

Virginia

Standards of Learning Assessments

Test Blueprint

Biology

2018 Science

Standards of Learning

This test blueprint will be effective with the administration of the spring 2023 Science Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.

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**Biology
Standards of Learning**

Test Blueprint

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General Test Information

Test Blueprint

Much like the blueprint for a building, a test blueprint serves as a guide for test construction. The blueprint indicates the content areas that will be addressed by the test and the number of items that will be included by content area and for the test as a whole. There is a blueprint for each test (e.g., grade 3 reading, grade 5 mathematics, grade 8 science, Virginia and United States History).

Reporting Categories

Each test covers a number of Standards of Learning (SOL). In the test blueprint, the SOL are grouped into categories that address related content and skills. These categories are labeled as reporting categories. For example, a reporting category for the Biology Standards of Learning test is *Life at the Molecular and Cellular Level*. Each of the SOL in this reporting category addresses an understanding of biological concepts related to molecules and cells. When the results of the SOL tests are reported, the scores will be presented for each reporting category and as a total test score.

Assignment of Standards of Learning to Reporting Category

Different parts of a Standard of Learning may be assigned to different reporting categories. For example, Biology SOL BIO 5.a, which covers the concept that DNA has structure and is the foundation for protein synthesis, is assigned to the reporting category *Life at the Molecular and Cellular Level* in the Biology SOL test. However, BIO 5.c, which addresses the variety of traits in an organism are the result of the expression of various combinations of alleles, is assigned to the reporting category *Interactions of Life Forms and Ecosystem Dynamics*.


Coverage of Standards of Learning


Due to the large number of SOL in each grade level content area, *every* Standard of Learning will not be assessed on every version (form) of an SOL test. By necessity, to keep the length of a test reasonable, each version will sample from the SOL within a reporting category. Every SOL in the blueprint will be tested within a three year period, and *all of these* SOL are eligible for inclusion on each version of an SOL test.

Use of the Curriculum Framework

The Biology Standards of Learning, amplified by the Curriculum Framework, define the essential understandings, knowledge, and skills that are measured by the Standards of Learning tests. The Curriculum Framework identifies essential understandings, defines essential content knowledge, and describes essential skills students need to master.

Biology Test Blueprint Summary Table

Reporting Category 	Biology Standards of Learning	Number of Items
Life at the Molecular and Cellular Level	BIO 2.a-e BIO 3.a-e BIO 5.a,b	17
Life at the Systems and Organisms Level	BIO 4.a-e BIO 6.a-f	11
Interactions of Life Forms and Ecosystem Dynamics	BIO 5.c-e BIO 7.a-d BIO 8.a-d	17
Number of Operational Items*		45
Number of Field-Test Items**		10
Total Number of Items on Test		55

 The Scientific and Engineering Practices are embedded into test items to varying degrees.

*Online test forms include multiple-choice and technology-enhanced items (TEI). Up to 15% of the items on an online form will be TEI.

**Field-test items will be administered to students for potential use on subsequent tests and will not be used to compute students' scores on the test.

Footnotes updated February 2026

Biology

Expanded Test Blueprint

Scientific and Engineering Practices

BIO.1 The student will demonstrate an understanding of scientific and engineering practices by

- a) asking questions and defining problems
 - ask questions that arise from careful observation of phenomena and/or organisms, from examining models and theories, and/or to seek additional information
 - determine which questions can be investigated within the scope of the school laboratory or field to determine relationships between independent and dependent variables
 - generate hypotheses based on research and scientific principles
 - make hypotheses that specify what happens to a dependent variable when an independent variable is manipulated
- b) planning and carrying out investigations
 - individually and collaboratively plan and conduct observational and experimental investigations
 - plan and conduct investigations or test design solutions in a safe and ethical manner including considerations of environmental, social, and personal effects
 - determine appropriate sample size and techniques
 - select and use appropriate tools and technology to collect, record, analyze, and evaluate data
- c) interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating data
 - construct and interpret data tables showing independent and dependent variables, repeated trials, and means
 - construct, analyze, and interpret graphical displays of data
 - use data in building and revising models, supporting an explanation for phenomena, or testing solutions to problems
 - analyze data using tools, technologies, and/or models to make valid and reliable scientific claims or determine an optimal design solution
- d) constructing and critiquing conclusions and explanations
 - make quantitative and/or qualitative claims regarding the relationship between dependent and independent variables
 - construct and revise explanations based on valid and reliable evidence obtained from a variety of sources including students' own investigations, models, theories, simulations, and peer review
 - apply scientific ideas, principles, and/or evidence to provide an explanation of phenomena and design solutions
 - compare and evaluate competing arguments or design solutions in light of currently accepted explanations and new scientific evidence
 - construct arguments or counterarguments based on data and evidence
 - differentiate between a scientific hypothesis and theory
- e) developing and using models
 - evaluate the merits and limitations of models

This revised test blueprint will be effective beginning with the spring 2023 test administration.

