

## What is ALEKS?

Beginning in the Fall 2021 semester, University of San Diego requires students to use ALEKS Placement, Preparation and Learning (ALEKS PPL) Assessment in lieu of SAT/ACT placement to determine readiness for mathematics courses. ALEKS PPL is a web-based program that uses artificial intelligence to map a student's strengths and weaknesses. The Placement Assessment is up to 30 questions and generally takes 60-90 minutes to complete. After the Placement Assessment, an individualized Prep and Learning Module is available for students to refresh their knowledge on forgotten topics. Students then have the opportunity to reassess and improve their placement.

ALEKS consists of three parts:

- An Initial Placement Assessment
- The Prep and Learning Module, an individualized, self-paced online review
- Access to 2 additional Placement Assessments

University of San Diego encourages each student 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.

**What is the purpose of placement testing?** The Placement Assessment results will be used to determine the most appropriate courses for each student as they move forward with college coursework. **After taking a Placement Assessment, students should meet with their advisor to review their results and enroll in the best classes based on their scores.**

This is a “Placement Assessment,” not a test. The difference is that a Placement Assessment is designed to determine what a student knows and what a student needs to work on. At the end of the ALEKS PPL Assessment, a student will have a much better sense of his/her strengths and weaknesses in math. Students then have a chance to brush up on topics that may have been forgotten or haven’t been practiced for some time.

**Be honest.** It is important that the Placement Assessment is taken seriously and each student gives it an honest effort so that the Placement Assessment truly reflects their current level of knowledge and math preparedness. There is no benefit to cheating on the Placement Assessment – the only result will be that a student enrolls in a class that is too difficult, or not challenging enough, potentially costing time and money. Therefore, while taking the Placement Assessment, students should not consult any outside sources for help (friends/family, internet searches, textbooks, notes etc...). The purpose of the Placement Assessment is to give an accurate measure of a student’s current mathematical knowledge state so that he/she will be successful in mathematics courses. <https://www.sandiego.edu/conduct/documents/Honor-Code.pdf>

## FAQs:

### Preparation

**Why must I take the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** The Placement Assessment is used to determine the appropriate mathematics course for you at this time. Upon completion of the Placement Assessment your scores will become part of your academic profile. If you are new to USD, schedulers will use this information to place you in the appropriate mathematics course. If you are a continuing USD student, this score will enable you to register yourself for the appropriate mathematics class after consultation with your academic advisor.

**Who has to take the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** All students who wish to take any of the following courses: Intermediate Algebra (Math 90), College Algebra (Math 115), Investigations in Mathematics (Math 110), Survey of Calculus (Math 130), Business Calculus (Math 294), and Calculus I (Math 150).

**When do I take the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** Your placement into a math course depends on your score on the placement exam, so every student should plan to take the assessment as soon as possible.

**Do I need to install any software or plug-ins prior to taking the ALEKS Placement Assessment?** No. There are no required plug-ins or applets required with your use of ALEKS PPL. 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. 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 University of San Diego. It is designed to identify if you are prepared for a particular course. After you take your first Placement Assessment, you will have the opportunity to review and master additional topics to reassess and improve your placement.

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).

### 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.

## Taking the Placement Assessment

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

**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 a Placement Assessment?** You may only use a pen or pencil, paper, and the resources provided within ALEKS. You should not receive assistance from friends, family, other websites, textbooks, or any other resource not provided by ALEKS. Using outside resources will lead to improper placement and potentially course failure. *It is a violation of the institution's honor code.* <https://www.sandiego.edu/conduct/documents/Honor-Code.pdf>

**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.

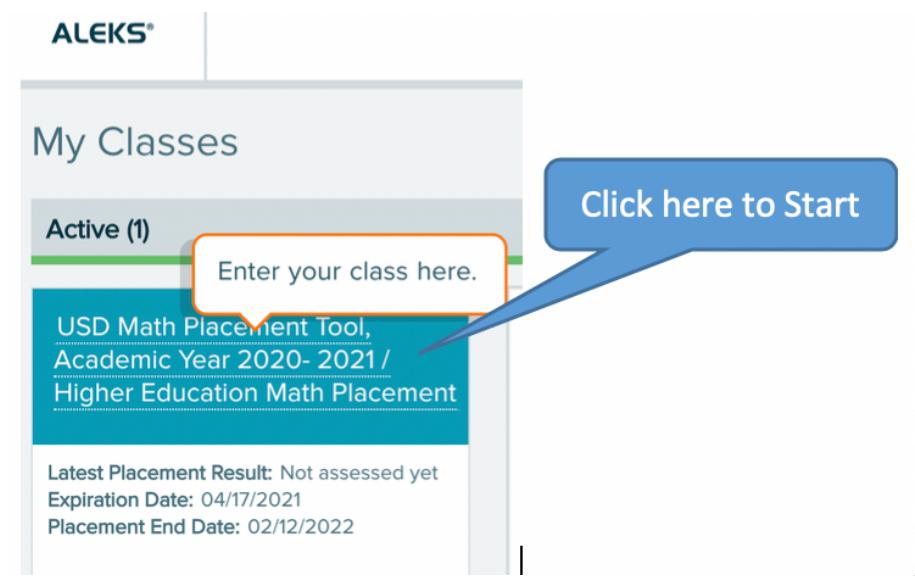
**What if I see questions I don't know?** It is likely that you will be asked questions on material you have not yet learned. On such questions it is appropriate to answer, **I don't know**. On any question that you have familiarity with, however, it is important to do your best. **I don't know** is 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 Placement Assessments timed?** Yes, you have 3 hours to complete a Placement Assessment once it has begun. However, the test usually takes no more than 1 hour.

