

The **Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT)** measures an individual's aptitude for learning a foreign language. First published in 1959, the test can be used to predict success in learning all basic communication skills, but particularly speaking and listening. The Modern Language Aptitude Test is now the property of the non-profit entity Second Language Testing Foundation, Inc., who has acquired the rights to the test in order to ensure its continued availability to the second language testing community. Click on the following links to learn more.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of the product, ALL SALES ARE FINAL.

We accept VISA/MASTERCARD payments. Click on "How do I obtain a copy of the MLAT" for more information.

To learn more about the concept of language aptitude and the practical uses of language aptitude measure, please visit our page on [Language Aptitude Testing](#).

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1. Which test should I choose?

The [Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery \(PLAB\)](#) is an off-the-shelf test available for sale to educators and others who have need for a language aptitude test. It was designed in the 1960s by Dr. Paul Pimsleur for predicting who will be successful in foreign language learning and as a tool to aid in the diagnosis of foreign language learning disabilities. The PLAB is intended for individuals from 7th grade to adult.

The [MLAT-Elementary](#) is an off-the-shelf test available for sale to educators and others who have need for a language aptitude test for English-speaking children in grades 3-6. It was designed in the 1960s by Drs. John Carroll and Stanley Sapon for predicting success in foreign language learning and as a tool to aid in the diagnosis of foreign language learning disabilities.

The [MLAT-Elementary Spanish Version](#) is an off-the-shelf test available for sale to educators and others who have a need for a language test for Spanish-speaking children in grades 3-6. It is an adaptation of the MLAT-Elementary, designed in the 1960s by Drs. John Carroll and Stanley Sapon for predicting success in foreign language learning and as a tool to aid in the diagnosis of foreign language learning disabilities. It was adapted by Drs. Charles Stansfield, Daniel Reed, and Ana Maria Velasco in 2005.

2. The MLAT is a secure test – What does that mean?

The MLAT is a secure test that is only available to government agencies, licensed clinical psychologists, and other selected groups who are deemed appropriate to administer the test for diagnostic purposes. Sale of the MLAT to an end user is granted solely by permission of SLTI, and SLTI may refuse sale of the MLAT for any reason. The MLAT is used principally with adults.

All users of the MLAT must agree to uphold the security of the test. This security agreement strictly prohibits the reproduction of any test materials through printing, electronic or mechanical means, included but not limited to photocopying, audiovisual recording or transmission, and portrayal or duplication in any information storage and retrieval system. They must also agree to only use the test for the express, legitimate purpose for which it is designed and intended.

3. How is the MLAT used?

The MLAT can be used for a variety of purposes. Since it indicates how easily an individual may learn a foreign language, it may be used to determine which individuals will profit most from language training. It has been used extensively as a selection measure for intensive language programs, such as those offered to military personnel. Alternatively, the MLAT may be used to determine which individuals will experience the most difficulty in language training. For instance, lack of language learning aptitude, as demonstrated by poor performance on the MLAT, may help qualify an individual for a waiver or a modification of a foreign language requirement at an academic institution.

4. Who uses the MLAT and why?

The MLAT is used by institutions and individuals to measure foreign language learning aptitude. There are four major groups of users. Churches and missionary

organizations use the MLAT to determine how long they should plan on providing language instruction to a missionary or how difficult a language a missionary will be able to handle. Missionaries with high aptitude may be assigned to learn more difficult languages. Private schools use the MLAT for advising students who might be interested in studying a foreign language. Government agencies, such as the Foreign Service Institute, and international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, use the MLAT with their staff in much the same way that missionary organizations do. Government agencies and corporations also use the MLAT to identify personnel who would benefit the most from the time and expense of an intensive language training program. School and clinical psychologists use the MLAT to determine if a student has a foreign language learning disability.

