



How to use the Assessment Tool Starting Points options

This document informs you about the new Starting Points options inside the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool (Assessment Tool) and guides you how best to use them with your diverse learners.

What are the Starting Points options?

The Starting Points options are online, adaptive assessments designed for learners who are at or below koru/step one of the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy.

Starting Points options are designed for use in a supported, one-to-one situation, ideally using a tablet. They are intended to be accessible for learners with limited language, reading, and computer skills. More confident learners can also complete the assessments independently on a tablet, PC, or laptop. A key feature of the Starting Points options is that the learners listen and respond to spoken language. In a group situation, learners may need to use headphones so as not to disturb others.

There are two Starting Points options:

- › Starting Points Listening and
- › Starting Points Reading.

The two options have different audiences.

Who are the options for?

Both Starting Points options are designed for learners who are at or below koru/step one of the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy.

- › **Starting Points Listening** is suitable only for beginning English language learners (ESOL), particularly those new to Aotearoa/New Zealand. It assesses a learner's ability to understand basic, everyday words in spoken English. The main focus is listening.
- › **Starting Points Reading** is suitable for learners who are at foundation stages of learning to read. These include both English language learners (ESOL) and learners who have grown up in Aotearoa/New Zealand and have English as their first language. Some of these learners are likely to have reading and/or other learning difficulties. This option is based on the Starting Points Assessment Guide, and focuses on reading.

How are they used?

Table 1 overleaf compares the two Starting Points options, highlighting differences and similarities.

Starting Points Listening

Starting Points Listening assesses a learner's ability to understand basic, everyday words of spoken English. It is therefore only suitable for learners who are at very early to early stages of learning English. A learner's score on *Starting Points Listening* is likely to provide an indication of their readiness to engage with *Starting Points Reading*.

Starting Points Reading

Starting Points Reading provides information about a learner's level of ability in the foundational skills for learning to read. These include the 'building blocks' of reading and writing¹:

- › phonological awareness
- › letter-sound relationships
- › vocabulary².

Phonological awareness is a vital first step in 'cracking the code' of written language. Because it is about hearing the sounds of the language rather than reading them, it is usually assessed in a face-to-face situation. However, the audio-based format developed specifically for *Starting Points Reading* allows aspects of phonological awareness to be assessed online.

Information from *Starting Points: Reading* may provide educators with an indication of areas in which further diagnostic or specialised testing might be appropriate, for example to support learners with reading difficulties.

To complete *Starting Points Reading*, a learner must understand a range of spoken and written English, including basic questions and directions. Therefore, this option is not suitable for ESOL learners who are at very early stages of learning English.

Starting Points Reading covers the range from foundational skills to koru/step 2+ on the Learning Progressions for reading. At koru/steps 1 and 2+, the focus changes to reading vocabulary and comprehension. A score at step 2+ indicates that a learner may be ready to transition to the mainstream reading option in the Assessment Tool.

Initial and progress assessments

Figures 1 and 2 outline suggested pathways through the Starting Points (SP) options and on to the main Assessment Tool (AT). Figure 1 shows pathways for Starting Points ESOL learners. Figure 2 shows pathways for Starting Points learners who have English as their first language.

The main difference between the two pathways is the use of *Starting Points Listening* for ESOL learners (see Figure 1). A learner's score on this assessment will provide one indication of their readiness to engage with *Starting Points Reading*. For example, learners who achieve up to mid range on *Starting Points Listening* are unlikely to have the level of vocabulary required to engage meaningfully with *Starting Points Reading*. For these learners, a progress assessment on *Starting Points Listening* would be appropriate. Learners who achieve highly on *Starting Points Listening*, however, may be ready to engage with *Starting Points Reading*. For these learners, *Starting Points Reading* would be a suitable progress assessment.

For non-ESOL Starting Points learners, the combination of *Starting Points Reading* and the Assessment Tool Vocabulary option may provide useful information to support teaching and learning for learners with reading difficulties³.

¹ TEC (2008). *Starting points: Supporting the learning progressions for adult literacy*. Wellington: Author.

² In *Starting Points Reading* the focus is first on **sight vocabulary** (at Starting Points levels) and then on **reading vocabulary** (at koru/steps 1-2+). **Receptive vocabulary** is assessed in *Starting Points: Listening* and the *Vocabulary* option of the main Assessment Tool.

