

ACTFL OPI and WPT for the Seal of Biliteracy

EXAMINEE HANDBOOK

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 **ACTFL**
AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE
TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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About the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) for the Seal of Biliteracy

The test described in this document is designed for 11th and 12th grade students of 25 less commonly taught and tested languages whose goal is to attain the Seal of Biliteracy in one of those languages. The languages offered are Albanian, Amharic, Bangla, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Croatian, Dari, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Malayalam, Pashto, Polish, Russian, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Yoruba. This test bundle consists of a combination of the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and Writing Proficiency Test (WPT), both designed and customized by ACTFL for this testing population. These tests, administered by Language Testing International (LTI), are standardized tests for the assessment of writing and speaking ability in a language. For specific information regarding ordering and proctoring these tests, please refer to the [OPI & WPT for Seal of Biliteracy Testing and Proctoring Guide](#).

The OPI is a valid and reliable means of assessing how well a person speaks a language by rating an elicited speech sample as compared to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012—Speaking. The WPT measures how well you spontaneously write by comparing your performance on writing tasks with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012—Writing. Both the Writing and Speaking guidelines can be found by clicking this link: [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012](#).

The OPI and WPT assess general writing and speaking proficiency. They are not designed to assess what you learned in a specific language program or class, nor are they tied to any teaching method or book. Rather than assessing what you “know” about writing in the language, the OPI and WPT are an assessment of what you “can do” with the language. Proficiency, that is, how well a person can use the language as described by the [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012](#), is the only factor assessed by the OPI and WPT.

About the OPI

The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is a 15- to 30-minute one-on-one interview between you and a certified ACTFL tester. It is an assessment carried out in the form of an interview but follows an established structure and protocol in order to elicit a ratable speech sample.

The OPI is interactive and continuously adapts to the speaker’s interests and abilities. It simulates a casual conversation in which the tester guides the conversation to examine a variety of speaking tasks across diverse topics. It elicits a speech sample in which the tester assesses your ability to communicate in the target language (proficiency) while communicating in ways that you might encounter in real-life situations.

Each OPI is unique, tailored to your interests and your level of functional ability. Its content is based on topics in areas related to your everyday life, school, and/or about current events happening in your local area, or even on a global scale. The tester will invite you to speak on a variety of topics while checking different linguistic functions. There is no right answer, so you should focus on providing a spontaneous and genuine response, just as you would in a real-life conversation, instead of repeating memorized or improvised material.

As the OPI progresses, the tester will explore a variety of contexts: at school, between friends, in a formal environment, etc. The tester will ask open-ended questions inviting you to elaborate and provide full responses while guiding you through the OPI structure.

About the WPT

The ACTFL WPT is a proctored test with a suggested duration of 30-40 minutes and maximum duration of 90 minutes. It is a carefully constructed assessment with four writing prompts that cover different topics. The writing tasks on the WPT are like those you might encounter in real life. The prompts represent a range of proficiency levels, functions and topics, in formal and informal contexts, dealing with practical, social, and/or professional topics. The prompts are open-ended and written in English with the expectation that the responses will be written in the target language.

The WPT is not an achievement test that assesses your learning of specific course and curriculum content. There is no right answer to the tasks, so you should focus on providing a spontaneous and genuine response rather than using memorized material. The WPT is evaluated in terms of your ability to write effectively and appropriately for real-life purposes. The writing sample is evaluated by an ACTFL-trained and certified rater to determine your level of proficiency.

Rating the OPI and WPT

ACTFL-Certified OPI and WPT raters are highly specialized language professionals who have completed a rigorous training process. They are trained to follow strict rating protocols, procedures and guidelines to rate the OPI and WPT. ACTFL only certifies testers and raters who are able to consistently produce a high degree of reliability. The quality of the OPI and WPT rating process is very important to us, and we work very hard to provide the best quality and accuracy of the final ratings.

The OPI and WPT rating process is performed exclusively through Language Testing International (LTI), the ACTFL Testing Office. Once a test is completed, LTI assigns the test to a rater for rating. Your test will not be released to you or any other party under any circumstances. Only the rating will be released. Each rating is fully described in the [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012](#).