There are many studies that provide evidence that the MLAT is a good predictor of success in foreign language learning. For a comprehensive review of the literature on the subject, see *J.B. Carroll. (1981). 25 years of language aptitude research. In K.C. Diller, Editor, Individual differences and universals in language learning aptitude. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.* For a basic reference for the validity of the MLAT as a predictor of foreign language learning disability, see *A.H. Gajar. (1987). Foreign language learning disabilities: The identification of predictive and diagnostic variables. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 20(6), 327-330.*

5. What is a language learning disability, and how can the MLAT be used in diagnosing one?

A language learning disability may be defined as low aptitude for learning languages in comparison with the student's aptitude for learning other subjects. It usually established by administering a battery of tests, including a language aptitude test such as the MLAT, PLAB or MLAT-E, and examining the pattern of scores. If the student shows normal aptitude for other school subjects but much lower aptitude on measures relating to language, then evidence of a weakness or disability in language aptitude is established. Another aspect of such an assessment is to examine the student's performance in different subjects. If the student does well in other subjects but poorly in language, then this provides further evidence of a substantial discrepancy in his or her abilities.

Sometimes a cognitive-academic disability is defined as an aptitude score below a certain percentile, such as the 20th percentile, the 10th percentile, or the 5th percentile. Whether the cutoff point is made on a case-by-case basis or set for the purpose of establishing a policy for a particular school, the decision must be made by a qualified professional as part of a comprehensive diagnostic procedure.

The MLAT can be used in developing a history of difficulty in learning foreign languages. For example, a school psychologist who is doing a diagnostic evaluation of a student who is progressing slowly in foreign language classes could use test results from the MLAT in conjunction with input from FL teachers and data from progress in language courses to help establish a diagnosis of a foreign language learning disability. Ideally, the MLAT-E would be administered when the student was in grade school, the PLAB would be administered at the junior high level, and the MLAT would be administered at a future point, such as when the student was applying for college, or in the first year of university studies and facing a language requirement. Consistently poor performances on these tests over the years would strongly support the case for a language learning disability. It is especially important

that such diagnoses be accurate and credible, because other special services and accommodations may be contingent on their outcome.

To read two articles at LD Online about foreign language learning disabilities, click on the following links:

[Learning Disabilities and Foreign Language Learning](#), by Robin L. Schwartz

[Foreign Language Learning and Learning Disabilities: Making the College Transition](#), by Sally S. Scott and Elaine Manglitz

6. How is the MLAT administered?

The MLAT may be administered to individuals or to groups. The basic Test Kit includes a Manual, Test Booklet, Practice Exercises Sheet, Examinee Answer Sheet, Hand Scoring Stencil, and Cassette Tape or CD. The cassette tape/CD includes instructions and stimuli for the entire test, and it controls the timing of the sections. Test administration takes approximately one hour and requires the use of a cassette recorder or CD player. After test administration is complete, scores are calculated by hand using the Hand Scoring Stencil.

7. How is the MLAT scored and what do the scores mean?

The score is tallied according to the number right per part. No points are deducted for errors or omissions. Scores will be interpreted differently from institution to institution; that is, each institution will set cut-off scores to determine, for example, which government agency personnel are eligible for language training.

The MLAT norms were established in 1958 by administering the MLAT to high school students, college students, military personnel, and foreign service officers. Separate norms are available for each group. Because aptitude is an inherent trait in human beings, the degree of aptitude in major populations groups does not change appreciably over time. Therefore, these norms continue to serve as a useful point of reference for evaluating an individual's test score. Although these norms exist, they should not substitute for the experience of the individual test user in relating test scores to success in language training.

