

LTI The ACTFL Testing Office

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ACTFL ORAL PROFICIENCY TESTING FOR THE *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM*

THE ACTFL ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW

The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview, or ACTFL OPI, is:

- a standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability
- a telephonic interview between a Certified ACTFL Tester and an examinee
- a criterion-referenced test that compares an individual's performance of specific oral communication tasks with the criteria of each of ten proficiency levels described in the ACTFL Proficiency-Guidelines-Speaking (Revised 1999)

The ACTFL OPI takes the form of a carefully structured conversation between a trained and certified interviewer and the person whose speaking proficiency is being assessed. The interview is interactive and continuously adapts to the speaking ability of the individual being tested. There is no script or prescribed set of questions; the topics discussed during the interview are based on the interests and experiences of the speaker.

Through a series of personalized questions, the interviewer elicits from the test candidate examples of his or her ability to handle the communication tasks specified for each level of proficiency in order to establish a clear "floor" and "ceiling" of consistent functional ability. Often candidates are asked to take part in a role-play to prove linguistic functions not easily elicited through the conversational format.

Since the ACTFL OPI is an assessment of functional speaking ability independent of any specific curriculum, it is irrelevant when, where, why and under what conditions the candidate acquired his/her speaking ability in the language.

The interviews are conducted by telephone and last between ten and thirty minutes. Each interview is digitally recorded. The recordings are the property of ACTFL/LTI and will not be shared with any outside party for any reason.

ACTFL OPIs IN 56 LANGUAGES

As of the printing of this brochure, ACTFL provides certified oral proficiency testing in the 56 languages listed below:

Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Cebuano, Chavacano, Croatian, Czech, Dari, Dutch, Egyptian, English, Filipino, Flemish, French, German, Georgian, Modern Greek, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hilgaynon, Hindi, Hmong, Ilokano, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Javanese, Khmer, Korean, Malay, Mandarin, Norwegian, Pashto, Persian Farsi, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Slovak, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamil, Tausug, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu and Vietnamese.

CHOICE OF OPI RESULT

The *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM* requires you to take an Official ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI).

- **Official ACTFL OPI and Rating:** An Official ACTFL OPI is a test conducted, recorded and rated by an ACTFL Certified OPI Tester. The tape of the interview is then rated blindly by a second ACTFL Certified OPI Tester to confirm the rating. The cost of an Official ACTFL OPI is \$139. Results will be reported to the *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM* in Nashville 2-4 weeks from the date of the test. You will be notified of the results by the Tennessee Court Interpreter Credentialing Program by mail.

FEES FOR AN INDIVIDUAL OPI

Official/Certified ACTFL OPI	\$139.00
Rescheduling Fee	\$ 25.00
Missed OPI Appointment/No Show	\$ 55.00

Payment may be made by credit card authorization (MasterCard or Visa), money order, or personal check. Payment must accompany an application form(s).

ADMINISTRATION OF THE OPIs FOR THE *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM*

Three specific sites in the State of Tennessee (Knoxville, Jackson, and Nashville) have been designated as test sites for interpreters to go to take a telephonic OPI in the target language. Once an interpreter has completed and submitted to LTI an OPI Application for the *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM*, LTI will notify the interpreter by mail, fax, or e-mail of possible dates at the site(s) they have selected on the application to schedule a test date and time.

APPLYING FOR AN ACTFL OPI

Step 1. *Complete an Application Form*

Use an ACTFL OPI APPLICATION FORM FOR THE *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM*. Fill out all the relevant personal contact information.

Step 2. *On the Application Form, choose a test site and indicate preferred date and time*

Indicate on your application the test site(s) to which you are willing to travel as well as your preferred date and test time. Please note that the *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM* will only test on the designated dates and times per testing location.

Step 3. *Submit Application*

Submit a completed application; include check, money order, or credit card authorization. No application will be accepted without full payment.

Step 4. *Appointment Confirmation*

Application processing typically takes 5-10 business days. Once LTI receives your application, LTI will send you a "Test Confirmation" stating the test site, test date, and test time. You will also be given the physical address for the test site and the name of your "test proctor" at the site.

Step 5. *Take the test*

On the scheduled test date, go to the test site and arrive 15 minutes prior to the time of your appointment. Bring with you two forms of ID to show the test proctor at the site. No telephonic interview will be conducted unless you present two forms of ID, one of which must be a United States government-issued photographic ID (i.e. passport or driver's license). You may not use pens, paper, dictionaries, recording devices, notes, or any other type of language references or aides during the test. Please do not bring them to the test site.

You are required to bring a telephone card with at least 30 minutes of telephone calling time on it. This phone card will be used by the "test proctor" to place the call to your Tester for the actual assessment.

Rescheduled or missed OPI Appointments**

In the event that an appointment needs to be rescheduled: Contact the LTI Test Coordinator immediately at (800) 486-8444 extension 10. There is no charge for appointments that are rescheduled prior to one day before the scheduled appointment. For appointments that are rescheduled on the day of the appointment, there is a \$25.00 rescheduling fee. For missed appointments there is a \$55.00 no-show fee.

