

# STAMP 4S Test Taker Guide

## What is Avant STAMP 4S?

Avant STAMP stands for *Standards-Based Measurement of Proficiency* and is a web-based test that assesses language proficiency. An Avant STAMP 4S test has four sections – Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, and the results of this test inform test takers and educators about learning progress and program effectiveness. Avant STAMP 4S test items are based on real-world, everyday situations. Avant STAMP 4S measures a test taker's language ability according to Benchmark Levels that are based on national standards. Test results will indicate the level of proficiency achieved for each section of the test.

## Preparing for the Avant STAMP 4S Assessment

Visit the [Technology Check](#) page to confirm your computer is configured properly and all technology preparation steps are complete before beginning testing. Take an Avant STAMP [sample test](#) to familiarize yourself with the layout of the test and the types of prompts that you can expect. It is also advisable to read the Avant STAMP 4S Benchmarks and Rubric Guide if you want information about the skills you need to demonstrate to achieve a certain test level.

## Rules for Taking an Avant STAMP 4S Test

The Avant STAMP 4S test must be taken in a proctored environment, with a proctor who is authorized by the organization sponsoring the test.

- No paper, pens, pencils, cell phones, etc. are allowed in the testing area
- No additional applications (e.g., Word, email, chat) or browser windows are allowed to be open during testing
- Avant graders review all written and spoken responses and any inappropriate responses (vulgar, violent, etc.) will not be scored and will be reported to your test administrator

## Logging in to Avant STAMP 4S

- Your teacher or proctor will provide the URL, Test Code and Password for the Avant STAMP 4S login page
- After entering the Test Code and Password you will see 2 buttons for starting a new test or continuing a test. After clicking on one of the buttons you will be asked to enter your Login Name
  - **Start New Test:** Click this button when starting a test for the first time. After clicking this button you will be asked to create a Login Name
  - **Continue Test:** Click this button to resume a test you have already started. You will be asked to re-enter the Login Name you entered when you started the test the first time
- Login Name must be between 1-25 characters on the login page. Login Name should be any combination of letters, numbers, or any of the following special characters: @ (at symbol); \_ (underscore); - (hyphen); . (period); , (comma); ' (single quote). Your teacher or proctor may have suggestions on what to enter in this field but please note that your Login Name cannot be the same as anyone else's in your testing group
- Be sure you remember how you entered your Login Name because if you need to resume you will need to use the same Login Name you started the test with previously.
- After you log in, the Student Profile screen will appear where you will need to enter your First Name, Last Name and Student ID. Follow directions from your teacher or proctor for entry into these fields

## Taking the Avant STAMP 4S Assessment

Your proctor will let you know what section of the test to start first. Reading and Writing sections are usually taken together (the Reading section is a prerequisite for the Writing section). Listening and Speaking sections are also usually taken together (the Listening section is a prerequisite for the Speaking section).

The test will provide helpful instructions at the beginning of each section. Please read the instructions carefully.

Responses to test questions are submitted using the NEXT button, located at the bottom right of the screen.

Unless directed otherwise, complete all sections of the test until the Test Complete message appears. If you get logged out of the test, you can log back in with the same credentials to continue where you left off.

## READING AND LISTENING SECTIONS

The Reading and Listening sections of the test are multiple choice and computer-adaptive, meaning that each new question is selected based on previous responses. Because Avant STAMP 4S is used to determine language proficiency for test takers who are at Novice, Intermediate and Advanced levels, the Reading and Listening sections start out with questions at various levels. If you are at the early stages of language learning, the test may challenge you, but don't be frustrated if you encounter a topic or words that are unfamiliar to you. Do your best, but keep in mind that an incorrect answer on an unfamiliar topic is okay and provides the system with valuable information needed for determining proficiency.

As your test progresses, you may see easier or more difficult questions based upon your earlier answers. Each test taker will follow a unique path as he/she moves through the test. You will see approximately 30 questions in each of the sections. The Reading section takes, on average, 35-40 minutes to complete and the Listening section averages 35-40 minutes. Either section may take longer for test takers who are getting many higher-level test items, which feature longer reading or listening passages. The speed of your Internet connection can also affect the length of the test.

