

# Mathematics Placement Guide

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## What is ALEKS?

The University of Missouri-St. Louis requires an ALEKS Placement, Preparation and Learning (ALEKS PPL) Assessment to determine readiness for mathematics courses. ALEKS PPL is a web-based program that uses artificial intelligence to map a student's strengths and weaknesses. The Placement Assessment is up to 30 questions and generally takes 60-90 minutes to complete. After the Placement Assessment, an individualized Prep and Learning Module is available for students to refresh their knowledge on forgotten topics. Students then have the opportunity to reassess and improve their placement.

ALEKS consists of three parts:

- An Initial Placement Assessment
- The Prep and Learning Module, an individualized, self-paced online review
- Access to 4 additional Placement Assessments

Students are encouraged to spend time in the Prep and Learning Module, even if the desired score is achieved, because time spent in ALEKS will ultimately lead to better preparation and improved grades.

**What is the purpose of placement testing?** The Placement Assessment results will be used to determine the most appropriate courses for each student as they move forward with college coursework. After taking a Placement Assessment, students should meet with their advisor to review their results and enroll in the best classes based on their scores.

This is a “Placement Assessment,” not a test. The difference is that a Placement Assessment is designed to determine what a student knows and what a student needs to work on. At the end of the ALEKS PPL Assessment, a student will have a much better sense of his/her strengths and weaknesses in math. Students then have a chance to brush on topics that may have been forgotten or haven’t been practiced for some time.

**Be honest.** It is important that the Placement Assessment is taken seriously and each student gives it an honest effort so that the Placement Assessment truly reflects their current level of knowledge and math preparedness. There is no benefit to cheating on the Placement Assessment – the only result will be that a student enrolls in a class that is too difficult, or not challenging enough, potentially costing time and money. Therefore, while taking the Placement Assessment, students should not consult any outside sources for help (friends/family, internet searches, textbooks, notes etc...). The purpose of the Placement Assessment is to give an accurate measure of a student’s current mathematical knowledge state so that he/she will be successful in mathematics courses. [More information on UMSL’s academic integrity policy](#)

## Preparation

**Why must I take the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** The Placement Assessment is used to determine the mathematics course in which you will have the greatest success. Upon completion of the Placement Assessments, your scores are sent to your academic advisor. Your advisor will review your scores and help make appropriate recommendations for course registration.

**Who has to take the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** All incoming freshmen and all transfer students who wish to enroll in a math course at or below the Calculus I (MATH 1800) level.

**When do I take the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** Valid dates for UMSL ALEKS scores are as follows:

Semester Attending	Dates
Spring	ALEKS score dated February 1 or later of previous year
Summer	ALEKS score dated July 1 or later of previous year
Fall	ALEKS score dated August 1 or later of previous year

**Are ALEKS PPL Assessments proctored?** No. **However, those students who wish to place directly into MATH 1800 or higher-level math course must demonstrate proficiency in a proctored environment.** Students should consult with their academic advisor before taking a proctored Placement Assessment. We reserve the right to require a student to take a Placement Assessment in a proctored environment.

**If my desired course requires a proctored ALEKS, where can I take my Placement Assessment?** ALEKS is proctored by appointment in the UMSL Campus Testing Center. [More information about the Testing Center](#)

**Is there a fee for using ALEKS PPL?** Use of ALEKS is included in your student fees. The fee for a proctored ALEKS Placement Assessment is \$25.

**Do I need to install any software or plug-ins prior to taking the ALEKS Placement Assessment?** No. There are no required plug-ins or applets required with your use of ALEKS PPL. As long as you have access to the internet and are using an updated browser, you should not experience difficulties in taking your Placement Assessment. For a list of preferred browsers, please review the ALEKS system requirements on their support site: [http://www.aleks.com/support/system\\_requirements](http://www.aleks.com/support/system_requirements)

**What topics are covered during the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** ALEKS PPL is an online, adaptive system that covers a broad spectrum of mathematics topics. The length of the Placement Assessment will vary, but can be up to 30 questions. You will see some, but not all, of the math you have learned in high school. It is a Placement Assessment, not a preview of math courses at UMSL. It is designed to identify if you are prepared for a particular course. After you take your first Placement Assessment, you will have the opportunity to review and master additional topics to reassess and improve your placement.

Topics covered:

- Real numbers (including fractions, integers, and percentages)
- Equations and inequalities (including linear equations, linear inequalities, systems of linear equations, and quadratic equations),
- Linear and quadratic functions (including graphs and functions, linear functions, and parabolas), exponents and polynomials (including integer exponents, polynomial arithmetic, factoring, and polynomial equations), rational expressions (including rational equations and rational functions)
- Radical expressions (including higher roots and rational exponents)
- Exponentials and logarithms (including function compositions and inverse functions, properties of logarithms, and logarithmic equations)
- Geometry and trigonometry (including perimeter, area, and volume, coordinate geometry, trigonometric functions, and identities and equations).

