

Riverside Insights

Official Guidance for UK/Ireland Administrations

Woodcock-Johnson IV (WJ V) — Mathematics Subtests: Americanisms and Cultural Adaptations

Purpose of This Guidance

This document provides official guidance from Riverside Insights to UK and Ireland practitioners administering the WJ V mathematics subtests. It addresses items containing U.S.-specific language, currency, measurements, or cultural references that may be unfamiliar to UK/Irish students, and clarifies which items may be adapted, which should be scored as correct without change, and how to handle edge cases.

This guidance has been prepared in consultation with SASC. SASC is a standard-setting group which promotes good practice and monitors standards for SPLD assessors and practitioners. <https://www.sasc.org.uk>

General Principles

Three categories of items apply:

Category C — Items that can and should be adapted: Where an item contains only a U.S.-specific term (e.g. “dollars”, “sidewalk”, “three hundred thirty”), the assessor may substitute the culturally equivalent UK term (e.g. “pounds”, “pavement”, “three hundred and thirty”) when reading the question aloud. Where a written stimulus also contains the U.S. term, guidance is provided on a per-item basis.

Score as Correct — Items that cannot reasonably be adapted: Where an item involves U.S.-specific content that cannot be meaningfully replaced (e.g. identification of U.S. coins such as a dime), the assessor should award credit automatically and proceed to the next item. This prevents students being penalised for unfamiliarity with content that is unrelated to the skill being assessed.

Basal and Ceiling Rules: Awarding credit for unadaptable items may allow a student to progress further in the test than they otherwise would. This is acceptable and does not compromise the validity of the assessment. The purpose of basal and ceiling rules is to give students the best opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, reduce unnecessary testing fatigue, and maintain standardisation while accommodating content differences. Allowing continuation to additional items ensures that performance reflects true academic ability rather than familiarity with U.S.-specific content.

If adaptation is not practicable: If any item cannot be adapted as suggested due to the complexity required of the assessor in the moment, the assessor should always default to awarding credit and moving to the next item. The basal and ceiling rules will continue to operate as stated above, and this approach ensures that no student is disadvantaged by content that falls outside their cultural experience.

Applied Problems (48 items; 27% contain Americanisms)

Items Suitable for Adaptation (Category C)

For the following items, assessors may substitute UK-equivalent language when delivering the spoken question. Where both spoken and written versions of the question exist, notes are provided on how to handle the written stimulus.

Item #	Issue Description	Official Guidance
13	<i>Item requires identifying items to buy for a total in cents.</i>	Adapt: Replace “cents” with “pence” when reading the question aloud. Adjust any spoken amounts accordingly (e.g. “25 cents” → “25 pence”).
16	<i>Question includes gas measured in gallons (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt (partial): Replace “gas” with “petrol” when reading aloud. “Gallons” is an acceptable unit in the UK/Ireland context and does not need to be changed. The written question may retain “gallons”.
22	<i>Question involves a quantity of dollars (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt: Replace “dollars” with “pounds” when reading aloud. Where the written stimulus shows “\$”, inform the student that the symbol represents pounds (£) for the purposes of this question.
32	<i>Earnings in dollars (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt: Replace “dollars” with “pounds” when reading aloud. Where the written stimulus shows “\$”, inform the student that the symbol represents pounds (£) for the purposes of this question.
37	<i>‘Dollars’ (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt: Replace “dollars” with “pounds” when reading aloud. Where the written stimulus shows “\$”, inform the student that the symbol represents pounds (£) for the purposes of this question.
38	<i>‘Feet’ in a calculation of volume (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt: Replace “feet” with “metres” when reading aloud and adjust the stated dimensions proportionally so that the calculation remains valid. The correct answer should be recorded in metres.
40	<i>‘Dollars’ (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt: Replace “dollars” with “pounds” when reading aloud. Where the written stimulus shows “\$”, inform the student that the symbol represents pounds (£) for the purposes of this question.
44	<i>Includes the word ‘sidewalk’ and a measurement in feet (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt: Replace “sidewalk” with “pavement” when reading aloud. Replace “feet” with “metres” and adjust stated dimensions so the calculation remains valid. The correct answer should be recorded in metres.
46	<i>‘Inches’ used in a calculation of surface area (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt: Replace “inches” with “centimetres” when reading aloud and adjust the stated dimensions so the calculation remains valid. The correct answer should be recorded in centimetres.
48	<i>‘Inches’ used in a calculation of a radius (spoken and written).</i>	Adapt: Replace “inches” with “centimetres” when reading aloud and adjust the stated dimensions so the calculation remains valid. The correct answer should be recorded in centimetres.

Items to Score as Correct (Cannot Be Adapted)

Item #	Issue Description	Official Guidance
17	<i>Requires identification of coins including a dime (heads side shown for four U.S. coins).</i>	Score as correct and proceed: The dime is a U.S.-specific coin with no direct UK/Irish equivalent. Students cannot reasonably be expected to identify it. Award full credit for this item and continue to the next item. Basal and ceiling rules remain in effect.

Items Requiring Assessor Judgement

The following item has been reviewed and a recommended approach is provided. Assessors should note any adaptation made in their session notes.

Item #	Issue Description	Official Guidance
25	<i>Refers to a fraction of 'a foot-long ruler'. Student needs to know there are 12 inches in a foot to answer correctly.</i>	Recommended approach: This item assesses fractional understanding using a ruler as context. Although metric rulers are more common in UK schools, rulers marked in inches are still available and the 12-inches-to-a-foot relationship is taught in the UK national curriculum. Assessors should not pre-teach the conversion. If the student is unfamiliar with the measurement, score the item as correct and proceed, consistent with the approach for other culturally unfamiliar content. This preserves the integrity of the basal/ceiling rules and avoids penalising the student for a knowledge gap unrelated to the core mathematical skill.

