



Nonstandard Testing Arrangements Handbook

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This handbook was updated in June 2025. It replaces the previous version published in February 2025. Updates include changes to procedural instructions for requesting nonstandard testing arrangements and changes to the English as a Second Language policy for licensure applicants in New York.

Part 1: Understanding nonstandard testing arrangements

Nonstandard testing arrangements are adjustments made to the standard testing environment or procedures that create an accessible testing experience for test-takers with medical or mental health needs. Test-takers who require additional support because of documented disabilities, health conditions, or other circumstances, such as lactation or English as a second language, may request nonstandard testing arrangements.

This section provides an overview of a standard exam administration and describes when nonstandard testing arrangements may be considered.

Standard testing arrangements

Some needs can be met without the need to request approval for nonstandard testing arrangements. Here are some commonly requested items that do not require approval.

- **Drinks** A drink in a spill-proof container may be accessed from the locker and consumed in the waiting area.
- **Food** A snack may be stored in the locker. Candidates may access the snack and consume it in the waiting area.
- **Layered indoor clothing** The following are examples of permitted items: sweaters, sweatshirts, blazers, suit coats, and saris.
- **Breaks** All test-takers may take an optional, scheduled 10-minute break between the exam's two sections. You may also take unscheduled breaks during the four-hour exam at your discretion. The clock does not stop for unscheduled breaks for any test-taker. You may leave the testing room during breaks to use the closest restroom and to access a drink and snack from your locker.
- **Comfort aids** Some items may be brought in and used at your desk without approval. Read the [complete Pearson VUE comfort aids list](#). The list includes:
 - Medical monitoring device attached to your body that does not make noise
 - Glucose tablets, unwrapped and not in a bottle/container
 - Cough drops, unwrapped and not in a bottle/container
 - Pillow/lumbar support
- **Writing utensil** Test center staff will supply you with an erasable note board booklet and marker. In addition, an electronic scratch pad is available for use during the exam. The scratch pad is provided for taking notes during the testing session. Scratch pad contents will not be saved and will not impact scoring.
- **Vision aids** Color contrast settings can be adjusted to white font with black background. You can highlight text and use the strikethrough feature located under the *Tools* menu. The software also allows users to zoom in and make text appear larger. The standard ASWB exam font can be increased up to 200% in increments of 25%. Finally, the brightness can be adjusted on the monitor.

Learn more about the overall examination process and [what to expect on exam day](#).

If you have needs that prevent you from taking your exam under standard testing conditions, you may be eligible to receive nonstandard testing arrangements.



Overview: Types of nonstandard testing arrangements

- Documented disabilities and other health conditions
- Lactation
- English as a second language

Nonstandard testing arrangements basics

ASWB complies with applicable laws related to the development, administration, scoring, and maintenance of its examination program. The association strives to balance the legal requirements of examination administration with discretionary arrangements. ASWB ensures that all candidates are provided with an opportunity to demonstrate the applied knowledge intended to be tested.

Candidates with a documented disability, health condition, or other need or who use English as a second language may be eligible to receive nonstandard testing arrangements.

Requests for nonstandard testing arrangements must be submitted and approved before the test-taker registers and pays for the exam with ASWB. Arrangements cannot be added to a testing appointment after the appointment has been scheduled.

Approvals are valid for one year with the exception of the following:

- Approvals will expire for temporary conditions, such as an injury with expected recovery date or pregnancy with a documented due date.
- Approvals for English as a second language arrangements do not expire unless revoked by your state/province/jurisdiction or ASWB.

Documented disabilities and other health conditions

Documented disabilities generally apply to a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. ASWB will make a necessary determination under all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local legislation, including but not limited to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Other needs that require you to request nonstandard testing arrangements may include:

- Monitoring device for conditions such as diabetes if device cannot be silenced, cannot be placed on vibrate mode, or is not attached to your body
- Additional breaks because of pregnancy
- American Sign Language interpreter

ASWB will work with candidates with other health conditions to make relevant arrangements. ASWB does not provide a list of available arrangements but closely considers the request submitted by the candidate and the practitioner. Unless otherwise required by law, ASWB reserves the right to deny nonstandard testing arrangements under this category if, at the sole discretion of ASWB, such

arrangements unfairly advantage or disadvantage any candidate or if the security and/or validity of the examination is at issue.

Lactation

Lactating individuals may be approved for nonstandard testing arrangements so they can pump or express milk during their exam appointment. Nonstandard testing arrangements that may be approved include:

- Use of the locker during a break to access a pump
- Extra time of one hour for pumping or expressing
- Frequent/extended breaks
- Use of a designated space for pumping or expressing
- Permission to keep water in a transparent, spill-proof, sports-type bottle with a spout at the testing desk
- Permission to leave the test center only for those approved to breastfeed in person

For individuals who are approved to pump or express milk, Pearson VUE test centers in the United States and Canada will provide a private space. The private space varies at each test center, but all have a chair, table, and electrical outlet. It may be either a break room with a door or a break area with a privacy screen. The space is available to individuals approved for this nonstandard testing arrangement on a first-come, first-served basis and may be used only for pumping or expressing milk. Lactating individuals are expected to provide their own storage and refrigeration.