NOTIFICATION OF OPI RESULTS

Once again, within 2-4 weeks of the test, your official ACTFL OPI Rating will be reported to the *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM* in Nashville, who will send you a letter with the results of the ACTFL test.

RETEST POLICY

Please be advised that the *TENNESSEE COURT INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM* will only allow an interpreter to take the OPI twice in a language. LTI/ACTFL's Retest Policy requires a minimum of 90 days between a test and a retest.

PREPARING FOR AN OPI

Read the ACTFL Proficiency Descriptions for Speaking, which are attached. The Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts has set the minimum proficiency level at Superior. This means that during the interview you must demonstrate the ability to:

- Speak the standard form of the language without using English or slang
- Speak the language formally, as well as informally
- Speak the language with a high level of accuracy and no pattern of error
- Speak about topics both concretely and in more general, abstract terms
- State and support a point of view in extended discourse on topics of personal and general interest
- Speculate and hypothesize about possible causes, outcomes, and/or occurrences in extended discourse

TEST TIPS

When taking the oral proficiency interview, listen carefully to the questions asked by the interviewer before answering. When answering, give as detailed a response as possible. Saying little to avoid making mistakes will not improve your rating.

Remember that the Tester's questions are not arbitrary; they are carefully framed to elicit the above communication tasks and functions. Therefore, if the Tester asks you your opinion on a topic, you should state and support that opinion. If you are asked to elaborate about a hypothetical situation, be sure to do so in hypothetical and not concrete terms. The Tester will NOT be evaluating the correctness of the content of your answers, opinions, statements or conclusions, but will only be assessing how well you express yourself in the target language.

ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES – SPEAKING (Revised 1999)

SUPERIOR

Speakers at the Superior level are able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They discuss their interests and special fields of competence, explain complex matters in detail, and provide lengthy and coherent narrations, all with ease, fluency, and accuracy. They explain their opinions on a number of topics of importance to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured argument to support their opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities. When appropriate, they use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations. Such discourse, while coherent, may still be influenced by the Superior speakers' own language patterns, rather than those of the target language.

Superior speakers command a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic and lexical devices, as well as intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone. They demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures. However, they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication.

ADVANCED HIGH

Speakers at the Advanced-High level perform all Advanced-level tasks with linguistic ease, confidence and competence. They are able to consistently explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. In addition, Advanced-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Superior level but cannot sustain performance at that level across a variety of topics. They can provide a structured argument to support their opinions, and they may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. They can discuss some topics abstractly, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise, but in general, they are more comfortable discussing a variety of topics concretely.

Advanced-High speakers may demonstrate a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms or for limitations in vocabulary by the confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration. They use precise vocabulary and intonation to express meaning and often show great fluency and ease of speech. However, when called on to perform the complex tasks associated with the Superior level over a variety of topics, their language will at times break down or prove inadequate, or they may avoid the task altogether, for example, by resorting to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis.

ADVANCED MID

Speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse.

Advanced-Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as circumlocution or rephrasing are often employed for this purpose. The speech of Advanced-Mid speakers performing Advanced-level tasks is marked by substantial flow. Their vocabulary is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature, except in the case of a particular area of specialization or interest. Dominant language discourse structures tend to recede, although discourse may still reflect the oral paragraph structure of their own language rather than that of the target language.

Advanced-Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. They are readily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the quality and/or quantity of their speech will generally decline. Advanced-Mid speakers are often able to state an opinion or cite conditions; however, they lack the ability to consistently provide a structured argument in extended discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers may use a number of delaying strategies, resort to narration, description, explanation or anecdote, or simply attempt to avoid the linguistic demands of Superior-level tasks.

ADVANCED LOW

Speakers at the Advanced-Low level are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained. Communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution may be employed in such instances. In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph. Structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker's own language rather than that of the target language.

While the language of Advanced-Low speakers may be marked by substantial, albeit irregular flow, it is typically somewhat strained and tentative, with noticeable self-correction and a certain 'grammatical roughness.' The vocabulary of Advanced-Low speakers is primarily generic in nature.

Advanced-Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion, and it can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may be achieved through repetition and restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH

Intermediate-High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with most routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully many uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to work, school, recreation, particular interests and areas of competence, though hesitation and errors may be evident.

Intermediate-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance at that level over a variety of topics. With some consistency, speakers at the Intermediate High level narrate and describe in major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length. However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the disintegration of connected discourse, the misuse of cohesive devices, a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the failure to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation.

Intermediate-High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although the dominant language is still evident (e.g. use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations, etc.), and gaps in communication may occur.

INTERMEDIATE MID

Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging.

Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

INTERMEDIATE LOW

Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions.

Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

NOVICE HIGH

Speakers at the Novice-High level are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs. Novice-High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions when asked to do so.

Novice-High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since these utterances are frequently only expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes appear surprisingly fluent and accurate. These speakers' first language may strongly influence their pronunciation, as well as their vocabulary and syntax when they attempt to personalize their utterances. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice-High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle simply a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice-High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence level discourse.

NOVICE MID

Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor's words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

NOVICE LOW

Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.