

## What is ALEKS?

Middle Tennessee State University uses ALEKS Placement Preparation and Learning (PPL) as a tool to help you succeed in your precalculus class. ALEKS PPL is a web-based program that uses artificial intelligence to map a student's strengths and weaknesses. The Assessment is up to 30 questions and generally takes 60-90 minutes to complete. After the Assessment, an individualized Prep and Learning Module is available to help you refresh your knowledge of important background topics. After completing the module, you will have several chances to retake the Assessment and improve your score.

ALEKS consists of three parts:

- An Initial Placement Assessment
- The Prep and Learning Module, an individualized, self-paced online review
- Access to four additional Placement Assessments

## What is the point of ALEKS?

**What is the purpose of the Assessment?** Your initial Assessment is a diagnostic tool. Your score on the first Assessment will allow ALEKS to develop a personalized Learning Module geared specifically toward topics you need to master. ALEKS then helps you master material that is weak. So ALEKS acts as a learning tool and a final assessment tool at the end of the course. After completing the review, you may retake the Assessment up to four additional times as a three-hour exam.

**What does the Assessment score mean?** Your initial Assessment result (overall score) is a number between 0 and 100. It represents the percentage of topics ALEKS has identified you have mastered. Through guided review and retakes, your goal is to get your Assessment score above 75. Here is what your initial Assessment score means.<sup>1</sup>

Your ALEKS Score	What the Score Means
76 – 100	You may be ready for Calculus I
61 – 75	You are ready for Precalculus; Use your Learning Module as support for new topics
46 – 60	You need some review of algebra procedures
30 – 45	You need extensive review of algebra procedures
14 – 29	You need some review of arithmetic procedures before working on algebra skills
0 – 13	You need extensive review of arithmetic procedures before working on algebra skills

<sup>1</sup> If your score is above 75 or below 30, we recommend that you consult with your advisor or instructor.

We encourage you to spend time in the Prep and Learning Module, even if the desired score is achieved, because time spent in ALEKS will ultimately lead to better preparation and improved grades. Please discuss this score with your advisor and/or your instructor; use this score for course placement information also.

### How does my ALEKS score figure into my grade?

ALEKS research has shown that an Assessment score of at least 76 correlates with preparation for Calculus I. Since that is your goal in precalculus, the contribution ALEKS PPL makes to your class grade will reflect how close you ultimately come to that score. This contribution will be 5% - 10% of your total grade. Exactly what percentage the grade contributes and exactly how the grade is computed depends on your instructor; that information will be included in your course syllabus. Improvement and course success are the important ideas, and this importance will be reflected in how your ALEKS grade is computed.

### How so I use ALEKS PPL to maximize the benefit?

- If you are happy with your initial score, you can keep it and do nothing. However, we encourage you to use the Learning Module and the multiple retake opportunities throughout the semester.
- It is helpful to retake the Assessment after a few weeks of course study and review, improving your score by focusing on algebra skills. After your class has completed its unit on functions, logarithms, and exponentials, take the Assessment again; finally, retake it one more time near the end of the semester to hone your trigonometry skills.
- **Be honest.** It is important that you take the Assessment seriously and give it an honest effort so that it truly reflects your current level of knowledge and math preparedness. Remember, the point of the Assessment is to help you succeed in your precalculus class and a subsequent Calculus class. Therefore, while taking the Assessment, you should not consult any outside sources for help (friends/family, internet searches, textbooks, notes etc...). Click here for MTSU's [Student Conduct Code](#).

## FAQs

### Preparation

**Who takes the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** Everyone enrolled in Precalculus at MTSU will need to take the initial Assessment.

**Is there a fee for using ALEKS PPL?** The College of Basic and Applied Sciences will pay for your use of ALEKS. All you have to do is enroll. You will have access to ALEKS for one year after enrolling, with a maximum of five Assessment attempts and unlimited concept practice.

**When should I take the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** It is critical that you get started early since ALEKS helps you review key math skills that you will need in your course. We expect you to take the initial Assessment during your first week of class; even sooner if possible. It is critical that you take the initial Assessment as soon as possible for two reasons. First, taking the Assessment early gives you a better chance of mastering background skills before they are needed in the course. Second, after taking the initial Assessment, you and your instructor or advisor may decide another course is a better fit for you. Changing courses is only possible in the first two weeks of the semester.

**Do I need to install any software or plug-ins prior to taking the ALEKS Placement Assessment?** No. As long as you have access to the internet and are using an updated browser, you should not experience difficulties in taking your Placement

Assessment. For a list of preferred browsers, please review the ALEKS system requirements on their support site: [http://www.aleks.com/support/system\\_requirements](http://www.aleks.com/support/system_requirements)

**What topics are covered during the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** ALEKS PPL is an online, adaptive system that covers a broad spectrum of mathematics topics consistent with those needed in a standard precalculus/Calculus class. The length of the Placement Assessment will vary, but can be up to 30 questions. You will see some, but not all, of the math you have learned in high school. It is a Placement Assessment, not a preview of math courses at MTSU.

Topics covered:

- Real numbers (including fractions, integers, and percentages)
- Equations and inequalities (including linear equations, linear inequalities, systems of linear equations, and quadratic equations),
- Linear and quadratic functions (including graphs and functions, linear functions, and parabolas), exponents and polynomials (including integer exponents, polynomial arithmetic, factoring, and polynomial equations), rational expressions (including rational equations and rational functions)
- Radical expressions (including higher roots and rational exponents)
- Exponentials and logarithms (including function compositions and inverse functions, properties of logarithms, and logarithmic equations)
- Geometry and trigonometry (including perimeter, area, and volume, coordinate geometry, trigonometric functions, and identities and equations).