Math Problem Identification

Items Suitable for Adaptation (Category C)

Item #	Issue Description	Official Guidance
15	<i>Refers to going to a store and spending dollars.</i>	Adapt: Replace “store” with “shop” and “dollars” with “pounds” when reading aloud.
18	<i>Refers to dollars and a baseball mitt.</i>	Adapt (partial): Replace “dollars” with “pounds” when reading aloud. “Baseball mitt” may be retained as the cultural reference does not affect the mathematical content of the item — the student is not required to know what a baseball mitt is, only to perform the calculation.

Item #	Issue Description	Official Guidance
21	<i>Reference to dollars.</i>	Adapt: Replace “dollars” with “pounds” when reading aloud.
23	<i>Three-digit numbers expressed as “X hundred, Y” (e.g. “three hundred thirty”).</i>	Adapt: When reading the question aloud, insert “and” after “hundred” (e.g. “three hundred and thirty”). This reflects standard UK spoken English for three-digit numbers and does not alter the mathematical content of the item.

Number Sense (42 items; 21.7% contain Americanisms)

Items Suitable for Adaptation (Category C)

Item #	Issue Description	Official Guidance
24	<i>Three-digit numbers expressed as “X hundred, Y” (e.g. spoken without “and”).</i>	Adapt: When reading the question aloud, insert “and” after “hundred” (e.g. “three hundred and forty”). This reflects standard UK spoken English and does not alter the mathematical content of the item.
29	<i>‘Three fourths’.</i>	Adapt: Replace “three fourths” with “three quarters” when reading aloud. Both expressions refer to the same fraction ($3/4$); the UK term is “three quarters.”
33	<i>‘Dollars’ and ‘cents’ in spoken question; “\$” symbol in written question.</i>	Adapt (partial): Replace “dollars” with “pounds” and “cents” with “pence” when reading aloud. The written stimulus shows the “\$” symbol. Inform the student at the start of the item that the “\$” symbol represents pounds (£) for the purposes of this question. The mathematical relationship between the two units is equivalent (100 cents = 1 dollar; 100 pence = 1 pound), so the calculation remains valid.
36	<i>Refers to dollars (spoken question only; no written question).</i>	Adapt: Replace “dollars” with “pounds” when reading aloud. As there is no written stimulus, no further adaptation is required.
37	<i>Asked to estimate a length in inches.</i>	Adapt: Replace “inches” with “centimetres” when reading aloud and supply the correct answer in centimetres. Assessors should note the adapted answer in their session materials.
39	<i>Approximate volume of a container described in feet (‘four and one-half feet’).</i>	Adapt: When reading aloud, replace “feet” with “metres”. Also change “four and one-half” to “four and a half” to reflect standard UK phrasing. The mathematical content of the item is unchanged.

Items Requiring Assessor Judgement

The following items contain content that cannot be straightforwardly adapted and require a judgement call from the assessor. Official guidance is provided for each.

Item #	Issue Description	Official Guidance
23	<p><i>Stimulus measurement (a door) given in feet. Student asked to estimate the height of a person relative to this. Unit label required in answer. Question is spoken by examiner.</i></p>	<p>Recommended approach: This item can be adapted. Replace “feet” with “metres” or “centimetres” as appropriate when reading aloud. The assessor should supply a plausible metric measurement for the door (e.g. 2 metres) to replace the U.S. customary figure. The student should be told that their answer should be given in the same unit. Note on complexity: Using metric units does not materially change the difficulty of the estimation task — the student is still required to estimate a proportional relationship. The skill being assessed (proportional reasoning and estimation) is the same regardless of the unit used. Assessors may note the adaptation in their session records.</p>
28	<p><i>Refers to using a bill (note) to buy a box of candy. Could change dollars/cents to pounds/pence and candy to sweets, but denominations of UK notes differ from U.S. bills, which may affect complexity.</i></p>	<p>Recommended approach: This item can be adapted with care. Replace “bill” with “note,” “dollars” with “pounds,” “cents” with “pence,” and “candy” with “sweets” when reading aloud. Regarding note denominations: If the original item references a specific bill value (e.g. a \$5 bill), assessors should note that a £5 note is a valid UK equivalent and may be used. The mathematical operations required (calculating change, totalling amounts) remain the same. If the denomination does not have a direct UK equivalent, the assessor should use the nearest equivalent UK note and note this adaptation in their session records. The complexity of the item is not considered to be materially altered by this substitution.</p>
42	<p><i>Refers to a measurement of four and a half square inches. No written question. Question asks whether the context would remain plausible if changed to cm.</i></p>	<p>Recommended approach: This item should remain in inches. The measurement of “four and a half square inches” refers to a small area (approximately 29 cm²), which would not be a natural metric description for the context in question (a stamp or similar small object). Converting to square centimetres would produce an unwieldy figure and could increase the difficulty of the item for reasons unrelated to the skill being assessed. Recommended administration: Administer the item as written, using “four and a half square inches.” Inches and square inches are taught in UK schools and are not wholly unfamiliar to students. If the student does not know the unit, score the item as correct and proceed, consistent with the general approach for culturally unfamiliar content.</p>

Summary Note

This guidance has been developed to support valid and fair administration of the WJ V maths subtests in UK and Ireland contexts. Adaptations are limited to language and cultural terminology and do not alter the mathematical skills being assessed. Assessors are encouraged to document any adaptations made during a session in their administration notes.

For questions about this guidance, please contact Riverside Insights.

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