8. For how long a period of time are MLAT scores valid?

With certain provisions taken into account, MLAT scores should be considered to be valid for at least 5 years. Language aptitude as measured by the MLAT is viewed as a stable trait, one not readily subject to change or improvement through courses or experience. Thus, when properly administered, the MLAT yields a score that theoretically is good for life, although certain circumstances might lead one to consider retesting. For example, if it is discovered that a person has a physical disability or learning disability that prevented them from understanding the test's instructions or from otherwise doing their best on the test, then the test could be re-administered with appropriate accommodations. In fact, it makes sense to allow people to retest if they wish to for whatever reason (e.g., a claim of extreme fatigue, test anxiety, worry, or some other distraction or adverse state of mind) so long as there is a waiting period of one year, since there is currently only one form of the test. In such retest cases, one could choose to average the scores, consider both scores, or consider only the most recent score. The Graduate Record Examinations

(GRE) test program, for example, retains scores for only 5 years and will report multiple scores earned during that period, with the advice that the school should look at all scores earned at separate administrations. For scores more than 5 years old, they leave the issue entirely to the university to decide and offer no policy guidance.

In contrast to this interpretation of "aptitude" testing, scores on "proficiency" measures such as the TOEFL, are valid only two years, because language proficiency can change substantially in that period of time or longer. Thus, language proficiency is viewed as a trait that is subject to improvement or decline, and it makes sense to put a limit on the amount of time that a test score will be considered a valid measure of a person's language proficiency. Even when the TOEFL is taken multiple times within a two-year period, ETS recommends that the most recent score be considered the most valid.

One other caveat regarding the interpretation of language aptitude scores that are more than a year old is to make reference to the appropriate set of norms in the manual. For example, if a college freshman produces an MLAT score that he or she obtained at age 14 as a high school freshman, then interpretation should not be based on the "College Freshman" norms, but rather on the 9th grade norms since the person was in the 9th grade at the time of testing.

9. Is it possible to prepare for the test?

The MLAT measures aptitude, not achievement or proficiency. Therefore it is not possible to prepare for the test. A high score on the MLAT indicates that an individual will likely do well in language training. Previous success at foreign language a foreign learning may also contribute to the probability of learning another language but it will not appreciably change one's score on the MLAT. An examinee who wishes to become familiar with the MLAT prior to taking it would do best to examine the sample items on this website.

10. What does the MLAT consist of?

The MLAT is comprised of five parts, each of which measures specific skills related to foreign language learning. The first part, *Number Learning*, requires examinees to learn a set of numbers through aural input and then discriminate different combinations of those numbers. The second part, *Phonetic Script*, asks examinees to learn a set of correspondences between speech sounds and phonetic symbols. In the third part, *Spelling Clues*, examinees must read words that are spelled as they are pronounced, rather than according to standard spelling conventions. They must then select from a list of words the one whose meaning is closest to the "disguised" word. The fourth part, *Words in Sentences*, measures examinees' awareness of grammatical structure. The examinees are given a key word in a sentence and are then asked to read a second sentence (or series of sentences) and select another word that functions in the same way as the key word. Finally, in the *Paired Associates* part, examinees must quickly learn a set of vocabulary words from another language and memorize their English meanings.

11. MLAT Sample Questions

Brief explanations of each of the five MLAT sections are provided here along with sample questions that illustrate the types of questions used in each section. Answers are also provided. Potential MLAT users may view these samples to see what the test looks like and to get an idea of how the MLAT tests specific cognitive abilities that have been shown to be associated with foreign language learning success. Potential examinees might also want to view these samples in order to familiarize themselves with the question formats before taking the test. Of course, the MLAT has its own sets of instructions, as well as sample questions and practice exercises.

If you want to see the sample questions and explanations for Part I, click [HERE](#).
If you want to see the sample questions and explanations for Part II, click [HERE](#).
If you want to see the sample questions and explanations for Part III, click [HERE](#).
If you want to see the sample questions and explanations for Part IV, click [HERE](#).
If you want to see the sample questions and explanations for Part V, click [HERE](#).

Click [HERE](#) to download the MLAT Sample Questions in PDF format.

