comparisons to the past and the TPM allows comparisons to the future. Keep in mind that it will not be possible to project STAAR scores at this time, only TAKS.

**10. Where can I get more information?**

For additional information on the vertical scale, please see
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/measures/vertscale/index.html