



Using Plover for **NCRA Testing**

Plover users intending to obtain certifications from the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) may use Plover for skills tests. This document outlines the differences when testing with Plover compared to conventional CAT software, and describes the types of hardware that can be used with Plover and restrictions on software and Plover plugins in order to follow NCRA's normal testing guidelines.

This document is only informational, and is not intended to overrule or conflict with any of the NCRA's official testing guidelines.

Sammi Ta

Developer & NCRA Liaison

Open Steno Project

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Software

Plover qualifies as “CAT software” for the purposes of testing, in that it receives steno strokes from a hardware stenographic writer and translates it into English text. However, since Plover can take steno input from many different types of writers, only some are likely to be allowed.

Because the testing process requires the Guardian browser, platform compatibility is more limited:

✓ Windows ✓ macOS ✗ Linux

You will also need a text editor to output your transcripts into. The editor may have spell checking, but may not have grammar checking; that means **no word processors**. NCRA gives **Notepad** as an example application that would be allowed. Other simple editors without grammar checking, such as **Notepad++** or **TextEdit**, may also be used.

Where the official guidelines instruct you to put your writer in Test Mode, this also includes **disabling stroke and/or translation logging** in Plover. Make sure logging is disabled before starting a test.

In addition to Plover’s built-in logging mechanisms, any **plugins that save or transmit stroke data or audio to external locations are not allowed**, including plugins like *Clippy* and *Tapey Tape*. Make sure such extensions are disabled or uninstalled before proceeding.

Hardware

NCRA's guidelines require a "stenographic writer" for testing. A conventional student- or professional-grade steno writer is recommended, but most hobbyist writers are reasonable substitutes. Commercially-available hobbyist writers marketed as such, e.g. The Uni or Starboard, are allowed.

Some existing open-source keyboard firmwares have several steno protocol implementations: **Gemini PR** is preferred for QMK, and **Plover HID** for ZMK. Using them is highly recommended.

✗ Standard keyboards

Mechanical keyboards:

- ~ QMK or ZMK, with **Gemini PR**, **TX Bolt**, or **Plover HID** keymap, preferably with a steno-like layout
- ✗ Other keymap or firmware

Hobbyist-grade steno writers:

- ✓ QMK or ZMK, with **Gemini PR**, **TX Bolt**, or **Plover HID** keymap
- ✓ **Javelin** onboard steno engine
Use Javelin's paper tape web tool to view and copy steno notes for submission. If your Javelin writer is configured with **Gemini PR**, **TX Bolt**, **ProCAT**, or **Plover HID**, you may also use it with Plover instead of onboard translations.
- ✗ Other keymap, firmware, or onboard steno engine

✓ Student- and Professional-grade steno writers

(Stenograph, Infinity, Passport, ProCAT, LightSpeed, Tréal)

The same procedures should be followed for testing as with any other software, including placing the writer in Test Mode.

✗ Other input devices, including game controllers

Procedure

Follow largely the same process described in the official guidelines for testing with any other CAT software. Where instructed to place your writer in Test Mode, if you are not using a student- or professional-grade steno writer, simply make sure that Plover is not logging or saving any data externally.

There are three separate deliverables for both transcription and realtime tests:

- a **steno notes file**, exported from Plover's paper tape window or Javelin's paper tape web tool and saved in ASCII .txt format, attached immediately after the test dictation;
- a full **transcript file**, including all text before and after the test, exported from your editor of choice and saved in ASCII .txt format, attached at the end of the editing period for transcription tests, or immediately after the test dictation for realtime tests; and
- the edited **transcript text**, including only the test content, copied directly into the myRealtimeCoach text field.

According to NCRA's testing requirements for Plover, the steno notes and transcript files must have sufficiently different names that can identify them as such, for example `steno-notes.txt` and `transcript.txt`. Check that the files are named appropriately before submitting.

Once all of the above files have been submitted, make sure to delete all test data—steno notes, transcripts, and associated files—before ending the testing session.