



Parent Guide to Accessing the Practice and Training Tests Site

Introduction

This document provides a brief explanation of how to access the student Practice and Training Test Site at home using either the secure browser or a supported Mozilla Firefox browser. Information on which browser to use is provided, as well as download and installation instructions.

About the Practice and Training Test Site

The student Practice and Training Test Site provides opportunities for students and guest users to become familiar with the online testing environment before taking an actual online assessment. The practice test environment looks and feels like the regular online testing environment. The practice and training tests are not intended to be used as a predictor of success on the DCAS.

Practice Tests

Practice tests are a snapshot of the assessed content standards; not all standards that are assessed on the DCAS are represented in a practice test. Practice tests exist for the following grades and subjects:

- Grades 3–10 Reading and Mathematics
- Grades 4 and 7 Social Studies
- Grades 5, 8 and 10 Science
- End-of-Course assessments

Training Tests

Students may select a Training Test to see examples of different item types administered. The following Training Tests are available:

- Grades 2–3 Training
- Grades 4–5 Training
- Grades 6–8 Training
- Grades 9–12 Training

Student Test Settings

Students who have specific online test accommodations, such as a larger print size, alternate background color (blue or yellow), or Text-to-Speech (TTS) can also use these accommodations on the Practice and Training Test site.

- Students who have any of the above accommodations identified in the DCAS system can simply log into the Practice and Training Test Site using their first name and SSID.
- During the login process, guest users can select a different background color in the color choices drop-down list. The available options are blue and yellow.
- Guest users and students who do not have a larger print size accommodation can use the [Zoom In] and [Zoom Out] buttons on the tests to explore the print sizes available.
- Guest users who want to practice using Text-to-Speech must use the secure browser and log into a guest session (see below).

Accessing Text-to-Speech

The text-to-speech (TTS) functionality **is available only when using the secure browser**. Thus, students who have a TTS accommodation or guest users should use the secure browser to become familiar with TTS in the online testing environment.

- To access TTS, guest users must log into a guest session.
- Students with a TTS accommodation may log into either a proctored session or a guest session.
- Students who do not have the TTS accommodation but want to try it must log into a guest session.

Accessing the Practice and Training Test Site

As stated earlier, either a supported Firefox browser or the secure browser can be used to access the Practice and Training Test Site.

Mozilla Firefox:

1. Open the Firefox browser and navigate to the DCAS portal (<http://de.portal.airast.org>).
2. Click the [**Students and Families**] card.
3. Click the [**Practice and Training Tests**] card.

Secure Browser (enables use of Text-to-Speech accommodation):

1. Open the Secure Browser.
2. Click the link for the Practice and Training Test Site. The login page will load.

About Mozilla Firefox

Anyone can download and install Firefox from the following website: <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox>. The website automatically recognizes your computer's operating system, and will prompt you to download the most recent Firefox browser.

Supported Firefox Versions (as of May 2012)

This table shows the supported operating systems and corresponding Firefox versions. By the beginning of the school year, the "upper limit" for supported Firefox browsers will change.

Operating System	OS Version	Supported Browsers
Windows	2000, XP, Vista, 7 Windows Server 2003, 2008	Firefox 3.6–10.0 Windows Secure Browser
Mac OS X	10.4	Firefox 3.6 Mac Secure Browser for 10.4
	10.5–10.7	Firefox 3.6–10.0 Mac Secure Browser for 10.5–10.7
Linux	Fedora 6 (K12LTSP 4.2+) Ubuntu 9 and 10	Firefox 3.6–10.0 Linux Secure Browser

Installing a Supported Firefox Browser

In 2011, Mozilla changed their release process for Firefox versions, and now releases updated browsers every six weeks. As a result, AIR strives to quickly and diligently test these new versions against the online testing system before “approving” these new versions for use with the Practice and Training Test Site. While almost any Firefox browser can be used with the Practice and Training Test Site, newer versions **may** cause problems. AIR allows new Firefox versions to be used, but displays a pop-up warning that you must acknowledge before you can log in to the Practice and Training Test Site.

If you want to install an earlier version of Firefox, Mozilla has a website that allows users to download previous versions of Firefox: <http://releases.mozilla.org/pub/mozilla.org/firefox/releases/>.

You can also change Firefox’s default settings to prevent it from updating to a new version automatically. This feature is located in the *Tools > Options > Advanced* menu. Click the “Update” tab to modify your settings as desired.

About the Secure Browser

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) develops the secure browser that students must use for online testing. All schools must install the secure browser on computers that students use for testing.

AIR updates the secure browser each year to allow enhancements to be made. As a result, a new secure browser must be downloaded and installed each year.



Using the secure browser to connect to the Practice and Training Site requires that all other applications be closed (e.g., Microsoft Word, Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc.). Otherwise, the student will not be able to log into a practice test.

The secure browser is available from the DCAS portal (<http://de.portal.airast.org>), and anyone may download and install it. As with most software, the correct version must be installed on your computer.

- If you have a **Windows** machine, then the Windows secure browser must be installed. This secure browser is available for Windows 2000, XP, Vista, and 7.
- If you have a **Mac** computer, then the correct Mac secure browser must be installed.
 - For the 2012–2013 school year, two Mac browsers will be available:
 - **10.4–10.6:** This secure browser is for computers with 10.4 (Tiger), 10.5 (Leopard), or 10.6 (Snow Leopard).
 - **10.7 (Lion):** This secure browser is for computers with with 10.7 installed.
 - *Note about 10.8 (Mountain Lion):* As the release date for Mountain Lion this summer, a secure browser for this system *will not be available* for the 2012–2013 school year.
- If you have a Linux computer, then download and install the secure browser for Linux.

Downloading and Installing the Secure Browser

Instructions for downloading and installing the secure browser are available on the DCAS portal, on the Secure Browsers page (<http://de.portal.airast.org/browsers/default.html>). You can download the PDF instructions for each operating system and print it out to have as a handy reference, or simply refer to the on-screen instructions.

To download the appropriate secure browser onto your home computer:

1. Click the tab with the name of the operating system (Windows, Mac OS X (10.4), Mac OS X (10.5–10.7), or Linux).
2. Click the [**Download Browser**] link.
3. Depending on your operating system, you will be prompted to either “Run” or “Save” the file. Follow the on-screen instructions on the Secure Browsers page to complete the download and installation process.
4. When the secure browser has been installed, you will see the secure browser icon on the desktop. As with any other software program, you can double-click on the icon to launch it.