Once an OPI is completed, the tester will review and analyze the sample to determine the final rating. In order to receive a rating, you must meet all of the requirements of that level (noted in the guidelines). After considering your speaking ability during the interview, the tester will compare the sample to the descriptors in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012—Speaking. To determine your rating, the tester uses all of the information gained from reviewing your speech sample and then chooses the best sublevel to match what you can do in the language.

When rating the WPT, the responses to each question are considered, based on the purpose of the prompt and the text type required to complete the task. To determine your rating, the rater uses all the information gained from reviewing your responses to decide the highest level of sustained writing ability. In order to achieve a rating, you must meet all the requirements of that level (noted in the Guidelines). The level is decided by the evidence of sustained writing at the level. Once the major level is identified, the sublevel is assigned, based on the quantity and quality of the writing at that level, and the evidence of performance at the next higher level.



OPI Test Structure and Protocol

The goal of the OPI is to obtain a ratable speech sample that both demonstrates the highest level at which you can speak consistently, and the quantity and quality of your functional ability.

Additionally, the sample will provide evidence of your speaking control at the next higher level of proficiency on the ACTFL scale.

A tester evaluates the sample and assigns a rating that matches your ability to the descriptors in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012—Speaking. Since all samples are compared to these proficiency guidelines, all ratings in all languages refer to the same criteria. You can review the descriptors in detail in the [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines](#) section of this handbook. There are four stages in an OPI.

Four Stages of the OPI	
Warm-up	The tester initiates the interview touching on a variety of topics to have an initial sense of your speaking ability. The interview begins at the Intermediate level, expecting that at least a basic conversation can take place. Most questions are of a general nature about your life and interests. Keep in mind that the tester’s objective is to hone in on your proficiency level, not your personal information. Topics are not meant to be of a personal nature, so, if you feel uncomfortable or are not allowed to speak about a topic, you can let the tester know that you do not want to talk about a particular topic. Testers are trained to pivot to a different topic when necessary.
Level Checks	Level checks explore the highest level at which you can function consistently. The tester selects specific topics and expands on them by asking several questions on the same topic. As the interview progresses, the kinds of questions might increase in complexity, inviting you to show your speaking ability at its best. You should provide complete responses to show your best production of the language (sentences, strings of sentences, paragraphs, multiple paragraphs), with the best quality and comprehensibility possible. All these elements together are taken into account to arrive at the final rating.
Probes	Probes explore one level above the level checks in order to gather evidence of the level at which the speaker can no longer maintain performance. This confirms that the level checks were targeted at the correct level. The tester must find the level at which the speaker’s production begins to decline in order for the sample to be ratable. The level of your control of your speaking during probes also provides information for the final rating.

	The tester’s task is to elicit a clearly ratable sample and maintain your focus on the content of your responses rather than on the linguistic challenges you might encounter. You should focus on providing the best response possible and follow the tester’s cues in providing your best performance throughout the OPI.
Wind-down	As the OPI draws to a conclusion, the tester will ask a few questions to return the conversation to speaking tasks you can easily perform. The tester might ask a few questions to touch on other topics, and to check that all the functions of the level are demonstrated. The wind-down takes a short time, and then the interview will end.

Before the OPI begins, your tester will read the statement below in English that serves as an introduction to the interview process.

OPI INTRODUCTION

I am a certified proficiency tester who has been asked to evaluate your speaking proficiency in (*language*). This is a test of your ability to express yourself in (*language*). Please use (*language*) throughout the interview.

The interview is being recorded and will last between 15 and 30 minutes. This recording shall remain the sole property of ACTFL/LTI and shall not be released to you or to any other party under any circumstances. The ACTFL Testing Office shall only provide the final rating.

During the interview, we will discuss a variety of topics. If you are uncomfortable with, or not authorized to speak about a topic that I may introduce, please let me know and we will discuss another topic. There may be instances when I need to interrupt you in order to change to a different topic.

Your personal opinions and points of view will not in any way affect your rating. However, in some cases, your ability to state and support opinions will be evaluated.

At some point during the interview, I may ask you to participate in a role-play situation with me. I will introduce the role play in English; then you and I will act out the situation in (*language*).

