

This module describes the Math-U-See curriculum's placement process. The module also includes the Class Placement Test Data form for recording scores and observations made during testing.

## Overview

The placement process provides teachers with the means to assess a student's capabilities in basic computation and to determine the best entry level for the student in the curriculum. Additionally, a baseline is established to support progress monitoring.

## How to Administer

The placement process should begin with the Placement Pretest. This starting point may seem unnecessary for every student, especially for those in upper elementary grades; however, careful observation of placement test-taking often reveals the specific foundational difficulties a student is having. A student should already meet the prerequisites for *Alpha* before taking the Placement Pretest.

### Prerequisites for Placement Pretest

Students must:

- » Demonstrate 1–1 correspondence
- » Demonstrate number recognition
- » Be able to count verbally zero to nine
- » Be able to write numerals zero to nine
- » Be ready for formal instruction

Students who do not demonstrate the *Alpha* prerequisites may be placed in the program's first level, entitled *Primer*. The *Primer* level is not recommended for students who do not demonstrate readiness for paper and pencil work. Also, *Primer* was not designed to include written assessment materials.

The Placement Pretest contains a few questions from each level, *Alpha* through *Zeta*. Once the student has missed two or more problems for any one level, the Placement Pretest should be stopped. The level-specific placement test for that level should then be administered.

## Placement Results

- » A score between 80% and 89% on the level-specific placement test indicates that the student has mastered the material contained in that level and should be placed in the next level.
- » A score between 0% and 79% on the level-specific placement test indicates the student has not yet mastered the material contained in that level and should be placed in that level.
- » If the student scores between 90% and 100% on the level-specific placement test, the placement test for the subsequent level should be administered.

## Delivery and Documentation

Individual testing is ideal, but testing can be done in a group setting if accompanied by careful observation. For planning purposes, be aware that there are word problems on the placement tests; it may be necessary for those problems to be read aloud to the student(s).

During testing, look for the level of understanding of the math problem shown. Unless specified by an IEP, students should not be provided with any assistive devices, such as calculators, manipulatives, or number lines. Do not help students with computation.

It is important during the testing to document thoroughly. Use the comments section of the Class Placement Test Data form to record your observations of each student. Note behaviors like finger counting, touch points, missing steps, and indicators of other issues. As the student progresses through the curriculum, these baseline observations will help to document improvement and mastery. A sample Class Placement Test Data sheet is provided on a subsequent page with representative scores and comments as a guide. A blank form is also provided for teacher use and is available as a fillable PDF in the online Professional Access.

## Fact Mastery

If a student scores into a level above *Alpha* conceptually but does not demonstrate fluency with addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division facts and does not have an IEP providing for accommodation, then this needs to be addressed.

The phrase, “Zip, Don’t Skip,” is a pacing term that describes spending time on areas students have not yet mastered and “zipping” through the concepts which students better grasp. In this manner, students build a strong mathematical foundation.

The Lesson Plan module contains suggestions for students who conceptually place into a higher level but need addition, subtraction, or multiplication strategies and practice to achieve mastery.

## Additional Suggestions for Middle and High School Students

Proper placement can make the difference between a student truly gaining understanding or continuing to struggle. Because instruction in the Math-U-See curriculum is organized topically, students can be placed at the appropriate ability level.

It is common for older students to make great leaps in the program once they gain a firm understanding of concepts, such as place value and math facts. If there is any doubt about the student’s mastery of these concepts, spend the appropriate amount of time necessary for them to be mastered. (See “Strengthening the Foundation in Strategies and Math Facts” in the Lesson Planning module.)

Having students gain confidence and success is critical. The more successes they have early and often in the program, the more they will want to engage, and the more they will feel confident in their abilities. Therefore, placing an older student according to conceptual understanding should be viewed as meeting the needs of a student and allowing additional opportunities for success. The competencies gained in the areas of numbers, operations, and algebraic reasoning—that are then applied to geometry, measurement, statistics, and data analysis—ensure that students have the strong foundation needed for success in higher education and adult life.