³ See Dymock, S., & Nicholson, T. (2012). *Dyslexia decoded: What it is, what it isn't, and what you can do about it*. Auckland: Dunmore Publishing Ltd.

Table 1: Comparing the Starting Points options⁴

	Starting Points Listening	Starting Points Reading
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English language learners (ESOL) at very early to early stages of learning English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners with English as a first language, who are at foundation stages of learning to read English language learners (ESOL). NB - Suitable for learners with at least basic understanding of spoken English
Strand	Listen with Understanding	Read with Understanding
Learning Progressions	Vocabulary	Decoding; Vocabulary; Comprehension
Learning Progressions koru/steps	Starting Points – koru/step 1	Starting Points – koru/step 2+
Format	Online, adaptive	Online, adaptive
Duration	30 items	30 items

⁴ Based on the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy. See <http://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/resources/354426> for further information.

Figure 1: Assessment Tool (AT) Pathways for ESOL Starting Points Learners

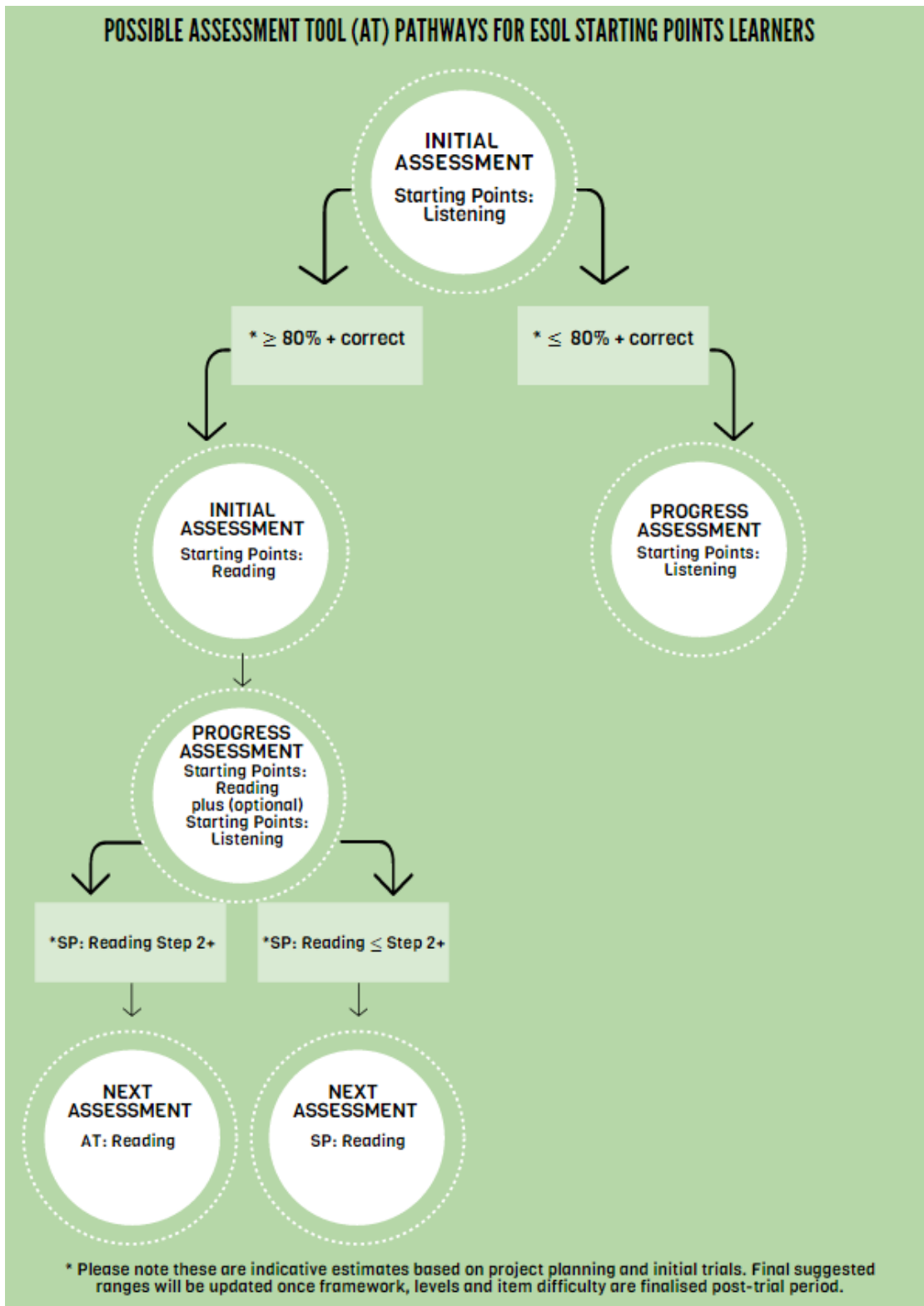
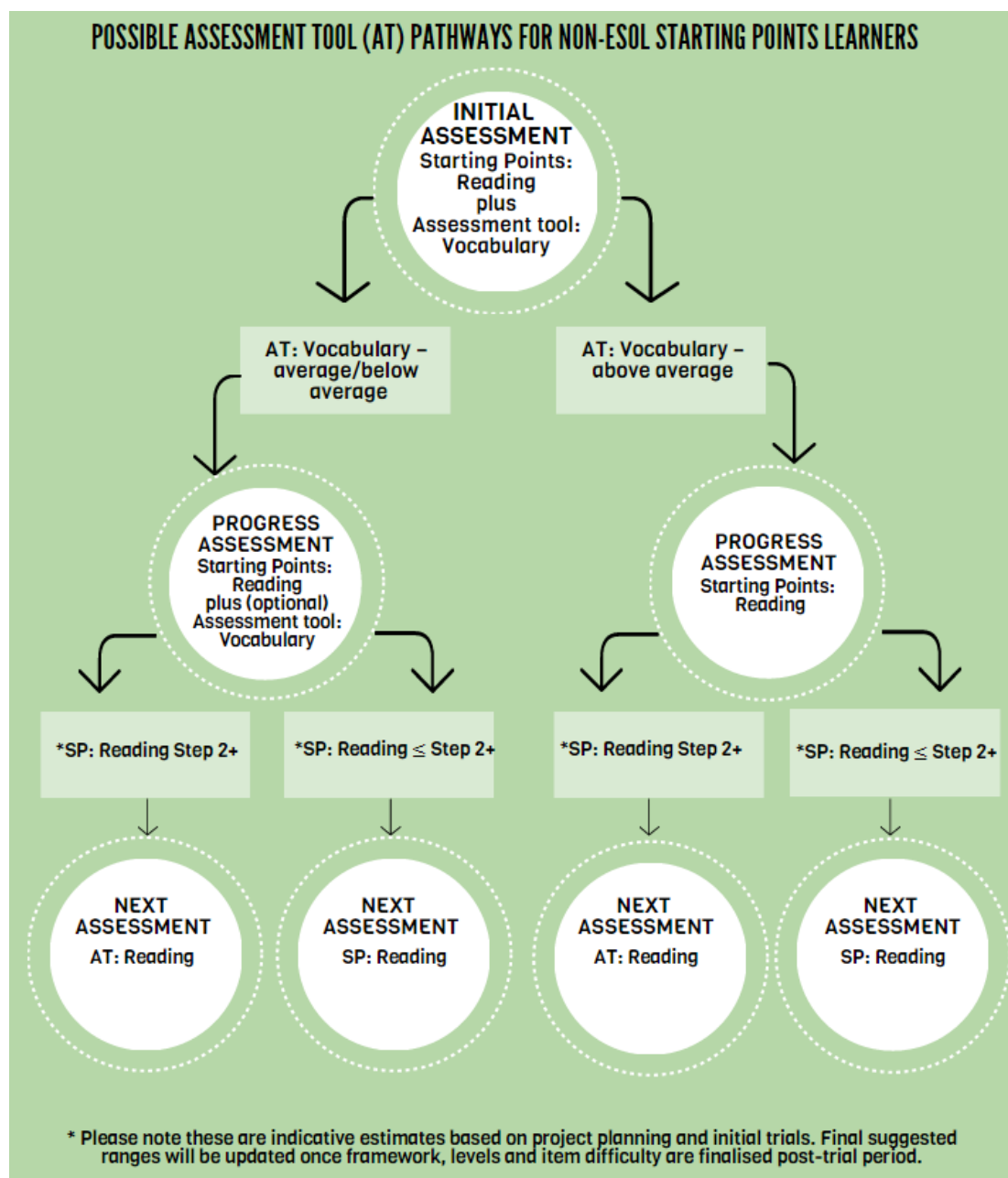


Figure 2: Assessment Tool (AT) Pathways for non-ESOL Starting Points Learners



Key:

AT = Main Assessment Tool options

SP = Starting Points options