ASWB is committed to exploring options with individuals who need to breastfeed in person. Because only test-takers are permitted to be inside the test center, individuals approved for in-person breastfeeding must leave the test center for this purpose. Availability of space outside the test center for breastfeeding in person varies.

English as a second language

The ASWB social work licensing exams are administered only in English, but qualified candidates who use English as a second language may submit the Request for Nonstandard Testing Arrangements. Qualified ESL candidates will receive up to two hours of additional time and may request permission to use up to two dictionaries, one bilingual word-to-word translation dictionary and/or one general English dictionary.

Because individual states and provinces determine whether to allow and recognize test scores using nonstandard testing arrangements for ESL, recognition of these scores is subject to change. Licensing boards may decide whether or not to accept these scores as part of licensure requirements for their jurisdictions. Candidates are encouraged to check with their licensing board for details. Currently, the following applies:

California test-takers must request and receive preliminary ESL approval from the California Board of Behavioral Sciences before requesting ESL arrangements for extra time from ASWB. California does not permit the use of an English or bilingual dictionary.

Dictionary

Test-takers approved for dictionary use as a nonstandard testing arrangement must provide their own print dictionary/ies. Translation dictionaries must be word-to-word dictionaries and may not contain definitions. General English language dictionaries must include only common definitions in English; no social work or other specialized dictionaries are allowed.

All dictionaries will be inspected by test center staff before and after the examination. Dictionaries should not be enclosed in packaging. Test center staff may disallow the use of a dictionary that does not conform to this policy.

If notes are found in a dictionary during the check-in process, the test-taker will not be permitted to bring the item into the testing room. If notes are found in a dictionary during the check-out process, the test-taker's dictionary(ies) will be confiscated, and the candidate's score will be held and investigated.

Disclaimer: ASWB is not responsible for any inaccuracies of translations related to personally supplied dictionaries. Candidates who accept nonstandard testing arrangements for dictionary use are responsible for the accuracy and usefulness of this option.

Part 2: Requesting nonstandard testing arrangements

You must request and be approved for arrangements **before registering for and scheduling your ASWB exam** so the necessary resources — including, for example, appropriate space and extra time — can be secured at the test center. If you register and schedule an appointment before being approved for nonstandard testing arrangements, the testing appointment must be canceled before your registration can be updated.

All candidates must request nonstandard testing arrangements through their [ASWBCentral](#) candidate account.

Documented disabilities and other health conditions

To request nonstandard testing arrangements for a disability or other health condition, you and your practitioner must provide information about your diagnosis, major life activities limited by your diagnosis, and other important details about your needs. If the documentation does not include adequate information regarding your functional limitations in the testing environment, specific to the diagnosis reported by the practitioner, the request cannot be approved.

To request **nonstandard testing arrangements for a disability or other health condition**:

- [Log in to your account](#). If you do not have an account, create one using your email address.
- Click on **Nonstandard Testing Arrangements** to access your Nonstandard Testing Arrangements Dashboard.
- Before beginning your request, click the **show more** link at the top right of the screen to review important application information.
- Select **Disability or health condition** as your request type in the drop-down list.
- Click the green **Begin New Request** button.
- Fill out the application, clicking **Next** at the bottom right of the screen at the end of each page.
- After you complete the application, click **Finish**.

Lactation

To request **lactation arrangements**:

- [Log in to your account](#). If you do not have an account, create one using your email address.
- Click on **Nonstandard Testing Arrangements** to access your Nonstandard Testing Arrangements Dashboard.
- Before beginning your request, click the **show more** link at the top right of the screen to review important application information.
- Select **Lactation** as your request type in the drop-down list.
- Click the green **Begin New Request** button.
- Fill out the application, clicking **Next** at the bottom right of the screen at the end of each page.
- After you complete the application, click **Finish**.

English as a second language

To request **English as a second language arrangements**:

- [Log in to your account](#). If you do not have an account, create one using your email address.
- Click on **Nonstandard Testing Arrangements** to access your Nonstandard Testing Arrangements Dashboard.
- Before beginning your request, click the **show more** link at the top right of the screen to review important application information, and to search for your board approval.
- Select **ESL** as your request type in the drop-down list.
- Click the green **Begin New Request** button.
- Fill out the application, clicking **Next** at the bottom right of the screen at the end of each page.
- After you complete the application, click **Finish**.

