



Can Do Descriptors

Early Years

The Early Years Can Do Descriptors

The Early Years Can Do Descriptors provide examples of what dual language learners (DLLs) **can do** at various stages of language development. They can help educators interpret results from WIDA language development assessments and identify ways to design opportunities for DLLs' meaningful participation in learning environments where the language of interaction is English.

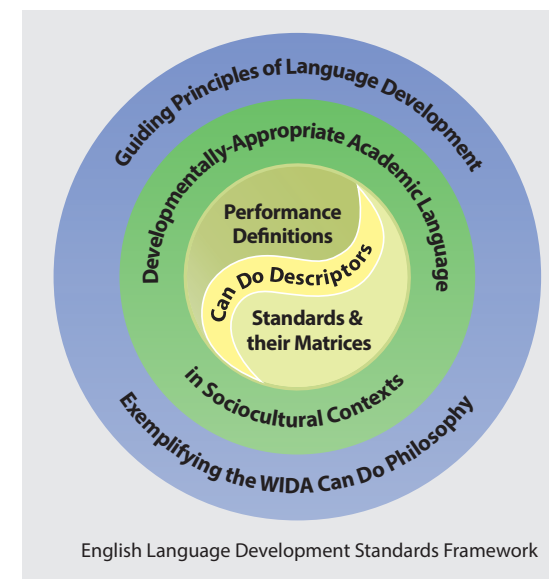
The Early Years Can Do Descriptors are one of the components of the WIDA Standards Framework (shown at right). All the components in the framework work together to support DLLs and their educators in supporting DLLs' language development. Therefore, we encourage practitioners and educators to use the Early Years Can Do Descriptors in conjunction with the other components of the framework. For more information on the WIDA Standards Framework, visit www.wida.us

Organization of the Early Years Can Do Descriptors

The Early Years Can Do Descriptors are organized by age clusters 2.5–3.5, 3.5–4.5, and 4.5–5.5 that correspond to those in the WIDA Early English Language Development Standards. Within each age cluster, there are example descriptors across WIDA's three levels of English language development in Early Years (Entering, Developing, and Bridging). In each language level, there are sample descriptors for receptive and expressive language domains.

The Early Years Can Do Descriptors provide examples of language use for three specific purposes: **Express Self**, **Recount**, and **Inquire**. These purposes are referred to as **Key Uses** and were identified based on reviews of literature, empirical research on language use in preschool settings, and a language analysis of early childhood standards.

The table below defines each Key Use and provides examples of activities in which children may use this language.



Key Uses of Language	Definitions	Example Activities
Express Self	Sharing feelings, needs and wants, choices and preferences Sharing about self and child's own individuality Planning activities with others and assigning roles Negotiating with others, including or inviting others to join in activities	Daily routines Conflict resolution Interactive games Persuading others
Recount	Sharing past events and experiences Retelling stories Sharing discoveries Describing things, routines, pictures or events	Storytelling Read aloud Show and tell
Inquire	Asking and answering questions Stating predictions and hypotheses Explaining observations, events or phenomena Discussing topics with others	Science experiments Problem-solving Directions and instructions Presentations

When working with Key Uses, it is important to keep in mind the following:

1. The Key Uses of language used in the Early Years Can Do Descriptors and the example activities described above are not exhaustive; they are just examples of the way children process and express language.
2. Children may engage in the Key Uses or activities described in the table during imaginative play, self-talk and interactions with others.
3. The three Key Uses are distinct, but they work in tandem and often overlap. For example, when children are engaged in resolving a conflict with another child (Key Use: Express Self), they may need to recount what happened first (Key Use: Recount). Likewise, when children wonder about the world (Key Use: Inquire) to explore how things are made or why things happen, they also may share their discoveries and describe objects or observations (Key Use: Recount).
4. The purpose for separating the Key Uses is to draw the attention to the various purposes for which a child may use language and not to privilege one purpose over the other. Language use should be modeled in intentional ways and across a variety of language uses.
5. While the Key Uses focus on what DLLs can do in English at the various levels of English language development, it is important to recognize that DLLs draw on multiple languages to communicate. Therefore, the Key Uses may be achieved through the use of all languages that are part of the linguistic repertoire of children.
6. The Key Uses in Early Years serve as precursors to Key Uses in K-12: Recount, Explain, Argue, and Discuss. As children acquire more complex language and use it to negotiate more complex content, the Early Years Key Uses (Express Self, Recount, and Inquire) serve as the building blocks of the K–12 Key Uses (Recount, Explain, Argue and Discuss). Their relation is not one to one, but each Key Use in Early Years supports the development of all of the K–12 Key Uses.

