



Calculator Policy for Calculator Sections of the DC Mathematics and DC Science Assessments

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For students taking the online **DC Math** assessment as well as the online **DC Science** assessment, an embedded [Desmos calculator](#) is available in the assessment platform on items that allow calculator use. External calculators are not permitted, except in instances when a student requires a specialized calculator (e.g., large key, talking) due to a disability. OSSE has adopted the Smarter Balanced calculator policy for DC Math.

DC Math Grades 3 – 5 Calculator Availability

- DC Math assessments for grades 3 – 5 do not allow for calculator usage. Other math tools are allowable as non-embedded accommodations to support students (see Question #4 below).

DC Math Grades 6 – 8 Calculator Availability

- In grades 6 – 8, the DC Math assessment is divided into two sections: Calculator Available and Calculator Not Available.
- The DC Math assessment for grade 6 includes an embedded online four-function calculator during the Calculator Available section.
- The DC Math assessment for grades 7 and 8 includes an embedded online scientific calculator during the Calculator Available section.

DC Math High School Calculator Availability

- In high school, the DC Math assessment is divided into two sections: Calculator Available and Calculator Not Available.
- The DC Math assessment for high school includes an embedded online calculator with scientific, regression, and graphing capabilities during the Calculator Available section.

DC Science Grades 5, 8 and High School Calculator Availability

- The DC Science assessment in grades 5, 8, and Biology includes an embedded online four-function calculator with square root and percentage functions throughout the assessment.

Calculator Accommodations:

For students who meet the guidelines in the *DC CAPE Next Accessibility Manual*, available on the [Pearson Support Portal](#), for a calculation device, this accommodation allows a non-embedded calculation device to be used in the Calculator Available section mathematics assessment (in grades 6-high school). The purpose of the non-embedded calculation device is to provide access for students with a disability that severely limits their ability to access the embedded Desmos calculator.

If a student needs a specialized calculator (e.g., large key, talking) on the Calculator Available section (in grades 6-high school), the student may bring their own, provided it is specified in their approved IEP or 504 plan and adheres to the grade-specific functions detailed above. Specialized calculators are not allowed for DC Math assessments in grades 3-5, but may be used on all DC Science assessments.

Calculators may not be used on the Calculator Not Available portion of the DC Math assessments, regardless of a student's designated supports. Other math tools are allowable as non-embedded accommodations to support students (see Question #4 below, and the *DC CAPE Next Accessibility Manual*).

Paper Testers:

Handheld calculators must adhere to accommodation guidelines for paper testing, and must have comparable functionality to the embedded calculators:

- Basic four-function calculator for DC Science, and for DC Math grade 6 during Calculator Available section only.
- Scientific calculator for DC Math grades 7 and 8 during Calculator Available section only.
- Scientific, regression, and graphing calculator for DC Math high school during Calculator Available section only.
- Handheld calculators are not allowed for DC Math grades 3-5.



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Frequently Asked Questions about the Calculator Policy

1. Can students use handheld calculators for computer-based assessments?

No. For students taking the online DC Math assessment as well as the online DC Science assessment, no external calculators are permitted. Students will use the embedded [Desmos calculator](#) for these assessments.

2. Why are calculators not allowed on the DC Math assessment in grades 3-5?

In the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, the Grades 3–5 mathematics assessments are intentionally designed to measure foundational mathematical skills and computational fluency without the use of a calculation device. Allowing a calculator on these designated non-calculator items changes the underlying construct being measured.

3. Can students use their own calculators on mathematics assessments in grades 6-high school?

If a student needs a specific calculator (e.g., large key, talking) on the calculator available section (in grades 6-high school), the student may bring their own, provided it is specified in their approved IEP or 504 plan and adheres to the grade-specific functions as defined in this Calculator Policy, and that the memory is cleared before and after administration.

4. What allowable mathematics tools are available for all grades on the DC Math assessment?

Embedded digital tools (e.g., embedded ruler, embedded protractor) are used for measurements related to math items. They are available only with the specific assessment items where one or more of these tools would be appropriate when interacting with the item.

Non-embedded math tools may be used as an accommodation for the DC math assessment for those students for whom the accommodation is documented in an active and valid IEP or 504 plan:

- Multiplication Chart
- 100s number table
- Abacus
- Two-color chips (e.g., single-sided or double-sided)
- Counters and counting chips
- Square tiles
- Base 10 blocks

5. Can students use calculators on DC CAPE Next assessments that are allowable for higher or lower grade level assessments?

No. In order to maintain validity of assessment results and comparability across schools, students must only use a calculator that is allowable for their grade/course assessment. Allowing for the use of a calculator that is designated for a lower or higher grade level assessment may unfairly disadvantage or advantage students and is, therefore, not allowed.

6. If a student takes an Algebra I course where a graphing calculator is used, but the student is taking a grade 8 DC CAPE Next assessment where a scientific calculator is used, which calculator should they use?

Calculator usage is assessment-specific, regardless of the student's grade level. In this example, the student should use a scientific calculator, because the student is taking the grade 8 DC CAPE Next assessment. A student taking the Algebra I assessment would use the graphing calculator for this assessment regardless of the student's grade level. Schools should ensure students have ample opportunity to practice with the allowable calculator for their DC CAPE grade/course assessment.



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7. Does my school have to buy new calculators?

A grade or course-appropriate online calculator is provided within the online delivery platform for all computer-based DC CAPE assessments. For paper-based assessments, all students in grades 6 and higher must have a hand-held calculator for the calculator portion of the DC CAPE Next assessment. Schools must either ensure they provide a sufficient number of the appropriate calculators to students, or allow students to bring their own. All calculators must meet requirements defined in the Calculator Policy, including ensuring the memory is cleared before and after administration.

8. Does memory have to be cleared on every hand-held calculator?

Yes. Calculator memories need to be cleared by resetting the calculator to its default settings before and after each testing session.

9. When is the memory reset on the online graphing calculator?

The online graphing calculator resets to its default settings after each section. However, within a section, the screen display on the online graphing calculator will carry from item to item.

10. How do I clear the memory for TI graphing calculators?

To clear the memory of TI-84 graphing calculators (or similar models), students and/or test administrators should complete the following steps:

Select the following:

- 2nd
- + (Mem)
- 7: Reset
- Scroll right twice to "ALL"
- 1: All Memory
- 2: Reset

The screen should say "Resetting All." When completed, the screen will say "Mem Cleared."