



Polly (text-to-speech) 2025 FAQs



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority



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Polly (text-to-speech) – Literacy and Numeracy co-requisite digital assessments –2025 Overview and Questions and answers

What's happening

Polly is a text-to-speech tool that comes with the digital assessment platform that students use to undertake their assessments.

Polly will be available for all students entered in the Writing (32405) and Numeracy (32406) assessments in 2025.

Text-to-speech supports students who have low vision, learning differences or reading difficulties by converting text into audio so they can listen to text in the assessment being read aloud. It may also support students who are aural learners.

The school can still provide students with a reader for support during the assessments as a backup in the event of any issues with the assistive technology, so the student feels confident completing the assessment.

Polly was available for previous English Literacy Writing (32405) and English Numeracy (32406) digital assessments.

If you would like your students to use Polly, you just have to:

- Let them know it's available
- Give them the [instructions to use Polly](#)
- Encourage them to practise using it before the assessments with past Writing or Numeracy assessments.
[Find past digital external assessments » NZQA](#) (access code 0000).
- For students that don't have a log in for past digital assessments you can access the credentials at the school's NZQA portal via the Access Copyright Past Exam content and Past Digital Exams link.
- Make sure they have headphones available for the assessment/s

When

Polly will be available for secondary school students and tertiary students participating in the Literacy and Numeracy corequisite digital assessment for Writing (32405) and Numeracy (32406) event one (19 - 30 May) and event two (1 - 12 September) in 2025.

Polly is not available for the Reading (32403) assessment while the Ministry of Education is investigating the suitability of using text-to-speech with the Reading assessment. However, a reader can be provided if the school considers the student is eligible for support from a reader for the Reading assessment. We are hoping to make Polly more widely available with more digital assessments in the future.

How Polly works

- Polly is available for any student to use.
- Polly will be off by default which means it won't display when any text in the assessment is highlighted.
- Students who want to use Polly can turn it on within the assessment.
- Polly can be accessed within the assessment by highlighting text and clicking on play to listen to the text being read aloud.

Headphones

Students who want to use Polly will need to use headphones if they are sitting in the main room where assessments are being held, rather than in separate accommodation.

Support for schools/kura

Further information, including FAQs is available on the NZQA website. NZQA website.

[Text-to-speech for co-requisite assessments - NZQA](#)

Things to do before the assessment

1. Make sure your students have headphones for the assessment. Students can use any headphones that are compatible with their device.
2. Encourage your students to practise using Polly using past Writing or Numeracy assessments.
3. Give your students the [instructions about using Polly](#).

On the day of the assessment

Make sure:

1. your students have headphones for the assessment.
2. know to put their hand up and ask the supervisor for help if they have any issues with Polly.
3. know how to turn Polly on and use it to listen to text being read aloud.
4. know that if they want to use the highlight and notes function during the assessment they will need to turn Polly off.
5. organise a reader or writer for the student if they need extra support.

Questions

If you have any questions about Polly please contact us.

[Contact NZQA](#)

Polly improvements – feedback from 2020-2023 trials

Feedback from the Polly trials between 2020 and 2023 has been used to design improvements to Polly.

These improvements include:

- a new voice that is preferred by students.
- a function to turn Polly on and off. Polly will be off by default.
- text will now be highlighted as Polly reads it.
- the speed that Polly reads at.

The Polly voice has been updated to a female voice as feedback on the voice used in the June 2023 trial suggested that students prefer a female voice.

We are also working on the following future improvements:

- giving students control over the speed Polly reads at
- updating the voice to one with a New Zealand accent (Aria) that can speak some basic te reo Māori.

We will update you about these improvements when more information is available.

Te reo Māori

We are investigating changing the Polly voice to Aria, which has a NZ accent and can read some basic te reo Māori.

This voice does not pronounce all te reo Māori words so we are also working with a New Zealand organisation on a te reo Māori text-to-speech tool that we hope to trial.

Questions

If you have any questions about Polly, please contact us.

[Contact NZQA](#)

Questions and answers

Kura/schools/tertiary institutes

1. I have a student who isn't entitled to SAC but needs some help with reading. Can they use Polly?

Yes, all students can use Polly. They don't have to be entitled to SAC.

2. Who can use Polly?

Polly will be available for secondary school students and tertiary students participating in the 2025 Literacy and Numeracy co-requisite digital assessment for literacy - Writing (32405) and Numeracy (32406) event one (19 - 30 May 2025) and event two (1 - 12 September 2025).

The schools/tertiary institutes will decide which students can use Polly.

3. Why is Polly available with the English medium standards and not te reo Māori?

Text-to-speech is not currently available in te reo Māori. We have been working with a New Zealand organisation that is developing text-to-speech to support te reo Māori and we hope to trial this in the future.