The table below describes the various audiences and potential uses of the Early Years Can Do Descriptors.

Audiences	Potential Uses
Adults who work with dual language learners in early care and education centers (<i>e.g., practitioners, teachers, teacher assistants, and other specialists</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret results from WIDA English language development observations and assessments • Collaborate and engage in conversations about ways to support the language development of young DLLs • Support the meaningful participation of young DLLs in English learning environments
Early Childhood Program Administrators (<i>e.g., community agency administrators and ECE setting administrators</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support communication with practitioners, families and other stakeholders • Inform the planning, design and development of systems that support the language development of DLLs • Advocate for appropriate language support for DLLs

Stakeholders are encouraged to use the Can Do Descriptors beyond the audiences and purposes identified above to advocate for equitable learning experiences for dual language learners.

Age: 2.5-3.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding nonverbally and/or with gestures to simple prompts • Finding familiar objects named orally • Responding to yes/no questions about familiar choices 	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following brief oral directions to meet routine social expectations • Responding nonverbally to familiar choice questions about likes and dislikes • Pointing to familiar pictures or objects based on oral descriptions 	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role playing in response to familiar songs, stories, and poems • Following oral directions related to imaginative play • Matching personal choices to those of others based on oral prompts
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to greetings in home language or isolated English words • Repeating familiar words in songs and stories • Stating preferences through words and gestures 	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeating words or everyday expressions related to familiar activities • Describing objects in imaginative play using short phrases (<i>e.g., noises associated with forms of transportation</i>) • Expressing feelings using familiar language 	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singing favorite short songs or rhymes to self • Inviting others to join in an activity using familiar language • Interacting with others using short phrases related to objects of play

Age: 2.5-3.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicating preferences based on words and simple questions • Pointing to pictures and objects based on simple prompts • Finding objects in familiar routines based on adult requests 	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following familiar directions to recreate patterns or designs • Sorting objects or pictures from familiar events based on oral prompts • Identifying pictures or events described in simple sentences. 	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguishing characteristics or attributes of objects or familiar events based on a series of simple sentences. • Sequencing pictures or illustrations from familiar stories • Organizing objects in response to one-step oral directions
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeating words in familiar routines • Naming needs and wants using words and short formulaic phrases • Sharing discoveries using gestures, nonverbal communication, and words 	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retelling situations using familiar language • Stating preferences using familiar phrases • Responding to yes/no questions about personal information 	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing familiar pictures of events using short sentences • Sharing personal information with others to make connections using familiar phrases • Explaining familiar activities or actions using short sentences

Age: 2.5-3.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to familiar oral prompts about new discoveries • Finding familiar objects of their interest based on peer prompts and yes/no questions • Choosing familiar activities from adult prompts 	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following inquiry prompts to make observations of the world around them • Identifying new discoveries based on inquiry prompts • Responding to questions about new events 	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying characteristics of objects to engage in problem solving based on adult prompts • Indicating curiosity based on teacher descriptions • Acting out what they know about the world based on adult prompts
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing curiosity about a new object using sounds, nonverbal communication, and gestures • Inviting others to participate in imaginative play using a combination of home language, gestures, and/or single English words • Naming familiar objects in the environment using single words 	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing observations during experiments based on adult modeling • Repeating names and properties of things children are curious about • Asking simple questions to engage in problem solving based on adult modeling 	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking questions in different situations based on adult modeling • Predicting consequences or actions during social interactions based on adult modeling • Explaining observations during play using familiar language

Age: 3.5-4.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pointing to objects and people based on adult modeling Acting out basic emotions from short statements Indicating preferences in response to adult's yes/no questions 	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to short prompts to help others Following directions to express an awareness of rules and routines Responding to peers or adult directions to resolve a conflict 	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in creative activities or movement based on two- step directions. Arranging items in response to questions from adults or peers Cooperating with others based on oral requests and directions
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to yes/no questions about personal preferences Indicating choices using non-verbal communication (pointing, physical movement) Repeating directions during familiar routines 	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking for help or offering help using a combination of formulaic phrases and some new phrases Sharing feelings, needs, and wants using short sentences Asking permission to participate in an activity using short sentences 	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-creating rules and brief scenarios to play cooperatively using original sentences Stating likes or dislikes and giving reasons based on adult models Persuading other to participate in activities based on adult models