**What happens if I do not complete a Placement Assessment in the allotted time?** If you do not complete the assessment in the allotted time, you will be given a placement result, but it will not be a true reflection of your abilities.

**I am ready to start my ALEKS PPL Assessment. How do I begin?** Please click the link below and see illustration below.

[https://secure.aleks.com/shiblogon/sso?sso\\_account=76f3fd0&enroll\\_class\\_code=QTT9Y-Y3LFQ](https://secure.aleks.com/shiblogon/sso?sso_account=76f3fd0&enroll_class_code=QTT9Y-Y3LFQ).



## Placement Result

**What is my placement result?** Your placement result (overall score) is a number between 0 and 100. It represents the percentage of topics ALEKS has identified you have mastered.

Course #	Course Name	ALEKS Score Range
<b>MATH 090</b>	INTERMEDIATE ALGEBRA	0-45
<b>MATH 110, MATH 115</b>	INVESTIGATIONS IN MATHEMATICS, COLLEGE ALGEBRA	46-60
<b>MATH 120, MATH 130, MATH 294</b>	INTRODUCTION TO STATISTICS, SURVEY OF CALCULUS, BUSINESS CALCULUS	61-75
<b>MATH 150</b>	CALCULUS I	76-100

Course placement is determined as follows:

### CUTOFF SCORE Table:

## Where can I see my score?

- You will receive your score immediately upon completion of your Placement Assessment.
- Your ALEKS score can be viewed by re-entering ALEKS using the same access link for which you took the Placement Assessment.
- *Your scores are automatically added to your student profile, which is accessible by your advisor.*

**How long is my placement result valid?** Your placement result does not expire.

**What if I do not place into the course I wanted?** This is a perfect opportunity to take advantage of the Prep and Learning Modules offered within ALEKS PPL. An individualized study plan will be created based on your performance on the Initial Placement Assessment. ALEKS will identify what you know and what you are ready to learn next so you can brush up on lost knowledge. For more information on how you can retake the assessment, see below.

**I did not place into the class I wanted. Can I take it anyway?** No, you must achieve the minimum placement result to take each corresponding class.

**Which math course is required for my program?** <https://catalogs.sandiego.edu/undergraduate/>

**What if I placed into the class I wanted?** Congratulations! Continue to use your Prep and Learning Module to improve your chances for success. The placement result required is the minimum preparation for your course. Take advantage of the individualized review and learning features in ALEKS to get a better grade in your class.

**Can I retake the ALEKS PPL Assessment?** The short answer is yes but to do so, please follow the following steps:

1. You must spend 5 hours in your learning module on ALEKS. This module is put together by ALEKS to help you with the areas that it found you needed support on after your initial placement.
2. You need to wait at least 48 hours after you first took the ALEKS placement tool.
3. If this is your third time taking the placement exam, please send an email to [mathplacement@sandiego.edu](mailto:mathplacement@sandiego.edu).

**Can I retake the ALEKS Placement Assessment immediately?**

You must wait 48 hours between Placement Assessments. There is generally no benefit to re-taking the Placement Assessment immediately after completing a prior attempt. You cannot improve your results by simply re-taking the Placement Assessment without spending time in the Prep and Learning Module to refresh material that you may have forgotten.

## 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.

**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 toward placement?** No. You must complete a new Placement Assessment to change your placement result. Select the placement tab in the upper right corner of the ALEKS page to start a new Placement Assessment.

**Can I change to a different Prep and Learning Module later?** No. You may only use one Prep and Learning Module. If you are unsure which module to select, use the module recommended by ALEKS or consult with your advisor.

## 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?** Please see this link  
[https://mhedu.force.com/aleks/s/articles?dc=Technical\\_Support](https://mhedu.force.com/aleks/s/articles?dc=Technical_Support) or  
[http://support.aleks.com/assess\\_placement](http://support.aleks.com/assess_placement)