4. How can we prepare students to use Polly?

Students can:

- practise using Polly by looking at the past Writing or Numeracy assessments.
- for students that don't have a log in for past digital assessments you can access the credentials at the school's NZQA portal via the Access Copyright Past Exam content and Past Digital Exams link.
- read the instructions on how to use Polly and how to prepare for using it in an assessment.
- [Text-to-speech for co-requisite assessments - NZQA](#)
- look at the activities and information on our webpage.
- [Preparing for digital assessment as a student - NZQA](#)
- read about checking devices
[Digital exams device check](#)
- prepare for digital assessment by using past digital exams
[past digital exams.](#)

5. What do schools and teachers need to do?

Schools are responsible for organising the Literacy and Numeracy corequisite digital assessments and are encouraged to support Polly. This includes:

- making sure students have headphones whether BYO or supplied by the school.
- letting students know Polly is available, whether they are using it or not.
- providing students with the instructions on how to use Polly
[Instructions on how to use Polly](#)
- supervising the assessment and providing support to students.
- managing any requirements for technical support of text-to-speech during the assessment.
- helping students to get ready for their digital assessments; e.g. sourcing headphones, sharing the link to the past Writing or Numeracy assessments.
- completing device checks, and using practice activities.
- considering how best to accommodate students using Polly.

6. What support for Polly is NZQA providing to schools? Where and when will support material be available?

For PNs/lead teachers - guidance and support material is available from the Assessment Master guidance, in your MyNZQA portal.

7. Why can't students use Polly with the Reading (32403) standard?

The Ministry of Education is investigating the suitability of using text-to-speech with the reading assessment. If the school considers the student is eligible for support from a reader, a reader can be provided for that student for the reading assessment.

8. Will students need to use headphones?

Yes. Students who want to use Polly will need to use headphones if they are sitting in any room where there are other students sitting the assessment, rather than in separate accommodation. Students not using Polly will not need headphones as Polly is turned off by default.

9. How do we manage students who won't be using Polly?

Polly is off by default and the student needs to turn it on within the assessment. You can ask students not using Polly to leave it off.

10. When will Polly be made available for more external digital assessments?

We are expecting Polly to be made available for more external digital assessments in the future.

Ākonga/students

11. Why would I use Polly?

Polly can be used if you need help with reading. It helps students who have difficulty with reading, have a learning difference like dyslexia or low vision, or prefer to listen to text rather than read it.

12. What if I'm not using Polly?

You don't need to do anything when you open the assessment. Polly will be off by default.

13. Do I have to have SAC to use Polly?

Any student can use Polly, you don't have to have SAC.

You might like to use Polly with your SAC. For example, if you have separate accommodation or a reader and writer.

14. Why can't I use Polly for the English Literacy Reading standard (32403) assessment?

The Ministry of Education is investigating the suitability of using text-to-speech with the Reading standard.

15. How do I access and use Polly?

- Polly is off by default.
- Turn it on using the icon on the top right-hand side of the screen (available on any page).

The screenshot shows the NCEA Literacy (Writing) assessment interface. At the top, a dark blue header bar contains the text "NCEA Literacy (Writing), Term 2 2023" on the left and a red arrow pointing to a user icon on the right. Below the header, the main content area has a white background. It starts with the heading "Kia ora" in bold. This is followed by a list of instructions: "You **must** use the Chrome browser.", "Look at your own screen only.", "If you click outside this browser window, you will be locked out.", "If you get locked out, put your hand up and ask the supervisor to help you.", "If you need to go to the toilet, click **Blank screen** (at the bottom of every screen). Then put up your hand to tell the supervisor.", and "We save your login times and answers." Below the list, it says "Click **Next** to continue." At the bottom of the main content area, there are two buttons: a grey "Exit" button and a blue "Next" button. At the very bottom of the screen, there is a dark blue footer bar. On the left is the NZQA logo. In the center, it says "If you need help during this assessment, please contact the supervisor." On the right, there is a button labeled "Blank screen" and a link labeled "Help guide".

When Polly is on, it is available on all pages of the assessment – unless you turn it off again.

- Highlight the text you want read aloud by selecting it with your mouse.

6. Analyse how the ending of the text was satisfying or frustrating.

7. Analyse how the author's purpose was revealed using different settings.
"Settings" may refer to physical places as well as social and historical contexts.

8. Analyse how the use of minor characters reinforced the author's purpose.



Result: The Polly play bar displays.

Click the play icon to hear the text read aloud.

Note:

- You can use the stop and pause buttons to stop or pause the text while it is playing.
- If you want to turn Polly off at any time during the assessment, click the Polly icon in the top right-hand corner of your screen.
- You can close the toolbar by clicking on the X in the top right-hand corner. If you want to use the Highlight and Notes tool, it can be accessed on the top left-hand side of the screen.
- You can move the toolbar across the screen by clicking on it and dragging it with your mouse.

16. Do I need headphones for my assessment if I'm using Polly?

You'll need to use headphones to ensure that using Polly doesn't disrupt other students sitting the assessment.

17. What if I want to use the Highlight and Notes tool?

If you are not using Polly it will be off by default and you don't need to do anything.

The Highlight and Notes tool can be used to add notes to, or highlight sections of the assessment text. While the Highlight and Notes tool is on, Polly will not display when you highlight sections of text.

You can turn on the highlight and notes tool by clicking on the icon in the top left-hand corner of the screen. Once on, it can be used to add notes to and highlight sections of the text. It can be turned off again by clicking on the icon to unselect it.