11 .1 MLAT Sample Questions – Part I

PART I: NUMBER LEARNING

Part I of the MLAT has 43 possible points. This part of the MLAT tests auditory and memory abilities associated with sound-meaning relationships. In this part of the MLAT, you will learn the names of numbers in a new language. Subsequently, you will hear the names of numbers spoken aloud, and you will be asked to write down these numbers. For example, if you heard someone say the number “seventeen” in English, you would write down 1 7. But in this test, you will hear the numbers in a new language. Here’s how it will work:

You will hear some instructions read aloud. The speaker will then teach you some numbers (not the same as these samples, of course). The speaker will say something like:

[The red text represents the voice you will hear.]

Now I will teach you some numbers in the new language. First, we will learn some single-digit numbers:

“ba” is “one”

“baba” is “two”

“dee” is “three”

Now I will say the name of the number in the new language, and you write down the number you hear. Try to do so before I tell you the answer:

“ba” -- That was “one”

“dee” -- That was “three”

“baba” -- That was “two”

Now we will learn some two-digit numbers:

“tu” is “twenty”

“ti” is “thirty”

“tu-ba” is “twenty-one” in this language -- because “tu” is twenty and “ba” is one.

“ti-ba” is “thirty-one” -- because “ti” is thirty and “ba” is one.

Now let’s begin. Write down the number you hear.

- a. ti-ba [you have only about 5 seconds to write down your answer]*
- b. ti-dee*
- c. baba*
- d. tu-dee*

Click [HERE](#) to see the answers to the Sample Questions for MLAT Part I.

After you write down the numbers, you will be told how to fill in the appropriate spaces on the answer sheet. Although this example was fairly simple, on the actual test you will have to learn one-, two-, and three-digit numbers and combinations.

11.2 MLAT Sample Questions – Part II

PART II: PHONETIC SCRIPT

Part II of the MLAT is a test of your ability to learn a system for writing English sounds phonetically. There are 30 possible points in this section. First you will learn phonetic symbols for some common English sounds. For each question, you will see a set of four separate syllables. Each syllable is spelled phonetically. A speaker will model the sounds for you by pronouncing each of the four syllables in a set. Then the speaker will model the sounds in the next set.

After the speaker models the sounds in five sets, you will be asked to look back at the first set. The speaker will go through the groups again, but this time the speaker will say only one of the 4 syllables in a set. Your task is to select the syllable that has a phonetic spelling that matches the syllable you heard.

For example, you would look at the first five sets. They would look something like this:

1. bot but bok buk
2. bok buk bov bof
3. geet gut beet but
4. beek beev but buv
5. geeb geet buf but

[Remember, the red text represents the voice of the speaker that you will hear]

The speaker will then pronounce each of the four syllables in each of the five sets. You follow along:

1. *“bot” “but”* *“bok” “buk”*
2. *“bok” “buk”* *“bov” “bof”*
3. *“geet” “gut”* *“beet” “but”*
4. *“beek” “beev”* *“but” “buv”*
5. *“geeb” “geet”* *“buf” “but”*

Then the speaker will go back to number 1 and pronounce just one syllable from the set of four. So, you might hear:

1. *“buk”*

During the actual test, you must indicate which syllable you heard by darkening the corresponding space on the computer answer sheet. Then you hear the next question:

2. *"bok"*

Choose your response from set 2. Then listen to question 3:

3. *"gut"*

Choose your response from set 3. Then listen to question 4:

4. *"beev"*

Choose your response from set 4. Then listen to question 5:

5. *"geeb"*

Choose your response from set 5.

After that, new phonetic symbols are introduced in the next five sets of four syllables. You respond to those questions, and then you are given a third and final set. Some of the symbols look like normal English spelling, and some do not. Although a few of the syllables may sound like English words, most of the syllables are nonsense syllables that just happen to contain English sounds.

11.3 MLAT Sample Questions – Part III

PART III: SPELLING CUES

Part III of the MLAT has 50 questions. This part of the MLAT requires the ability to associate sounds with symbols and depends somewhat on knowledge of English vocabulary. It is also somewhat speeded, and therefore, it is much more challenging than the following exercise, which consists of only 4 practice question. Nonetheless, trying these sample questions will give you a good idea of what Part III is like.

