

What Is CAT-3?

Before 2008, CAT-3 was the most impressive commercially available series of achievement tests in Canada. The test specifications were drawn up in view of current Canadian curricula. The tests offer assessments in reading, language, writing, spelling and mathematics in a modular and flexible format. The Basic Battery can be comfortably administered within one morning of class time. Even more in-depth assessments of students' strengths and needs are provided through the Supplemental Tests. Constructed-response formats are provided in the Writing and Mathematics assessments. CAT-3 reports include profiles of students' strengths and needs as well as norm-referenced information based on a representative Canadian sample of about 3600 students per grade. Group reports are also available at the class, school and district levels.

What Is CTCS?

The *Canadian Test of Cognitive Skills* (CTCS) is a reliable academic aptitude test that measures the cognitive abilities important for scholastic success in Grades 2–12. CTCS includes scores for three critical cognitive factors—verbal, non-verbal and memory (CTCS is the only major academic aptitude test in Canada that measures memory).

How Does CAT-3 Help, Parents and Students?

PARENTS

CAT results help parents by providing them with an independent measure of achievement to compare with their own assessments.

CAT provides certain kinds of information. Reading, mathematics, and language are areas of high priority for most people, but they are not the only important areas of academic achievement. As well as academic achievement, there are other areas of development such as character, artistic expression, sports and life skills, to which parents give differing priorities.

Careful examination of CAT results, particularly over time, helps parents understand two important things. They gain a better understanding of the problems which are worth worrying about. Secondly, they acquire a basis for setting reasonable academic goals for their children.

There is no simple way to decide what is a problem and whether parents should do something about it. Some students achieve very consistent scores on all tests, with parents agreeing they are strong, weak or average students. Others show marked variations. In such cases, some parents like to encourage and build on strengths; others focus on correcting the weaknesses.

It is sensible to understand both the actual level of achievement and the reasons why it may be lower than expected. The reasons may be simple (for example, poor hearing or sight) or complex (a combination of low aptitude, a physical disability and an emotional problem). Fortunately, the best treatment is often the same: patient, step-by-step instruction.

As young people move through adolescence, they and their parents consider their goals and expectations for the future. Test results are one part of the information helpful in making informed decisions.

STUDENTS

CAT helps students by giving them an independent picture of their level of achievement in the basic skills.

Young people often have a good understanding of themselves, their strengths and limitations. However, they also have blind spots. Some do not recognize abilities they have; others believe they are doing better than they really are.

How Do You Prepare Your Child to Write CAT-3?

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Parents can become involved in preparing the student for taking tests. The following are some suggestions:

- Make sure the student listens carefully and understands all verbal directions given. The student must learn to ask questions to clarify directions when necessary.
- Assist the student to become aware of time limits when completing tasks. Self-pacing will ensure the student completes the test in the time allotted.
- Ensure the student gets a good night's rest and eats breakfast on the morning of the test day.
- Encourage and motivate the student to perform to the best of his/her ability.

WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO?

- Relax and get a good night's sleep the night before the test.
- Ask questions for clarification if the directions are unclear.
- Eliminate alternative answers when guessing. This strategy may increase the possibility of an informed guess.
- Use scrap paper for making calculations or graphs when problem solving. This may assist with accuracy.
- Pace oneself throughout the testing session. Bring a watch into the testing session. Once the student has completed half the questions, looking at the watch will help to ensure he/she is on track.
- Double-check answers at the end of the testing session, if time permits. Accuracy may be improved by reviewing the responses.

Features and Benefits of CAT 3

CAT-3 specifications were developed after careful consideration of the four major Canadian curricula—those for Western Canada and the Territories, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

CAT-3 materials are easy to read while having a contemporary and attractive appearance. The format was finalized after much consultation with teachers, graphic artists and publishing experts. The content of **CAT-3** was designed to reflect Canadian society and values. This is clearly seen in the theme-based Reading/Language tests. The themes and content reflect the cultural, ethnic, geographical and occupational diversity of modern Canadian society.

CAT-3 offers assessments in a modular and flexible format. The Basic Battery consists of a Reading/Language test that integrates comprehension, vocabulary and language questions and a Mathematics test that includes questions from all strands as defined by each province. This Basic Battery can be comfortably administered within one morning of class time. Even more in-depth assessments of students' strengths and needs are provided through the Supplemental Tests: Word Analysis, Vocabulary, Spelling, Language/Writing Conventions and Computation and Numerical Estimation.

For Grades 2 and 3, **CAT-3** spelling tests are administered in the constructed response format—students print the words that are dictated by the teacher. For Grades 4 through 6, spelling tests can be administered using either the constructed-response or the multiple-choice format.

Writing assessments are available for Grades 2 through 12. These writing assessments include narrative, informational, persuasive and letter prompts. A selection of up to six prompts is available at each grade.

Open-ended math assessments are available for Grades 1 through 9. The three or four tasks per grade assess problem solving and communication skills. Students' responses to writing and math tasks can be scored locally or through the publisher.

CAT-3 reports include easy-to-read profiles of students' strengths and needs as well as norm-referenced information. Group reports are also available at the class, school and district levels. The report for parents further facilitates communication between the school and home.

CAT-3 was administered to over 44 000 students across Canada in Spring 2000. This allows student performance to be compared to the performances of same-grade students across Canada. The norming included students from grades 1 through 12, from every province, from rural and urban areas and from public, private and native schools, ensuring a representative Canadian sample.

Testing Time

	Level 11	Level 12	Level 13	Levels 14-18	Levels 19/20
	#min	#min	#min	#min	#min
BASIC BATTERY					
Reading/Language Part 1 and Part 2	25 + 25	40 + 35	30 + 35	35 + 35	40 + 30
Mathematics	35	40	45	40	40
SUPPLEMENTAL TESTS					
Word Analysis	20	15	15	--	--
Vocabulary	20	20	15	15	15
Spelling	--	--	--	15	15
Language/Writing Conventions	--	15	15	20	20
Computation	15	20	25	25	25
CONSTRUCTED-RESPONSE					
Dictation	--	10	10	10	--
Mathematics	10/task	10/task	10/task	10/task	--
Writing	--	20/task	20/task	30/task	30/task

Grade Level – CAT-3 Level – CTCS Level Chart

When students write both **CAT-3** and the Canadian Test of Cognitive Skills, CTC Scoring Service can provide Predicted Achievement Scores. These scores identify students whose achievement levels are lower (or higher) than would be expected given their cognitive skill levels. Predicted Achievement reports are especially useful in identifying students who are underachieving.

Grade Level	CAT-3 Level		CTCS Level
	Fall	Spring	
1	--	11	--
2	11	12	1
3	12	13	1
4	13	14	2
5	14	15	2
6	15	16	3
7	16	17	3
8	17	18	4
9	18	19	4
10	19	19	5
11	19	20	5
12	20	20	5
postsecondary	20	20	5

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For further information regarding CAT-3 tests, go to their website below:

<http://www.canadiantestcentre.com/Parents/InformationForParents.asp>