

Target Skills – for use by Tutors

Ralph Cullimore, Devon ACL, March 09

A. What is Target Skills?

Target Skills is a suite of literacy & numeracy software from Tribal-CTAD.

Devon ACL has bought an annual licence for the '**Skills Check**' and '**Initial Assessment**' parts – but not for the learning materials, interactive games etc, which cost more.

Target Skills comes in two forms:

- **Target Skills Gold (TSG)** which is a web-based version
- **Locally Installed** version that runs on a particular computer.

Target Skills Gold is the preferred option for DACL as it **can be stopped and resumed** at will from any Internet connection. It also allows tutors, LSCO's and the learners themselves to check progress from anywhere that has an Internet connection.

The Locally Installed version may be useful for situations where there is no Internet access but requires tutor/LSCO intervention to save the results otherwise these are lost – though there is a complicated method available to allow uploading of results to a web database.

The two main parts of either version of Target Skills are:

Skills Check

- Only useful for **L1** or **L2** learners
- Choose from English or Maths
- Each assessment has 24 questions picked at random & takes approx 20 mins
- Is non-adaptive (ie the questions are fixed regardless of level as the user proceeds)
- Terminates if a learner gets five questions in a row wrong
- At assessment end, gives the user a **score** plus an **indication of level** from this list:
 - Working at Entry Level
 - At Entry, working towards L1
 - Competent at L1
 - Competent at L2

Initial Assessment

- Covers the range **EL1,2,3 and L1, L2**
- Includes aspects of diagnostic assessment as well as initial assessment
- Choose from English or Maths
- Assessments are **adaptive** – ie they change according to the answers given
- Are of variable length - a level 1 learner will end up answering more questions than an entry level learner for example
- Consequently, can take anywhere from 20-60 mins, depending on level
- Gives detailed results; specifying level demonstrated against each of the main curriculum points in coloured bars

B. What to do on TS Gold

This section assumes you are using the web-based version – Target Skills Gold.

Dummy run: Try out setting up and doing an Initial Assessment

1. Once you have received your username and password, go to the TSG site for DACL
The full address is <http://devonacl.targetskillsgold.com/login>
Or you can get to it via the link on www.dacl.org
2. Login to the site and create a single ‘dummy’ learner for practice purposes. To do this:
Click ‘Learners’ + ‘Add Learners’ then type in a FirstName and LastName
Click on Maths and English and **tick both ‘Skip Skills Check’** boxes
In the Groups section scroll down and click **‘Training’ group**
Choose a user-name and password for this dummy learner
Make a note of the username and password as you will need it later!
Finally, click **Save**.
3. Log out as tutor and then login as the ‘dummy’ learner you have just set up.
4. Work through the Practice and one of the two assessments (either Maths or English) to get a feel for the experience. You don’t need to be too zealous and can just ‘guess’ some answers if you want!
5. Log off as the learner then Log in as yourself – ie as a tutor.
6. You should be able to see the ‘dummy’ learner’s name on screen.
If not, you may be viewing the wrong subject so click the other tab (English or Maths).
If you still can’t see the learner’s name, click on the word ‘Learners’ at the top and scroll through the list – or click on a letter on the left
(You can also limit it to one particular group by clicking the Group list)
7. Click on the dummy learner’s name to see their details and results
8. When viewing the results, click on ‘Learning Record’ to see more info
9. When viewing the Learning Record, click on the word ‘Numeracy’ (or ‘Literacy’) to expand the results further.

Real thing: using with learners

10. When ready to use TSG with a real learner, login as yourself and set up an account for that learner, assigning them to the appropriate ‘real’ group this time. See step 2 above

Make sure you **put a tick in ‘Skip Skills Check’** for both Maths and English if you want them to go straight to the Initial Assessment..

Make a note of the username and password you set up for this learner.

11. Introduce TSG Initial Assessment to the learner, help them with the Practice if appropriate, then get them to work through the Initial Assessment.
12. Log in as yourself and check the results. See steps 6-9 above.
If you want, print out the results of the IA (either immediately or at a later time)
Colour printouts look good but black and white printouts are fine.

Notes

Sound (speakers or headphones) is required for the Practice and for parts of the English Initial Assessment. Sound is NOT required for the Maths IA but could be useful as it helps learners who prefer to listen to an instruction rather than to read it on the screen.

Stopping and starting. Learners can stop the IA and then carry on later if, for example, they need a break or are running out of time. For the purposes of the pilot you will need to ensure that learners complete the IA somehow – eg by extending the session, getting them back at another time etc.

The time required to complete an IA is normally in the range 20 mins – 1.5 hours. The average (mean) time for doing so is around 45 mins but exact duration depends on level of learner, amount of reading time required and other factors. It is important that the LSCo or tutor keeps an eye on the learner's progress and intervenes to get the learner to not-over-agonize, take a break, etc if necessary.

C. Details which may be relevant

There are a number of issues that may be relevant and these are grouped together here.

Odds & Ends

1. The web address for getting in is <http://devonacl.targetskillsgold.com/login>
2. The Practice section for the Initial Assessment can be done as many times as required by a learner. The IA itself can only be done once, though – but can be stopped and restarted several times if required (eg breaks, end of session etc).
3. For learners that seem (from initial contacts) to be L1 or L2 but are rather nervous, it could be useful to get them to go through the Skills Check with the LSCo or tutor sat by the side so that they can talk about things that are difficult .
4. If a prospective learner has known needs in SfL it is not worth getting them to do the Skills Check since that is all at L1 and L2 – go straight to IA instead.
5. Having headphones often helps learners to concentrate – so it is often better than speakers – and reduces stress as they know that no-one else can hear where they have got to, or when they are taking a long time to answer.
6. Learners with hearing aids generally can't use headphones due to the position of the microphone on the hearing aid itself. If possible, ensure that such learners can work through the IA in a quiet and private location instead.
7. When using the standalone 'CD' version, a printer is useful - to get a record there and then - in case of delays or problems uploading later on. (The CD version is likely to be introduced later, once the web-based version has become established.)

Groups

1. all learners need to be attached to a group
2. groups are set up by someone with admin rights
3. learners can be moved from one group to another
4. each tutor can be given rights to one or more groups
5. several tutors can be given rights to any one group
6. groups make it easier to run reports (select just that group)
7. groups make it easier to manage learners (see just those, and not all of the county)