18. I don't like the Polly voice and the speed is not right for me. What can I do?

Students can't change the Polly voice or the speed the text is read aloud at.

We are planning to add a function to Polly that allows you to change the speed.

19. What will Polly read aloud?

Polly will read out any text that has been selected. You can select the text by using your mouse or keyboard to drag the cursor across the text.

If you have selected just part of a multi choice question, Polly will only read aloud the answer or answers you have selected. If you have selected a drop-down box, Polly will read aloud all the answers in the drop-down box regardless of whether you have selected an answer or not. This is because Polly can't tell which answer you have selected.

General

20. Is there a text-to-speech tool that reads te reo Māori?

Polly can't be used with te reo Māori assessments. We are working with a New Zealand organisation to build a te reo Māori text-to-speech tool that can be used in assessments that use te reo Māori. We hope to trial this in the future.

21. Why is Polly's pronunciation of te reo Māori not always correct?

The Polly voice is not set up to read te reo Māori. We are planning to change the voice to a New Zealand voice that can pronounce te reo Māori. We are also working with a New Zealand organisation to build a te reo Māori text-to-speech tool.

22. Is speech-to-text different from text-to-speech? Do you have an option to use speech to text?

Speech-to-text or dictation software is a type of assistive technology that converts voice into text. Text-to-speech converts text into voice. There isn't an inbuilt speech-to-text function available with the digital assessment platform, but we are working towards students being able to bring their own speech-to-text applications into their digital assessments in the future.

Feedback and evaluation

23. What work has NZQA already done to test Polly functionality?

NZQA has completed four trials to test Polly functionality with students.

- In 2020 students were asked to test Polly and complete a survey.
- In 2021 we gained further insights from testing the text to speech function, and from our discussions with students, SENCOs and teachers.
- In 2022 we trialled Polly with the pilot Writing and Numeracy digital assessments.
- In 2023 we trialled Polly with the Writing and Numeracy assessments. We used this trial to test improvements we have made to Polly.

24. What happened to my feedback about how Polly could be improved in previous trials?

Feedback from the 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 Polly trials has been used to design improvements to Polly.

These improvements include:

- a new voice that is preferred by students.

- a function to turn Polly on and off. Polly will be off by default.
- text will now be highlighted as Polly reads it aloud.
- we have changed the speed of Polly.

We are also working on the following future improvements:

- giving students control over the speed Polly reads at
- updating the voice to one with a New Zealand accent (Aria) that can speak some basic te reo Māori.

Contact us

If you have any further questions, please contact us.

[Contact NZQA](#)

Polly instructions for students/ākonga

Here's what you need to know to use Polly (text-to-speech) in your assessment.

Polly is available to all students/ākonga sitting the Writing and Numeracy assessments. It is not currently available for the English Literacy Reading standard (32403) assessment while the Ministry of Education is investigating the suitability of using text-to-speech with the reading standard.

If you want to have someone to act as a reader for you as well as using Polly, tell your teacher in plenty of time before the date of the assessment so they can arrange it.

Things to do before the assessment

1. Make sure you have headphones for the assessment.
2. Practise using Polly using past assessments [past digital exams](#). (access code 0000).
3. If you don't have a log in for the past digital assessments talk to your teacher.
4. Read the instructions (on the next page) for using Polly.

On the day of the assessment

5. Make sure you have headphones to use with the assessment.
6. Log in to the assessment and follow the supervisor's instructions.
7. On the first screen of the assessment, turn Polly on.

NCEA Literacy (Writing), Term 2 2023





Kia ora

- You **must** use the Chrome browser.
- Look at your own screen only.
- If you click outside this browser window, you will be locked out.
- If you get locked out, put your hand up and ask the supervisor to help you.
- If you need to go to the toilet, click **Blank screen** (at the bottom of every screen). Then put up your hand to tell the supervisor.
- We save your login times and answers.

Click **Next** to continue.

Exit

Next

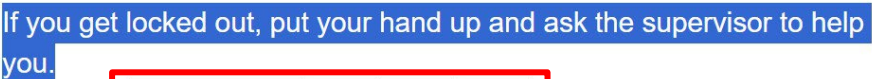

Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa

If you need help during this assessment, please contact the supervisor.

Blank screen

[Help guide](#)

Instructions for using Polly

Step	Action
1	Log into the digital assessment. ☐ Note: • Polly is off by default. • Turn it on using the icon on the top right-hand side of the screen. ☐  ☐ • When Polly is on, it is available on all pages of the assessment – unless you turn it off again. • Turn Polly off by clicking the Polly icon (available on any page)
2	Highlight the text you want read aloud by selecting it with your mouse. Result: The Polly play bar displays. •  •  • If you need  screen (at the bottom of every screen). Then put up your hand to tell the supervisor.
3	Click on play to hear the text read aloud. Note: • You can use the stop and pause buttons to stop or pause the text while playing. • You can move the Polly playbar by clicking on it and dragging it across your screen. • If you want to turn Polly off at any time during the assessment, click the Polly icon in the top right-hand corner of your screen.

Questions

If you have any questions about Polly, please ask your teacher.