Each question below has a group of words. The word at the top of the group is not spelled in the usual way. Instead, it is spelled approximately as it is pronounced. Your task is to recognize the disguised word from the spelling. In order to show that you recognize the disguised word, look for one of the five words beneath it that corresponds **most closely in meaning** to the disguised word. When you find this word or phrase, write down the letter that corresponds to your choice. Try all four samples; then click below to check your answers.

NOW GO RIGHT AHEAD WITH THESE SAMPLE QUESTIONS. WORK RAPIDLY!

1. kloz
 - A. attire
 - B. nearby
 - C. stick
 - D. giant
 - E. relatives

2. restrnt
 - A. food
 - B. self-control
 - C. sleep
 - D. space explorer
 - E. drug

3. prezns
 - A. kings
 - B. explanations
 - C. dates
 - D. gifts
 - E. forecasts

4. grbj
 - A. car port
 - B. seize
 - C. boat
 - D. boast
 - E. waste

Click [HERE](#) to see the answers to the Sample Questions for MLAT Part III.

11.4 MLAT Sample Questions – Part IV

PART IV: WORDS IN SENTENCES

There are 45 questions in MLAT Part IV. The following exercise consists of only 4 practice questions. The MLAT questions test recognition, analogy, and understanding of a far greater range of syntactic structures than the 4 sample questions shown here.

In each of the following questions, we will call the first sentence the *key* sentence. One word in the *key* sentence will be underlined and printed in capital letters. Your task is to select the letter of the word in the second sentence that plays the same role in that sentence as the underlined word in the key sentence.

Look at the following sample question:

Sample: JOHN took a long walk in the woods.

Children in blue jeans were singing and dancing in the park.
A B C D E

You would select "A." because the key sentence is about "John" and the second sentence is about "children."

NOW GO RIGHT AHEAD WITH THESE SAMPLE QUESTIONS.

Write down your answers so that you can check them when you are finished.

1. MARY is happy.

From the look on your face, I can tell that you must have had a bad day.
A B C D E

2. We wanted to go out, BUT we were too tired.

Because of our extensive training, we were confident when we were out sailing,
A B C
yet we were always aware of the potential dangers of being on the lake.
D E

3. John said THAT Jill liked chocolate.

In our class, that professor claimed that he knew that girl on the television
A B C D E
news show.

4. The officer gave me a TICKET!

When she went away to college, the young man's daughter wrote him the most
A B C
beautiful letter that he had ever received.
D E

Click [HERE](#) to see the answers to the Sample Questions for MLAT Part IV.

11.5 MLAT Sample Questions – Part V

PART V. PAIRED ASSOCIATES

Part V of the MLAT focuses on the rote memory aspect of learning foreign languages. On the actual test, you will have 2 minutes to memorize 24 words. You will then do a practice exercise. You can look back at the vocabulary during this practice exercise, but you will not be permitted to look at the vocabulary or at your practice sheet while you are doing the Part V questions that follow the exercise. Your task here is to MEMORIZE the Maya-English vocabulary below. There are only six words to memorize on this practice test. Keep in mind that the vocabulary list on Part V of the MLAT will be 4 times longer than this sample. Take 40 seconds to memorize this vocabulary. Then click below to go to the questions. Do not look back at the vocabulary until you have finished responding to the sample questions.

Vocabulary

<u>Maya</u>	--	<u>English</u>
c?on		gun
si?		wood
k?ab		hand
kab		juice
bat		ax
pal		son

NOW GO RIGHT AHEAD WITH THESE SAMPLE QUESTIONS.

Write down your answers so that you can check them when you are finished.

- bat
 - animal
 - stick
 - jump
 - ax
 - stone
- kab
 - juice
 - cart
 - corn
 - tool
 - run
- c?on
 - story
 - gun
 - eat
 - mix
 - bird

4. k?ab
A. road
B. tree
C. yell
D. fish
E. hand
5. si?
A. look
B. yes
C. forgive
D. cook
E. wood
6. pal
A. chief
B. son
C. friend
D. gold
E. boat

Click [HERE](#) to see the answers to the Sample Questions for MLAT Part V.