## Taking the Assessment

**What is the format of the questions on ALEKS?** ALEKS is not a multiple-choice Assessment. It is open-response and requires you to work out solutions with a paper and pencil, and then enter them into ALEKS. Be sure to have scratch paper with you.

**Can I review a question after I've answered it?** Because ALEKS is adaptive, once you submit an answer, you cannot change it. Be sure to carefully check your answer before submitting your response.

**Can I practice using the ALEKS input tools before I begin the Placement Assessment?** ALEKS will begin with a brief tutorial to make sure you are comfortable with the math palette tools before your Placement Assessment begins. The tutorial shows you how to enter different types of answers, how to use the ALEKS calculator, and how to graph. If you aren't sure how to input an answer, or need help while you are taking the ALEKS Placement Assessment, select the **Help** button below the answer pallet tools. Going to the tutorial during your Placement Assessment will NOT impact your Placement Assessment results.

**May I use a calculator while using ALEKS?** ALEKS will provide an on-screen calculator if you need one to complete a particular problem. Otherwise, you may not use a calculator.

**May I use any other resources during an Assessment?** You may only use a pen or pencil, paper, and the resources provided within ALEKS. Remember, the point of the Assessment is to help you succeed in your precalculus class. You should not receive assistance from friends, family, other websites, textbooks, or any other resource not provided by ALEKS. Receiving assistance is a violation of MTSU's Student Code.

**What if I see questions I don't know?** It is likely that you will be asked questions on material you have not yet learned. On such questions it is appropriate to answer, **I don't know**. On any question that you have familiarity with, however, it is important to do your best. **I don't know** is interpreted by ALEKS to mean that you do not know how to solve the topic, and this will be reflected in the Placement Assessment results. There is no penalty for incorrectly answering a question on the Placement Assessment, it only helps ALEKS understand what you know and don't know.

**Are Assessments timed?** You will have three hours to complete the initial Assessment. You will also have three hours to complete each subsequent Assessment. If you need to exit the Placement Assessment for any reason, you will be able to log back in and pick up where you left off.

**Are Assessments supervised?** ALEKS assessments are not supervised (they are unproctored). We trust you to do your own work. Remember, the assessment process is designed to help you succeed in your course; cheating on the assessments goes against your best interests.

**What happens if I do not complete an Assessment in the allotted time?** If you do not submit your Assessment in the allotted time, the Assessment will reset; and you will have to start over. Starting over does not affect the number of retakes you have remaining.

#### Where can I see my score?

- You will receive your score immediately upon completion of your Assessment.
- Your ALEKS score can be viewed by re-entering ALEKS using the same access link for which you took the Assessment.
- Your numeric scores are periodically added into Pipeline and are accessible to your instructor. Your instructor will not have access to any other data from your ALEKS account.

**Can I retake the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** Yes, you may take up to five Assessments, including the initial Assessment. However, to make each attempt worthwhile, it is important that you spend time working in your ALEKS Prep and Learning Module between Assessments so that you can improve your skills. You must wait at least 48 hours between Assessments, and you are required to spend a minimum of ten hours in your Learning Module before attempting a second Assessment. The amount of time required decreases between subsequent Assessments.

Assessment	Minimum Required Time in Learning Module Before Retaking Assessment
Second Assessment	Five Hours
Third Assessment	Five Hours
Fourth Assessment	Three Hours
Fifth Assessment	Three Hours

## Prep and Learning Modules

**How long do I have access to my Prep and Learning Module?** You will have six months of access to your Prep and Learning module. Access to the prep course will not begin until you select **start** on the top of your screen. DO NOT select into the Prep and Learning Module until you are ready to start working.

**Is there an additional fee for my Prep and Learning Module?** Access to a Prep and Learning Module is included along with the additional Placement Assessments.

**Must I work in my ALEKS Prep and Learning Module between Placement Assessments?** You can retake the Placement assessment up to four additional times to improve your score. Students are required to work in the Prep and Learning Modules for a minimum amount of time prior to each Placement Assessment to increase success. You will be asked to take the assessment twice for your precalculus class.

**What are ALEKS Knowledge Checks?** While working in a Prep and Learning Module, you will periodically complete a Knowledge Check to make sure you have mastered the topics you gained in Learning Mode. If you do not show mastery during the Knowledge Check, the topics will be added back into your Learning Pie so you can review them again.

**Does progress in an ALEKS Prep and Learning Module count as an Assessment score?** No. You must complete a new Placement Assessment to change your Assessment score. Select the placement tab in the upper right corner of the ALEKS page to start a new Placement Assessment.

## Technical Support

**What do I do if my web browser gets stuck or my computer crashes while I'm taking the Placement Assessment?**

Simply close the browser, or log out and log back in. ALEKS will resume the Placement Assessment exactly where you left off, with no loss of your previous answers.

**Where can I get help with ALEKS?**

<http://www.aleks.com/faqs/technical>

[http://support.aleks.com/assess\\_placement](http://support.aleks.com/assess_placement)

**I am ready to start my ALEKS PPL Assessment. How do I begin?** You will need to sign into ALEKS PPL and create your account. Click on [ALEKS PRECALCULUS](#) to get started.