- develop, revise, and/or use models based on evidence to illustrate or predict relationships
 - develop and/or use models to generate data to support explanations, predict phenomena, analyze systems, and/or solve problems
- f) obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information
- compare, integrate, and evaluate sources of information presented in different media or formats to address a scientific question or solve a problem
 - gather, read, and evaluate scientific and/or technical information from multiple authoritative sources, assessing the evidence and credibility of each source
 - communicate scientific and/or technical information about phenomena in multiple formats

Reporting Category: Life at the Molecular and Cellular Level

Number of Items: 17

Standards of Learning:

BIO.2 The student will investigate and understand that chemical and biochemical processes are essential for life. Key ideas include

- a) water chemistry has an influence on life processes;
- b) macromolecules have roles in maintaining life processes;
- c) enzymes have a role in biochemical processes;
- d) protein synthesis is the process of forming proteins which influences inheritance and evolution; and
- e) the processes of photosynthesis and respiration include the capture, storage, transformation, and flow of energy.

BIO.3 The student will investigate and understand that cells have structure and function. Key ideas include

- a) the cell theory is supported by evidence;
- b) structures in unicellular and multicellular organisms work interdependently to carry out life processes;
- c) cell structures and processes are involved in cell growth and division;
- d) the structure and function of the cell membrane support cell transport; and
- e) specialization leads to the development of different types of cells.

BIO.5 The student will investigate and understand that there are common mechanisms for inheritance. Key ideas include

- a) DNA has structure and is the foundation for protein synthesis;
- b) the structural model of DNA has developed over time.

Reporting Category: Life at the Systems and Organisms Level

Number of Items: 11

Standards of Learning:

BIO.4 The student will investigate and understand that bacteria and viruses have an effect on living systems. Key ideas include

- a) viruses depend on a host for metabolic processes;
- b) the modes of reproduction/replication can be compared;
- c) the structures and functions can be compared;
- d) bacteria and viruses have a role in other organisms and the environment; and
- e) the germ theory of infectious disease is supported by evidence.

BIO.6 The student will investigate and understand that modern classification systems can be used as organizational tools for scientists in the study of organisms. Key ideas include

- a) organisms have structural and biochemical similarities and differences;
- b) fossil record interpretation can be used to classify organisms;
- c) developmental stages in different organisms can be used to classify organisms;
- d) Archaea, Bacteria, and Eukarya are domains based on characteristics of organisms;
- e) the functions and processes of protists, fungi, plants, and animals allow for comparisons and differentiation within the Eukarya kingdoms; and
- f) systems of classification are adaptable to new scientific discoveries.

Reporting Category: Interactions of Life Forms and Ecosystem Dynamics

Number of Items: 17

Standards of Learning:

BIO.5 The student will investigate and understand that there are common mechanisms for inheritance. Key ideas include

- c) the variety of traits in an organism are the result of the expression of various combinations of alleles;
- d) meiosis has a role in genetic variation between generations; and
- e) synthetic biology has biological and ethical implications.

BIO.7 The student will investigate and understand that populations change through time. Key ideas include

- a) evidence is found in fossil records and through DNA analysis;
- b) genetic variation, reproductive strategies, and environmental pressures affect the survival of populations;
- c) natural selection is a mechanism that leads to adaptations and may lead to the emergence of new species; and
- d) biological evolution has scientific evidence and explanations.

BIO.8 The student will investigate and understand that there are dynamic equilibria within populations, communities, and ecosystems. Key ideas include

- a) interactions within and among populations include carrying capacities, limiting factors, and growth curves;

- b) nutrients cycle with energy flow through ecosystems;
- c) ecosystems have succession patterns; and
- d) natural events and human activities influence local and global ecosystems and may affect the flora and fauna of Virginia.