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The English RLA Test and the Spanish RLA Test

What Texas teachers need to know to help students succeed in both languages

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The short answer. The two tests look alike on the surface. Both have 41 items worth 52 points, with reading passages, revising passages, editing passages, and one long written answer.[2,3,4,8] Under the surface they are different tests. The Spanish test is written in Spanish, not translated from English, and it is built to its own standards, the SLAR TEKS in 19 TAC Chapter 128.[1,10] The editing skills do not match one to one, and the Spanish writing section leans harder on revising. This guide lays the differences side by side so you can teach to each test in its own language.

What this guide answers

1. **How the tests are made.** Why the Spanish test is written fresh in Spanish, and who checks every passage.
2. **At a glance numbers.** Items, points, passages, and written answers per grade, side by side.
3. **Why editing differs.** Which conventions live only in Spanish, only in English, and which only look shared.
4. **Reading and writing differences.** Genres, topics, vocabulary, cognates, and the long answer.
5. **Success in both rooms.** Practical moves for bilingual, dual language, ESL, and English RLA teachers.
6. **Quick reference.** A one page checklist you can keep at your desk.

Who this is for. Bilingual, dual language, and ESL teachers who teach in Spanish, and English RLA teachers whose students also test in Spanish. Spanish versions exist only in grades 3, 4, and 5.[2,3,4]

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01 · HOW THE TESTS ARE MADE

Written in Spanish, not translated into Spanish

TEA builds the Spanish test the same way it builds the English test: from scratch, in the language of instruction, with Texas teachers checking every passage and question.

Three facts from TEA

1. The Spanish RLA test is written in Spanish. TEA explains that mathematics and science questions are translated from English and adapted, but the reading language arts passages and questions are developed uniquely in the Spanish language, so that the Spanish language arts curriculum can be assessed in a more authentic and meaningful manner.[1]

2. Texas teachers review every passage and question. Each Spanish blueprint says passages and questions are written to the TEKS, then reviewed and approved by Texas teacher groups for grade level, TEKS alignment, bias, and accessibility, then tried out with Texas students before any of them can appear on a scored test.[2,3,4]

3. The standards themselves are separate. The SLAR TEKS state that they reflect language arts standards that are authentic to the Spanish language and to reading and writing in Spanish, and that they are not a translation or a modification of the English language arts TEKS.[10] The Spanish standards live in 19 TAC Chapter 128. The English standards live in 19 TAC Chapter 110.[9,10]

Why a translated worksheet cannot do the job

- **It tests the wrong error.** An editing item is built around one real error and three believable wrong answers. In Spanish those wrong answers must be believable Spanish errors. A translated item often ends up with no real error, or with two possible answers.
- **It misses the classroom register.** Texas bilingual rooms run on academic Spanish with local habits: *ustedes*, not *vosotros*; *hoja de trabajo*; *idea central*; *evidencia del texto*. Generic translation tools pick some other register and miss your room.
- **It can test a rule that does not exist.** A translated item can ask about an English only convention, such as an apostrophe in a possessive, which has no Spanish equivalent. There is nothing for the student to fix.

What this means for you. Teach Spanish conventions during Spanish time, from Spanish models. If a practice item started life in English, check it against the SLAR standard before you hand it out. The test your students will take was never English.

One honest note. TEA also says the English and Spanish versions assess the same student expectations. The two standards documents are still worded differently, strand by strand. Treat the Spanish test as its own test, built to the SLAR standards, rather than as a mirror of the English test.

02 · AT A GLANCE

The two tests side by side

Same skeleton, different muscle. Counts below come from the 2026 scored forms and the Spanish blueprints; the pattern holds across the 2024 to 2026 forms reviewed.[2,3,4,8]

Feature	The English RLA test	The Spanish RLA test (grades 3 to 5 only)
Grades with this version	Every tested grade	Grades 3, 4, and 5 only
Items and points	41 items, 52 points: 38 one point items, two 2 point items, one 10 point long answer	Same: 41 items, 52 points, same split
Reading	2 single passages plus 1 paired passage; 24 items; 1 short written answer worth 2 points	Same shape: 2 single plus 1 paired; 24 items; 1 short written answer worth 2 points
Revising	8 items, always positions 26 to 33, on 2 revising passages	9 to 10 items, about positions 26 to 35, on 2 revising passages
Editing	8 items, always positions 34 to 41, on 2 editing passages	5 to 7 items in the editing passage block, plus 1 to 2 vocabulary items tucked into those passages
Dropdown items	Exactly 1 per form, always in editing	1 to 5 per form, most often in revising and editing
Long written answer	1 extended response, 10 points, written about a reading passage	Same: 1 extended response, 10 points, written about a reading passage
Total passage words	Not stated in the materials reviewed	Capped at about 2,740 in grade 3, 3,040 in grade 4, and 3,190 in grade 5
Time limit	Not stated in the blueprints or forms reviewed, for either test	

The weighting difference. Out of about 16 writing items, English splits them evenly, 8 revising and 8 editing. Spanish gives about 10 to revising and about 6 to editing. So Spanish students meet more sentence level revision work and fewer pure editing items. Give Spanish revising extra practice time; do not split practice 50/50 in either language without checking the form.