Important:

- English as a Second Language arrangements may be requested only if you have been approved by your social work licensing board to take an ASWB exam.
- If you need arrangements for American Sign Language, complete the request for nonstandard testing arrangements for a disability or other health condition.

Timeline and expectations

- **We review requests in the order received. It may take up to three weeks.** ASWB does not offer an expedited process, so we advise against beginning a new request if you cannot wait three weeks for a decision.
- **We will notify you by email with your decision.** You can check the status of your request by [logging into ASWBCentral](#) and reviewing the request's **status**.
- **It is your responsibility to contact ASWB if you have not received communication from ASWB after three weeks** from the date you submitted the request. During periods when we experience high volume, applicants may expect a longer processing time.
- **Wait to register and schedule a testing appointment until you receive our decision letter by email.** If you schedule a testing appointment before obtaining approval for nonstandard testing arrangements, you will be required to cancel your testing appointment. Nonstandard testing arrangements cannot be added to an existing testing appointment.

Part 3: Taking your ASWB exam with nonstandard testing arrangements



Overview: Taking an ASWB exam with nonstandard testing arrangements

1. **Apply for a license** with your state or provincial social work board or college.
2. **Request nonstandard testing arrangements** from ASWB.
3. **Register for your exam** with ASWB.
4. **Schedule your testing appointment.**

Registering for an exam

You may register for the ASWB exam beginning on the day you receive your decision letter.

During the registration process, you will be asked to verify that you will use your approved arrangements for your exam.

After you have registered, you will receive an Authorization to Test email from ASWB within two business days. The email includes your approved arrangements and scheduling instructions.

When you receive a valid Authorization to Test email, you must verify that the arrangements listed in the determination letter are also listed on your Authorization to Test email. If they do not match, you must contact ASWB at specialarrangements@aswb.org immediately and must not schedule a testing appointment until corrections are made.

Because of the importance of providing a secure testing environment for its high-stakes licensing exams, ASWB contracts with Pearson VUE to test its candidates. Pearson VUE administers a wide variety of exams for various purposes. Some of the rules that those taking the social work licensing exams must follow may not match the rules for those taking other exams.

Special circumstances

Under some circumstances, you will need to complete extra steps before you can receive your Authorization to Test email.

If ASWB has not received your board approval, you must first apply for a social work license and be approved to take the licensing exam. Obtain license application instructions by selecting your state or province, under Step 1 at [Getting Ready for the Exam](#). When ASWB receives the board approval, you can register for the ASWB exam.

If you are already registered, but not scheduled, you will receive an email from ASWB with the subject line “IMPORTANT: ASWB registration changes” within two business days.

If you are already registered and scheduled, we will contact you to confirm that the appointment cancellation process can be completed. Once completed, you will receive an email from ASWB with the subject line “IMPORTANT: ASWB registration changes” within two business days.

Scheduling the testing appointment

If the testing arrangements are listed correctly in the Authorization to Test email, follow the instructions in the email to schedule your testing appointment. Pearson VUE will have a record of your approved arrangements.

Test-takers with nonstandard testing arrangements must schedule their exam with Pearson VUE per the instructions in the Authorization to Test email received after registering for the exam.

Canceling and rescheduling the testing appointment

If you need to cancel and reschedule your testing appointment, follow the steps listed in the Authorization to Test email you receive when you register for the exam. ASWB does not offer nonstandard testing arrangements that would allow canceling or rescheduling a testing appointment in case of illness or an episode related to an ongoing health condition.

If you miss your examination appointment or do not cancel your appointment within the guidelines, ASWB may excuse your absence. To be considered for an excused absence for illness or an unexpected circumstance, you will need to complete the [Excused Absence Form](#) within 30 days of your missed appointment.

Please review the cancellation policy and details about excused absences in the [ASWB Examination Guidebook](#).

Retesting

Nonstandard testing arrangements are valid toward any exam registration until the arrangements expire. If you register for the exam before your arrangements expire, the arrangements will be valid until you take the exam or until your board approval or ASWB registration expires, whichever comes first.

When your arrangements expire, you may submit a new request for arrangements. Extensions for arrangements are not offered.

English as a second language arrangements do not expire unless revoked by ASWB or your state or province. Therefore, submitting a new request is not necessary unless you are requesting changes to your ESL arrangements.

Part 4: Useful resources

Contact ASWB Nonstandard Testing Arrangements

- Call us at 888.579.3926, ext. 3250
- Email us at specialarrangements@aswb.org
- Find us online at [Nonstandard testing arrangements - ASWB](#)

[Downloadable request form for nonstandard testing arrangements for a disability or other health condition](#)

Resources on the overall examination process and what to expect while taking your social work licensing exam:

- [ASWB Examination Guidebook](#)
- [On Exam Day](#)
- [ASWB Candidate Rules Agreement](#)