**Can I practice using the ALEKS input tools before I begin the Placement Assessment?** ALEKS will begin with a brief tutorial to make sure you are comfortable with the math palette tools before your Placement Assessment begins. The tutorial shows you how to enter different types of answers, how to use the ALEKS calculator, and how to graph. If you aren't sure how to input an answer, or need help while you are taking the ALEKS Placement Assessment, select the **Help** button below the answer pallet tools. Going to the tutorial during your Placement Assessment will NOT impact your Placement Assessment results.

## Taking the Placement Assessment

**What is the format of the questions on ALEKS?** ALEKS is not a multiple-choice Placement Assessment. It is open-response and requires you to work out solutions with a paper and pencil, then enter them into ALEKS. Be sure to have scratch paper with you.

**May I use a calculator while using ALEKS?** ALEKS will provide an on-screen calculator if you need one to complete a particular problem. Otherwise, you may not use a calculator.

**May I use any other resources during a Placement Assessment?** You may only use a pen or pencil, paper, and the resources provided within ALEKS. You should not receive assistance from friends, family, other websites, textbooks, or any other resource not provided by ALEKS. Using outside resources will lead to improper placement and potentially course failure.

**Can I review a question after I've answered it?** Because ALEKS is adaptive, once you submit an answer, you cannot change it. Be sure to carefully check your answer before submitting your response.

**What if I see questions I don't know?** It is likely that you will be asked questions on material you have not yet learned. On such questions it is appropriate to answer, **I don't know**. On any question that you have familiarity with, however, it is important to do your best. **I don't know** is interpreted by ALEKS to mean that you do not know how to solve the topic, and this will be reflected in the Placement Assessment results. There is no penalty for incorrectly answering a question on the Placement Assessment, it only helps ALEKS understand what you know and don't know.

**Are Placement Assessments timed?** No, you are free to complete the Placement Assessment at your own pace. The system will allow you to access your Placement Assessment for 48 hours. If you need to exit the Placement Assessment for any reason, you will be able to log back in and pick up where you left off.

**What happens if I do not complete a Placement Assessment in the allotted time?** If the Placement Assessment is unproctored, you will have to restart the Placement Assessment. If the incomplete Placement Assessment is proctored and timed, you will be given a placement result, but it will not be a true reflection of your abilities.

**I am ready to start my ALEKS PPL Assessment. How do I begin?** Login to ALEKS (<https://www.aleks.com/umsl/ppl>) with your university SSO and password and select **Add Class**. The current class code can be found on the [UMSL Math Placement webpage](#).

## Placement Result

**What is my placement result?** Your placement result (overall score) is a number between 0 and 100. It represents the percentage of topics ALEKS has identified you have mastered.

Course placement is determined as follows. For more information on UMSL math course prerequisites, please consult the [Mathematics Course Prerequisite Information](#) page or contact your academic advisor.

Course #	Course Name	Minimum ALEKS Score
<b>MATH 1020</b>	Contemporary Mathematics	25
<b>MATH 1021</b>	Choice and Chance	25
<b>MATH 1025</b>	Geometry in the Real World	25
<b>MATH 1026</b>	The Music of Math	25
<b>MATH 1030</b>	College Algebra	45
<b>MATH 1035</b>	Trigonometry	61
<b>MATH 1045</b>	Pre-Calculus	45
<b>MATH 1100</b>	Basic Calculus	61
<b>MATH 1102</b>	Finite Mathematics	56
<b>MATH 1105</b>	Basic Probability and Statistics	61
<b>MATH 1150</b>	Structure of Mathematical Systems	51
<b>MATH 1800</b>	Analytic Geometry and Calculus I	76*
		*must be earned in proctored environment.

**Which math course is required for my program?** For questions regarding results or course placement, please contact your academic advisor.

#### Where can I see my score?

- You will receive your score immediately upon completion of your Placement Assessment.
- Your ALEKS score can be viewed by re-entering ALEKS using the same access link for which you took the Placement Assessment.

**How long is my placement result valid?** Your placement result is valid for up to 12 months.

**What if I do not place into the course I wanted?** This is a perfect opportunity to take advantage of the Prep and Learning Modules offered within ALEKS PPL. An individualized study plan will be created based on your performance on the Initial Placement Assessment. ALEKS will identify what you know and what you are ready to learn next so you can brush up on lost knowledge.

**I did not place into the class I wanted. Can I take it anyway?** No, you must achieve the minimum placement result to take each corresponding class.

For more information on UMSL math course prerequisites, see the [Math Prerequisites](#) page or consult with your academic advisor.

