



2025-26 Guidelines for the Use of the Enrollment Management Association's Character Skills Snapshot

Introduction

The purpose of these Guidelines for the use of the Character Skills Snapshot is to provide enrollment professionals with information needed to support the appropriate use and interpretation of the Snapshot report as well as ensure consistent use among schools for this tool. The Character Skills Snapshot, herein referred to as the Snapshot, is a tool designed by the Enrollment Management Association to assist enrollment professionals in the independent schools' admissions process. The Snapshot was developed using a rigorous scientific approach and pilot tested with over 12,000 students enrolled in independent schools across the United States, China, and Canada. Fifty-six independent schools were involved in the development of the Snapshot.

The Snapshot is designed to measure seven essential character skills deemed relevant to independent school admissions, skills which schools seek to nurture in their students: resilience, open-mindedness, teamwork, social awareness, self-control, intellectual engagement, and initiative. The Snapshot is administered online and is untimed so students can take it from their own home or some other place of their choosing. Most students need 20 to 30 minutes to complete the Snapshot.

The Snapshot measures skills in two different ways. The first presents students with three statements and asks them to select the statement that is most like them and the statement that is least like them. In any given administration year there may be 20-30 of these item types. The second presents students with a number of scenarios and four different responses per scenario. Students are asked to rate the appropriateness of each response on a four-point scale from not appropriate to very appropriate. There are 10 total scenarios.

Students can only take the Snapshot once per admission cycle. The results for the current admissions cycle will be valid through July 29, 2026.

The Snapshot

The Snapshot reports provide additional information about an applicant to support the professional judgment of experienced enrollment management professionals. Snapshot reports are meant to be used in conjunction with, not instead of, other measures such as scores from the SSAT, letters of recommendation, and information obtained in personal interviews.

The information presented in Snapshot reports provides students with an opportunity to show the extent of their character development beyond what might be revealed in other sources of information, including interviews and letters of recommendation. Results from the Snapshot, when combined with other information collected for admissions purposes, can provide supplemental information that could be used to differentiate candidates who have similar academic profiles.

Future Uses of the Snapshot

Other possible uses of the Snapshot could be to assist in decisions made to form classrooms that are compatible from a behavioral perspective, establish compatible pairings of student and counselor, or assign students with compatible housemates. Snapshot reports should be used for these purposes with caution until evidence has been collected that demonstrates the validity of Snapshot results used in this manner. Enrollment professionals are encouraged to collect their own information to evaluate whether they think the addition of the Snapshot helps them make better decisions.

Research studies to collect evidence that will demonstrate the validity of the interpretation and use of the Snapshot for a variety of purposes are continuous. Until the results of these studies are available, information derived from the Snapshot must be interpreted with caution.

Snapshot Reports

The Snapshot report will be sent to member schools only if a parent explicitly chooses to send the report to a school. The reports will appear on the Member Access Portal (MAP). Parents and students will have the opportunity to view Snapshot reports before requesting that results be sent to schools.

Each skill presented in a Snapshot report is described using one of three categories -- emerging, developing, and demonstrating. The emerging category indicates that the student's result fell into the lowest 25% of scores in the comparison sample; the developing category indicates that the student's result fell into the middle 50% of scores in the comparison sample; and the demonstrating category indicates that the student's result fell into the highest 25% of scores in the comparison sample. It is important to note that students with skills in the emerging category still have these skills, but maybe to a lesser degree than their peers. Similarly, students with skills in the demonstrating category still have room to develop these skills.

Snapshot Reliability

The data collected and analyzed following multiple field trials and operational use by more than 70,000 students who have taken the Snapshot over the last five years allows the Enrollment Management Association to conclude that the Snapshot is a reliable assessment.

Snapshot Validity

The Enrollment Management Association conducted several content validity studies to determine if the Snapshot is measuring the intended seven character skills. Through several research activities, The Enrollment Management Association concluded the Snapshot exhibits content validity.

The Enrollment Management Association also collected predictive validity evidence for the Snapshot following students who participated in the field trial, through to their first year at school. The focus of these studies was to collect data to further support the valid use and interpretation of the results of the Snapshot for admissions purposes. Findings from approximately 700 students indicated the seven Snapshot character skills are related to multiple outcomes deemed important by admissions professionals. Future validity studies to evaluate the usefulness of Snapshot results for purposes other than admissions are currently being planned, and their results will be reported as they become available.

Recommended Uses

At this point, results from the Character Skills Snapshot are recommended for use in admissions decisions only. It is possible that the Snapshot can be used for other purposes, such as to evaluate the compatibility of the placement of a student in a classroom, but additional studies are needed to support such uses. When used for these other purposes, enrollment professionals are advised to interpret scores on the Snapshot with caution until evidence of the validity of the interpretations for alternative purposes has been collected, evaluated, and disseminated.

Multiple Criteria

No single piece of information should be used as the sole indicator to characterize an individual's knowledge, skills, or abilities. Results from the Character Skills Snapshot are intended for use with other information that is gathered for admissions decisions. The Snapshot results are intended to be used in conjunction with, not instead of, evidence such as SSAT scores, letters of recommendation, and personal interviews. This information is intended to support professional judgment about admissions decisions.

Test Takers who are Non-Native Speakers of English

Validity studies that are currently being conducted include test takers who are non-native speakers of English. Until the results of these studies are available, Snapshot results for these individuals should be interpreted with care.

Schools are asked to sign off to acknowledge they have read these Guidelines prior to being able to download Snapshot reports. Please make sure everyone on the admissions staff has reviewed this document.