11.6 Answers to MLAT Sample Questions

MLAT Part I, Number Learning

- a. thirty-one (31)
- b. thirty-three (33)
- c. two (2)
- d. twenty-three (23)

MLAT Part III, Spelling Cues

1. A **kloz** is a disguised spelling of **clothes**, which corresponds in meaning to **attire**
2. B **restrnt** is a disguised spelling of **restraint**, which corresponds in meaning to **self-control**
3. D **prezns** is a disguised spelling of **presents**, which corresponds in meaning to **gifts**
4. E **grbj** is a disguised spelling of **garbage**, which corresponds in meaning to **waste**

MLAT Part IV, Words in Sentences

1. C
2. D
3. C
4. D

MLAT Part V, Paired Associates

1. D
2. A
3. B
4. E
5. E
6. B

12. How do I obtain a copy of the MLAT?

You can visit [SLTI Store](#) to download the order forms. You can also download a print friendly version of the MLAT Order Form (used for fax or postal mail) by clicking [here](#) or an email friendly version by clicking [here](#). You can open the print friendly version with [Acrobat Reader](#). Print it out, complete the information requested, including the Organization or Student Qualifications Form, and mail it with a check, money order, or credit card information according to the instructions on the order form. You can open the email friendly version with Microsoft Word. Complete the order form, save the file, and email it as an attachment to CStansfield@2LTI.com.

VISA/MASTERCARD. To pay with your Visa or Mastercard, please download the print friendly version of the MLAT order form, if you prefer to fax or send your order by postal mail. Download the email friendly version of the MLAT order form if you prefer to email your order. Due to security concerns, please note that you will have to call SLTI with your credit card number and expiration date, if you email your order.

PAYPAL: You may pay with PayPal, which is an Internet bank. To pay for your order with PayPal, or to open a PayPal account, please visit [SLTI Store](#) and follow the instruction on the page.

Email CStansfield@2LTI.com, if you have any questions regarding payments and orders.

13. What test materials should I order?

Each examinee requires a test booklet, an answer sheet, and a practice exercises sheet. Administration of the test requires the test manual, cassette tape or CD, and hand-scoring stencil for scoring the answer sheet. The test kit contains everything necessary to administer the test to **five** people. Additional materials can be ordered separately. **Due to the nature of the product, ALL SALES ARE FINAL.**

Most psychologists administer the MLAT to only one person at a time. Thus, they usually purchase one test kit and one additional package of 20 answer sheets and 20 practice exercise sheets. That way, they have materials for the eventual testing of 25 people.

Classroom teachers and researchers normally administer the MLAT to groups of people. Thus, they usually order additional test booklets so as to permit group administration. For example, a teacher or researcher who will administer the test to four groups of 20 students will need one test kit, 20 reusable test booklets, four packages of 20 answer sheets, and four packages of 20 practice exercise sheets. If the test is to be administered simultaneously in different locations, then an additional test kit will be needed for each location.

14. Scannable answer sheet

Nearly all MLAT users use the non-scannable answer sheet that comes in the test kit. However, a scannable Scantron answer sheet is available to institutions with a Scantron scanner. The answer sheet is double-sided with identification fields on each side. It also contains spaces for examinee name, date of birth, date of test, and nine special codes fields that can be used to record other kinds of examinee

background data. These can be specified by the test administrator. If you wish to purchase scannable answer sheets for your Scantron scanner, please contact SLTI.

15. Computer-Based MLAT

SLTF has recently made available a computerized version of Carroll and Sapon's Modern Language Aptitude Test (CB-MLAT). The MLAT-CB is recommended for high volume users because it is scored by the software and the results can be viewed instantly. For more information on the [computer-based MLAT, click here](#).

16. References and Resources

More information about the MLAT, and about Language Aptitude Tests in general, can be found by clicking here: [References and Resources](#).