Age: 3.5-4.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pointing to pictures based on prompts Following simple directions using non-verbal response in an adult-led activity or during play with peers Identifying familiar people in pictures based on simple statements 	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting out short parts of familiar stories read by an adult Sequencing familiar activities or events based on oral statements Responding to oral descriptions embedded in familiar activities or routines 	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following oral directions from peers or adults Making patterns based on oral detailed descriptions Distinguishing between personal events based on extended oral statements and/or questions
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naming family members and self from yes/no questions Repeating names of objects used in familiar settings Orally labeling familiar objects used in activities or events Identifying basic emotions using one-to-two words 	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing familiar events using short sentences Retelling personal experiences using a combination of formulaic phrases and some new phrases Explaining to a peer where to put things during clean up time using familiar language 	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing details about the recent event using a variety of original sentences Describing activities associated with science investigation based on adult models Explaining steps to a game or planned activity to a peer based on adult models

Age: 3.5-4.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorting objects from oral descriptions of their characteristics • Following one-to-two step oral instructions in an experiment • Sorting items by size, color, and/or shapes based on descriptions 	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following simple statements to participate in a discussion on a topic of interest • Drawing pictures in response to oral instructions • Finding pictures that match oral descriptions of an observation 	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying groups of objects for an experiment or project of interest based on oral detailed descriptions • Distinguishing between natural phenomena based on detailed descriptions • Following multiple oral instructions to engage in problem solving
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeating names and properties of things children are curious about • Identifying senses to explore objects using words and formulaic phrases • Responding to yes/no questions related to safety 	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing ideas of interest using short sentences • Sharing an observation or question about their wonderings using familiar language • Stating facts from observations based on adult modeling 	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking familiar questions about the features in the environment • Describing characteristics of objects found in natural world (e.g., “<i>Sharks live in salty water. They don’t live in this water because it’s not salty, it’s fresh.</i>”) • Retelling a sequence of an observation or an experiment using a variety of original sentences.

Age: 4.5-5.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to invitations to play from others • Finding objects or people from language related to self and others • Following one-step directions related to routines 	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to requests from others • Identifying information about self, others and home routines based on extended sentences • Responding to choice questions 	<p>Process language of Self-Expression by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following multiple two-to-three step directions related to routines • Responding to detailed questions about self • Indicating preferences of others from their descriptions
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicating feelings using words and longer formulaic phrases • Repeating familiar language of routines • Using nonverbal communication and words and short phrases in English and/or home language to play and work with others 	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stating needs or wants using short and some extended sentences • Sharing information about self using sentences that combine formulaic phrases with new words • Assigning roles to self and others using familiar language 	<p>Express Self by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stating likes/dislikes and giving reasons using adult models • Offering personal opinions using related sentences • Rephrasing roles and routines using a variety of sentences

Age: 4.5-5.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding familiar people and places named orally Pointing to pictures from familiar events based on simple statements Matching oral language to classroom and everyday objects 	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to familiar songs and poems through gestures and physical movement Identifying familiar sequence of event described or shared orally Sorting pictures or objects according to oral instructions 	<p>Process language of Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting out stories told by others Role playing familiar events described by others Finding objects from detailed oral directions
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Naming characters or places in familiar stories using words and longer formulaic phrases Repeating patterns orally during familiar activities Describing classroom and everyday objects using familiar words and expressions 	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retelling familiar stories using short and some expanded sentences Asking questions about familiar routines or events Describing situations or events using familiar language 	<p>Express Recount by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling original stories using related sentences Describing past events based on adult models Offering personal opinions using a variety of short and expanded sentences

Age: 4.5-5.5

Towards the end of the given level, dual language learners can:

	ELP Level 1 Entering	ELP Level 3 Developing	ELP Level 5 Bridging
RECEPTIVE	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding objects from oral statements to explore the natural world Identifying groups of objects for an experiment or project of interest based on simple questions or statements Following along as an adult describes natural phenomena by looking at the real objects 	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following statements to participate in a discussion on a topic of interest Making patterns from real objects or pictures based on oral descriptions Sorting pictures or objects to respond to hypothesis statements 	<p>Process language of Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a representation of their understanding of an idea read aloud or discussed Sequencing pictures to an experiment based on oral statements Responding to inquiry questions about observations
EXPRESSIVE	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using nonverbal communication and words and short phrases in English and/or home language to inquire about their environment Repeating names and properties of things they are curious about Answering yes/no questions to engage in problem solving 	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing an observation or question about their wonderings using related statements. Explaining cause and effect relationships to engage in problem solving using short and some expanded sentences Describing features in the environment based on adult models 	<p>Express Inquire by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking questions about the features in the environment Making predictions about what will happen in an experiment based on adult models Documenting characteristics of things found in the natural world using a variety of short and expanded sentences

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Please visit www.wida.us to view a full list of educators who participated on the development workshop, national experts who shared their expertise in the development process, and those who participated in the review of the Can Do descriptors.



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