Bar Code File Preparation, Transmission & Validation
Frequently Asked Questions
2019-2020 Updates

Bar code labels are required for all students taking the Iowa Assessments with pencil/paper. A bar code file submission is required to process student records for Iowa Assessments online testing, though physical labels will not be generated for online testers. Additional fees and delays in scoring the order may apply if any documents do not have a bar code label when returned for scoring.

Please submit a follow-up bar code order as needed to cover any new students, students missed in the original order, lost or damaged labels, etc. before sending in documents for scoring. Please wait until you are sure that all of your students are accounted for before submitting a follow-up order. This avoids the additional cost and time required to validate multiple follow-up orders and send multiple shipments and will help order fulfillment proceed more smoothly.

File Preparation

Q: What needs to go in a bar code file?

A: The bar code file template contains 32 fields of student data, data fields correspond to the columns in Excel, each data field must have a column header in the first row of the file. A few fields in the file are optional, a number of fields can be left blank as a blank field has meaning in those data fields. For more detail on the data required and coding for the data fields, please refer to the Bar Coding Documents page on ITP's Online Tools website. The "Bar Code Template" file on this page shows the header row, the layout of your file must match this template exactly.

Q: Is there anything new this year (2019-2020) in the bar code file layout?

A: The bar code file layout for 2019-2020 is the same as last school year.

Q: Are all of the data fields listed in the file layout required?

A: All 32 data fields are required to be in the file, as designated by the header row, but some data fields will be blank for student coding. For home-schooled students or students attending non-accredited non-public schools, only student name, date of birth, gender, and grade are required to be filled in (the other data fields can be left blank). The building name for home-schooled students should be "Home" or "Homeschool", in order for the validation program to recognize the status of those students.

Q: I'm not sure how to code some of the data fields listed in the bar code file; where can I learn more about them?

A: The document "Bar Code File Layout" lists field descriptions and valid values to enter in the bar code file, and the document "Coding for Disaggregation of Scores" goes into more detail on the meaning of the data and coding. Both documents are available on the Bar Coding Documents page on ITP's website.

Q: How can I access the Iowa DE's student State ID system to receive ID numbers for my students?

A: The DE has information about this online: https://www.educateiowa.gov/data-reporting/state-id

For additional assistance you can contact Becca Wemhoff at the DE (becca.wemhoff@iowa.gov or 515-281-5471).

Q: How do I create a bar code file?

A: Most districts use student information systems (e.g. JMC, PowerSchool, Infinite Campus, etc.) that have been approved by the Iowa Department of Education. These systems have a special function within the Iowa tab to create a file for Iowa testing bar code file input. If your district does not have a student information system, or if you use a SIS that is not approved by the DE, you may need to manually type or copy/paste information into an Excel file formatted with the bar code template. A bar code file template is available on the Bar Coding Documents page on ITP's website.

Q: I have some new students (or some students for whom I discovered errors in their information after labels were printed) – what should I do?

A: You need to create a new bar code order and submit a file to ITP containing just the students (new students and/or replacement labels) for whom you need labels. When you receive the labels you should affix them to the applicable answer documents PRIOR to mailing them in for scoring. All answer documents must have a bar code label before the order can be scored.

File Transmission

Q: How far in advance of testing should I submit my bar code file to ITP?

A: If you want to apply the labels before testing begins, we recommend you submit your file one month in advance of your test date. If you receive new students between your initial file submission and your test date, you should create a new bar code order and submit a file containing just those students.

You are also free to wait until after you've started testing and then order a full set of labels to place on documents after testing is concluded. Students can write in their personal information on test day, and then school staff can match and affix the correct labels with the correct students.

Q: Can I email my bar code file to ITP?

A: No. Bar code files contain sensitive information and email is vulnerable to interception by third parties. The Online Tools website provides a secure means for you to send your file to ITP and for ITP to provide you with file validation results.

Q: Does my file need to be in a specific format?