Plus 6 field test items that do not count toward the score, built around one extra passage set (a single passage, a paired passage, a revising passage, or two short editing passages).[2,3,4]

03 · EDITING IS NOT THE SAME

Some rules are not the same in both languages

The two editing standards list different skills. The English standard asks for apostrophes in contractions and possessives and for capitalization of holidays.[9] The Spanish standard asks for verb conjugations across many tenses, gendered articles, ser and estar, and grade level spelling rules instead.[10]

ONLY IN SPANISH

- **Accent marks that change meaning:** *pájaros*, *más* against *mas*, *cómo* against *como*, *él* against *el*
- **Lowercase days, months, languages, and nationalities:** *lunes*, *enero*, *español*, *mexicana*; common nouns stay lowercase too (*Voluntarios* to *voluntarios*, a released grade 3 item[7])
- **The diéresis:** the two dots in words such as *bilingüe* and *cigüeña*; a released grade 4 item refuses the false *antigüa* with diéresis[7]
- **Sound alike words spelled differently:** *haber* against *a ver*, *porque* against *por qué*, *si* against *sí*
- **Opening marks:** every question needs its *¿*, every exclamation its *¡*
- **Dialogue punctuation:** the long dash (raya) and angled marks (« »), not the English marks
- **Gender and number agreement:** article, noun, and adjective must agree together
- **Ser against estar,** preterite against imperfect, and the subjunctive mood

ONLY IN ENGLISH

- **Apostrophes:** possessives (*the dog's tail*) and contractions (*can't*); Spanish has none and uses *de* plus a noun instead
- **Capital days, months, holidays, and languages:** *Monday*, *January*, *Spanish*; Spanish lowercases them
- **English spelling patterns** that never appear in Spanish words

SHARED, BUT WORKING DIFFERENTLY

- **Subject verb agreement:** Spanish has six person forms and often drops the pronoun (*viven* against *vives, vivo, vivimos*, released grade 3[7])
- **Commas:** a comma goes before *pero*; items in a series take commas, with no comma before *y* in a simple list
- **Prepositions carry meaning:** *por* and *para*, *en*, *con*, *sobre* (a released grade 5 item tests *en* against *con, por, desde*[7])
- **No doubling up:** *muy* plus a superlative is redundant (*muy conocidísimo* to *conocido*, released grade 5[7])

Proof from the released Spanish tests. Grade 3, 2026: *visito* to *visitó* (past tense fits a past event); *pajaros* to *pájaros* (all *esdrújulas* carry a written accent). Grade 4, 2026: *Estado* to *estado* (a common noun); *salimos* against *saliéremos, salgamos, salíamos* (preterite against other moods and tenses); *mas* to *más* (adverb, not conjunction). Grade 5, 2026: *motivo* to *motivó* (the action happened in the past). None of these items could be translated from English. Each one tests Spanish.[7]

Differences that matter beyond editing

Same genres, different shelves

Both tests draw from the same genre shelf: fiction, drama, poetry, and literary nonfiction on the literary side, and informational, argumentative, correspondence, and persuasive on the nonliterary side.[2,3,4] What fills those genres differs. Released Spanish forms feature Texas, Mexican, and Latino life: a family board game of *lotería* in grade 3 practice, a student report on the Karankawa in grade 4, a letter about the *Capitolio* in grade 5.[6] Released English forms feature Texas and American topics such as Clara Barton and the Dust Bowl.[5] **Build background knowledge in the language of the test.** A student who knows lotería in English still needs the Spanish words for it, and the reverse.

Vocabulary: cognates are a bridge, false friends are a trap

Many academic words cross over cleanly: *información/information*, *comunidad/community*, *celebración/celebration*. The English standards themselves name cognates as a scaffold and urge students to use first language knowledge to grow vocabulary.[9] But some lookalikes lie: *embarazada* does not mean embarrassed, *éxito* does not mean exit, *librería* is a bookstore, not a library, and *sopa* is soup, not soap. **Teach both lists on purpose.** Collect true cognates from each week's passages, and isolate the false ones before test day.

