

**National Reading Media
Assessment: What Is It and Why
Should I Use It?**

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**Braille, print or both? That is the
question.**

- The primary purpose of the National Reading Media Assessment (NRMA) is to help teachers determine whether their blind students should be a print reader, a braille reader, or a dual media reader.

**What is the National Reading Media
Assessment?**

- The NRMA is an assessment of the visual reading efficiency of youth in kindergarten through 12th grade who are visually impaired.
- The tool is designed to measure the extent to which large print materials are sufficient to complete academic tasks, whether braille should be introduced, or whether the youth should be given primary instruction in braille.

Who is the NRMA for?

- The target population for this assessment consists of youth with an identified visual impairment who have enough visual functioning to identify print letters or shapes by sight.

Why and by whom was this Assessment created?

- The process of creating the assessment began in 2008 when the National Federation of the Blind brought together a committee of experienced teachers of blind students, professors in teacher-prep programs, specialists in deafblindness and multiple disabilities, as well as experienced parent advocates.
- Parts of multiple assessments were used to assess students instead of one assessment leading to inconsistencies in data that was collected and a great deal of subjectivity.

How long does the NRMA take to administer?

- It takes around an hour to administer this test. This makes it easy to administer the test multiple times throughout the year.

Is there research to support the NRMA?

- The NRMA underwent three rounds of reliability and validity testing. The assessment is driven by data, which means that clear, objective, and observable behaviors translate into meaningful metrics. These statistics help the teacher to more effectively understand the true effects of a student's visual impairment on the task of reading.
- More information about this research can be found in an article discussing this topic in the Journal of Blindness Innovation and Research.
- <https://nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/ibir/ibir13/ibir030201.html>

Are teachers required to use a particular tool?

- Teachers can use any test they want, or a combination of tools. All that is required is that the results be discussed with the IEP team. Many teachers use parts of an assessment kit created by the Texas School for the Blind. At its core, the test doesn't look at what medium is most effective for a student; rather it seeks to address which comes more naturally to a student. "Retrieving an item from a backpack," the test says is a "tactile" behavior; "reaching out to grab a pen from a teacher" is a visual behavior. This is why having a research-based instrument removes some of the subjectivity in the assessment process and allows decisions to be grounded in actual data.

Why are student's not allowed to use optical devices when being assessed?

- Same reason why you can't use optical devices at the eye doctor.
- The optical devices show what the student can read with help, the assessment is intended to measure what the student can read when the print is a normal distance from his or her face.

**Does this test have a braille bias?
That is, will braille be recommended
for every student who takes the test?**

- No, the NRMA measures average visual functioning under standard educational conditions without a bias to either media.

How do I access the assessment and is it free?

- The NRMA is free of charge, it is the goal of the NFB to strengthen the validity and effectiveness of this assessment and welcomes feedback from the teachers who use it.
- You access the assessment at the following web address.
<https://www.nfbrma.org>

Who should I contact for more information?

- Dr. Edward Bell Director, Professional Development and Research Institute on Blindness Louisiana Tech University
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