*Here are some tips:*

- Read the question and answers before you attempt to read or listen to the passage (this will help guide your reading/listening and help you move through the test more quickly)
- Do not translate each word that you read or hear – translating each word is not reading or listening for comprehension and it will take more time that you can better use in later sections
- In the Listening section, you can listen to each recording two times
- If you're having trouble reading the text in the images on the test, you can enlarge your screen with the following key combinations:
  - On a Mac: Press the "Command" and "+" keys at the same time
  - On a Windows/PC: Press the "Control" and "+" keys at the same time

## WRITING AND SPEAKING SECTIONS

- These sections start with a sample item
  - Use the sample Writing item to practice keyboarding special characters you may need to use
  - Use the sample Speaking item to ensure that your microphone is working properly
  - Do not spend much time crafting answers to sample questions as they do not contribute to your final score
- Provide your response using the target language you are being tested in
- Write or record at your highest possible level
- Provide all detail requested in the question and enough detail to fully demonstrate your writing or speaking skills
- Stay on topic
- Pace yourself
  - Allow sufficient time for all three of your Writing/Speaking items
  - Complete responses for all items are needed to accurately determine your proficiency level
- In these sections, click **NEXT** to submit the response and move to the next screen
- After clicking **NEXT**, you will not be able to return to the question

## WRITING SECTION

The Writing section consists of one sample and three test questions.

- For some languages the test will include a character box where the appropriate symbols and accented letters are included and can be clicked. No additional action is required to set up a virtual keyboard for these languages.
- Other languages require that a virtual keyboard is loaded. A standard keyboard will be used to type characters corresponding with the virtual keyboard. (your teacher or test proctor can show you how to do this)
- To see which languages require loading a virtual keyboard visit the [Writing Input Guide](#). This guide also includes directions for loading the virtual keyboards

- The test will **AUTO-SAVE** test taker's writing every 10 seconds.
- When done with a test question, click **NEXT** to save the response and move to the next question or screen

## SPEAKING SECTION

The Speaking section consists of one sample and three test questions.

- Organize your thoughts before you start to record
- To record a response, click **Begin Recording**
- When done recording, wait two or three seconds, and then click **Stop Recording**
- After recording, click **Listen** to listen to your recording
- You can then do one of the following:
  - If you want to add to the recording, click the **+ sign**
  - If you want to delete the recording and start over, click on the **Trash can**
- Avoid long pauses when you are recording
  - Use the **Stop Recording** and **Begin Recording/+ Sign (Add to Recording)** buttons as needed
- When the recording is complete, click **NEXT** to save your response and move to the next test question or screen

## VERY IMPORTANT

For the Speaking Section, click **Listen** after recording to verify that the response was recorded properly.

- If the response is inaudible or of poor quality, **DO NOT CLICK NEXT**.
- You can try recording again, but should contact the test proctor or teacher if there are headset issues, or if a problem persists
- Never click **NEXT** to bypass the test item –if the problem cannot be resolved during the current testing session, click **STOP TEST** (and resume the test after the problem is resolved)
- If you see the **Begin Recording** button again after clicking **Stop Recording**, this is indicating no recording was captured

Following these procedures will prevent having a speaking response that cannot be graded.

## Completing the Avant STAMP 4S Assessment

- If you are not completing the test in one session, follow the instructions from your teacher or proctor about when to click Stop Test
- You have not completed Avant STAMP 4S until you see a screen that says "Test Complete."
- If you need to finish the test at another time, plan to do so within 14 days of starting the test (or within the timelines specified by your teacher or proctor).

## Resuming the Avant STAMP 4S Assessment

To resume a test, click Continue Test after entering the test code and password and re-enter your Login Name exactly as you did the first time. The test should resume at the point where you left off. Contact your test proctor or teacher for assistance if you experience difficulty resuming your test.

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