The long written answer counts the same

In both languages the extended response is worth 10 points, almost a fifth of all points, and it is written about a reading passage.[2,3,4,8] The thinking transfers completely: a clear central idea, organized structure, and text evidence. What does not transfer is the sentence level craft, which follows the editing rules of the language being written. **Practice writing about reading in both languages, and grade each one by its own conventions.**

Study the real items. TEA posts answer keys, item rationales, and expectation tables for the 2024 to 2026 forms in both languages, plus full practice forms from 2023.[5,6,7,8] The rationales show the logic of the wrong answers, which is exactly what you need to write strong practice items of your own.

05 · SUCCESS IN BOTH ROOMS

What students need to succeed in both classrooms

Students do not need double the learning. They need to know what moves across, what stays put, and which language each rule belongs to.

1. **Name what transfers, out loud.** Central idea, text evidence, structure, combining sentences, and conclusions move across. Say so in class, then show the same move in a Spanish passage and an English passage in the same week.

2. **Teach Spanish only rules in Spanish time.** Daily accent and agreement work, dictation with written accents, and short contrasts: ser against estar, preterite against imperfect, indicative against subjunctive. The grade 3 SLAR standard names ser and estar for a reason.[10]

3. **Do cognate work every week.** Pull true cognates from the week's passages into a wall list. Keep a separate rogues list for false friends. Have students defend each word with the sentence it came from.

4. **Separate, then bridge.** Keep full Spanish register through the whole Spanish block. Then run short bridging lessons that compare one rule side by side: apostrophe possessive against *de* plus noun, capital *Monday* against lowercase *lunes*, English marks against the raya.

5. **Practice each item type in each language.** Dropdown items show up more in Spanish, so no Spanish student should meet one first on test day. Short written answers appear in both reading and revising, and the long answer is worth 10 points in both. Rehearse all three.

6. **Study the released items as a team.** Read the rationale documents to learn the wrong answer logic: believable Spanish errors such as *mas* for *más* or present tense slipped into a past tense paragraph.[7] Then write your own checks with the same kind of tempting wrong answers.

The one line version. Transfer what transfers, explicitly teach what does not, keep Spanish conventions inside Spanish time, and let students compare the two systems on purpose instead of mixing them by accident.

06 · KEEP AT YOUR DESK

Quick reference checklist

PLANNING

- [ ] Spanish test exists in grades 3, 4, 5 only
- [ ] Both tests: 41 items, 52 points, 1 long answer worth 10
- [ ] Spanish writing leans revising: about 10 revising, about 6 editing
- [ ] English writing splits even: 8 revising, 8 editing
- [ ] Reading both: 2 single plus 1 paired passage

SPANISH BLOCK

- [ ] Accents checked daily, in real sentences
- [ ] Agreement: article plus noun plus adjective
- [ ] Ser and estar, preterite and imperfect, subjunctive
- [ ] Lowercase days, months, languages, nationalities
- [ ] Opening ¿ and ¡, raya in dialogue
- [ ] Cognate wall plus false friend rogues list

ENGLISH BLOCK

- [ ] Apostrophes: possessives and contractions
- [ ] Capital days, months, holidays, languages
- [ ] Same revising moves, English conventions
- [ ] Bridge one rule against Spanish each week

BEFORE TEST WEEK

- [ ] Dropdown items rehearsed in Spanish
- [ ] Short answers rehearsed in reading and revising
- [ ] One practice long answer in each language
- [ ] Reread one rationale set per grade taught

Sources

1. TEA student assessment FAQ on the Spanish test: math and science translated and adapted, RLA passages and questions developed uniquely in Spanish.

2. TEA, Spanish RLA blueprint, Grade 3: 41 items, 52 points, 2 revising and 2 editing passages, word cap about 2,740, teacher review process.

3. TEA, Spanish RLA blueprint, Grade 4: same design, word cap about 3,040.

4. TEA, Spanish RLA blueprint, Grade 5: same design, word cap about 3,190.

5. TEA, 2023 English RLA practice assessment and sampler, Grades 3 to 5: passage shape, revising and editing blocks, topic examples.

6. TEA, 2023 Spanish RLA practice assessments and samplers, Grades 3 to 5: passage shape, topic examples.

7. TEA, 2026 Spanish RLA item rationales, Grades 3, 4, 5: all released editing items cited in sections 3 and 5.

8. TEA, 2024 to 2026 RLA student expectation tables, English and Spanish, Grades 3, 4, 5: item counts, splits, and item types in section 2.

9. 19 TAC Chapter 110, ELAR TEKS: English editing standard 11(D), cognate guidance in the introduction.

10. 19 TAC Chapter 128, SLAR TEKS: Spanish editing standard 11(D) with ser and estar, gendered articles, and the authentic language statement.

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