**What if I placed into the class I wanted?** Congratulations! Continue to use your Prep and Learning Module to improve your chances for success. The placement result required is the minimum preparation for your course. Take advantage of the individualized review and learning features in ALEKS to get a better grade in your class.

**Can I retake the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** Yes, you may take up to 5 Placement Assessments. However, to make each attempt worthwhile, it is important that you spend time working in your ALEKS Prep and Learning Module between Placement Assessments so that you can improve your skills.

**Can I retake the ALEKS Placement Assessment immediately?** You must wait 48 hours between Placement Assessments. There is generally no benefit to re-taking the Placement Assessment immediately after completing a prior attempt. You cannot improve your results by simply re-taking the Placement Assessment without spending time in the Prep and Learning Module to refresh material that you may have forgotten.

## Prep and Learning Modules

**How long do I have access to my Prep and Learning Module?** You will have six months of access to your Prep and Learning module. Access to the prep course will not begin until you select **start** on the top of your screen. **DO NOT** select into the Prep and Learning Module until you are ready to start working.

**Is there an additional fee for my Prep and Learning Module?** Access to a Prep and Learning Module is included along with the additional Placement Assessments.

**Must I work in my ALEKS Prep and Learning Module between Placement Assessments?** You can retake the Placement assessment up to 4 additional times to improve your score. (The highest score will be used for math placement). Students are required to work in the Prep and Learning Modules for a specific amount of time prior to each Placement Assessment to increase success.

- 2nd attempt—required to complete 5 hours of work in the Prep and Learning Modules before attempting assessment.
- 3rd attempt—required to complete 5 additional hours of work in the Prep and Learning Modules before attempting assessment.
- 4th attempt—required to complete 3 additional hours of work in the Prep and Learning Modules before attempting assessment.
- 5th attempt—required to complete 3 additional hours of work in the Prep and Learning Modules before attempting assessment.

**What are ALEKS Knowledge Checks?** While working in a Prep and Learning Module, you will periodically complete a Knowledge Check to make sure you have mastered the topics you gained in Learning Mode. If you do not show mastery during the Knowledge Check, the topics will be added back into your Learning Pie so you can review them again.

**Does progress in an ALEKS Prep and Learning Module count toward placement?** No. You must complete a new Placement Assessment to change your placement result. Select the placement tab in the upper right corner of the ALEKS page to start a new Placement Assessment.

**Can I change to a different Prep and Learning Module later?** No. You may only use one Prep and Learning Module. If you are unsure which module to select, use the module recommended by ALEKS or consult with your advisor.

## Do I need to take the ALEKS if...?

### ...I have college math credits, like AB, IB or Dual Enrollment credits?

Freshmen: All freshmen should take ALEKS and can talk to an advisor at [New Student Orientation](#). Transfer credits will still count, but students need to know whether or not they are prepared for their intended math course at UMSL. The purpose of our placement process is to determine, based on your mathematical background and current ability, which math course is appropriate for you. If you have transfer credits and ALEKS places you below the level you need for a particular math course, please discuss this with your academic advisor.

Transfer Students: All students who wish to enroll in a math course at or below the Calculus I level (MATH 1800) are encouraged to take the ALEKS assessment. ALEKS will gauge how well you are prepared for your desired course. In particular, if it has been more than one year since you took your math course, you need to spend time reviewing in the ALEKS Prep and Learning Modules in order to be successful in your upcoming course!

**...I took the AP Calculus test?** Yes. Incoming freshmen must take the ALEKS assessment. AP scores are not available until mid-summer, and decisions about your eligibility for math courses may be needed prior to the receipt of these scores. It is possible that your AP score will allow you to register for a higher-level math course, so you should check with your academic advisor.

**...I took College Algebra, Precalculus, or Calculus at my high school?** A high school course does not count towards college credit unless it was taken as part of a dual credit program through a college or university. Students must take ALEKS in order to place into the appropriate math course at UMSL. If you took a college-level or dual credit course while in high school, you must provide appropriate documentation to the Office of Admissions.

**...I just want to repeat my last math course?** Regardless of whether or not you have taken a course before, you must satisfy the prerequisite requirements for the course in the upcoming semester when you plan to enroll. For example, if you did not earn a C- or above in your last math course and want to repeat it, you will need an ALEKS score for the upcoming semester. If your original score has expired, you will need to repeat the assessment.

**...I took an ALEKS assessment through another institution. Can I use this score at UMSL?** No. UMSL does not accept an ALEKS assessment score taken elsewhere.

## Technical Support

### What do I do if my web browser gets stuck or my computer crashes while I'm taking the Placement Assessment?

Simply close the browser, or log out and log back in. ALEKS will resume the Placement Assessment exactly where you left off, with no loss of your previous answers.

### Where can I get help with ALEKS?

<https://mhedu.force.com/aleks/s/alekscontactsupport>