A: Yes. Acceptable formats are an Excel spreadsheet (.xls or .xlsx), a comma-separated values (.csv) file, or a tab-delimited text (.txt) file, with one student per row. The file also must use the bar code template with 32 fields/columns with the header row at the top. If you use a student information system approved by the DE, it will have an export function that produces a .txt file with the template properly applied.

Q: When I try to submit my file, I get the error message "That is not a valid file type," but I know that it is one of the accepted file formats. Why am I receiving this error message?

A: Certain versions of Microsoft Office on Macintosh computers along with some third- party software may remove the ".xls" (Excel spreadsheet), ".csv" (comma-separated values) or ".txt" (tab-delimited text) filename extension, thereby confusing the website into thinking your file is not one of the accepted types. Simply edit the name of your file by appending the correct extension to the end of the File name and upload it again; the website should accept the submission.

Q: After I submit my file and click "Upload", I am taken back to a login screen – did you receive my file?

A: If you're asked to log in again after you click "Upload" it is likely that your work session has "timed out." This is a security feature that logs you out automatically after an hour of inactivity to protect your data in case you forget to log out. If this happens, we did not receive your file. Log back in to the website and try submitting your file again.

If your file was submitted successfully, you will see a "File upload complete" message and a new red-shaded row will appear under the "View a file" header. If you don't see a row matching this description, it is possible we did not receive your file. If you're unsure if we've received your file, please contact us.

Q: I am testing multiple grades at the same time and I have my data separated out over several files. Can I submit multiple files to the website for ITP to process?

A: Yes. We can process only one file in each bar code order, but we will take a look at the files and combine them into one as needed on our end. We may contact you for clarification if we find duplicate records or other inconsistencies that require resolution.

Q: We are testing in a month and already have a completed bar code order, but we haven't received the labels yet. However I realized I forgot to include a grade, what should I do?

A: Contact ITP. If the order has been processed by the printer, it is closed and you will need to start a new order. In some cases we may be able to reactivate the order and add the missing students to the file and process everything together.

Q: I am testing my high school in four weeks and my middle school one week after that. Should I submit these as separate orders?

A: Orders with similar test dates (e.g. October 7th and October 14th) should be submitted together for faster processing. However, orders with very different test dates (e.g. October and February) should be separated and the order for February testers sent in closer to that test date instead of in the fall with the October testers.

File Validation

Q: I received an email that said my file had errors in it. I checked the website and found that my errors were with birth dates. However, the dates are correct; my students are special ed., foreign exchange students, recent immigrants, etc. How do I take care of this error?

A: Simply let ITP know that these dates are correct, either by marking the Excel error file we provide with an X in the "Correction For Field" column, or with a message via the "Contact ITP" link on the website. The dates will continue to show up as "errors" on the PDF order summary, but you don't need to do anything else with them. If you indicate a birth date is correct, but the year is way off (e.g. a student born in 2013 listed as a 3rd grader), ITP may contact you directly and request clarification.

Q: I'm receiving an error "Race (Missing)" but my student is coded Hispanic. What is going on?

A: Race/ethnicity classification involves a two-question designation, per guidelines of the federal Department of Education. The first question: Is this student Hispanic? (yes/no) Second question: What is the student's race? (Choose one or more: American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White) Even if a student is Hispanic ethnicity, you must still designate a race also. Please refer to the document "Bar Code Procedures" on the Bar Coding Documents page on Online Tools for additional information.

Q: I've discovered errors with the counts in the order summary that ITP provided me. What do I do?

A: Edit the information in your student information system to correct the errors, then generate a new bar code file and upload this new file to your existing order. ITP will process the most recent information submitted.

Q: I received a message that my file validated cleanly. Now what?

A: As a final step, we need you to provide verification the order summary ITP provided for your file is accurate. The order summary is a PDF file uploaded by ITP to the file management page of your order. Please review the summary and if it looks accurate, click the "Mark summary file OK" button in the upper right corner of the file management page. After you click OK we will send you an email when the file has gone to the printer and let you know when the labels should arrive.