Your participation in the interview is very important and will help you to show your (*language*) ability at its best.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Once the tester reads this statement, you can ask any questions that you may have about the testing process. After the tester answers any questions, the tester will switch to the testing language and the OPI will begin. After this moment, speak the testing language only.

Role-plays are also a part of the OPI, but they may function as a level check or a probe. Role-plays represent social transactions or situations you might encounter in real life. The role-play works like a mini-drama in which both you and the tester take on different roles. The tester will choose to present to you a simple situation or social transaction (e.g., introducing yourself to a

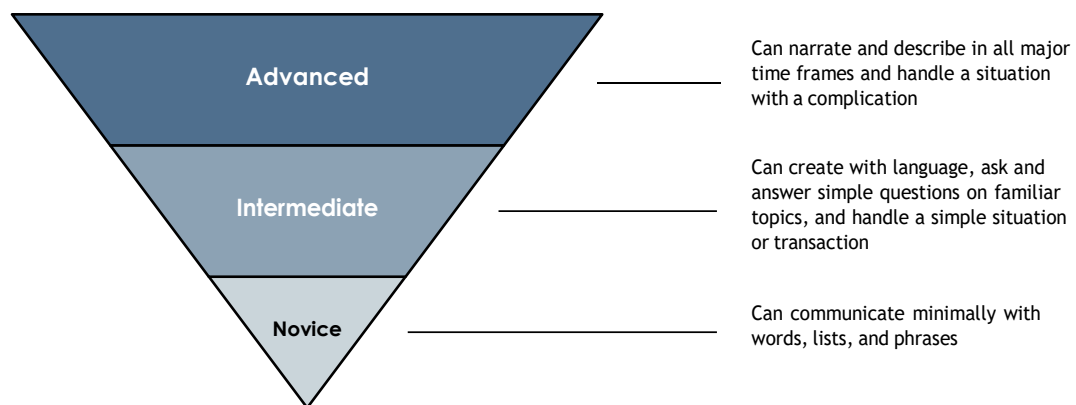
friend, buying tickets), or a situation with a complication (e.g., reporting an accident, returning a defective item). Other, more complex situations might require you to deal with a topic abstractly or handle an unfamiliar situation. During the role-play, the tester will guide you to complete the task proposed in the situation. Once the task in the role-play is completed, the tester will continue asking questions that target different speaking tasks.

Testers are experienced at making the OPI process effortless and adaptable. As such, you might not recognize the various components of the interview while tasks are changing and the level of complexity alternates from one level to another. While you are responding to questions and tasks, the tester is making decisions and choices that give you the opportunity to show your best functional ability while eliciting a ratable sample. Your job is to focus on responding to the questions, and to show your language ability at its best.

Linguistic Functions and OPI Question Types

OPI questions elicit different functions or types of language associated with the different levels on the ACTFL Proficiency scale. For each of the major levels of proficiency, there are specific types of communication that you must demonstrate. The tester will likely probe similar functions on a variety of topics in order to determine the quantity and quality of your speaking ability. For a rating that is associated with a specific proficiency level, all functions of that level must be demonstrated.

Below is a visual representation of the ACTFL scale with concise information about the major levels tested by the OPI. As you can see, the ACTFL scale covers a full range of proficiency; this test targets the Novice Low through Advanced Mid levels.



NOVICE LEVEL

Not all interviews include Novice-level questions; only those that have demonstrated evidence of breakdown at the Intermediate level will be asked questions at the Novice level.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	Examples of Novice-level Questions
Lists	What colors are in the room?
Phrases	What do you like to do in your free time?

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

All interviews begin at the Intermediate level, and all candidates will have the opportunity to speak about their routines and personal interests.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	Examples of Intermediate-level Questions and/or Requests
Simple description of a person, place, or thing	Describe your best friend. What does he or she look like?
Simple description of an activity or event	Tell me what you do after school every day.
Ask questions to get something you want or need.	You would like to get a reservation at a restaurant this weekend. Ask three or four questions to find out what is available.

ADVANCED LEVEL

Advanced-level questions invite candidates to speak about themselves and beyond. The tester will ask you to talk about yourself, your school, and/or your community. The tester's questions give you the opportunity to respond with detailed narrations and paragraph-length descriptions in the present, past, and future.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	Examples of Advanced-Level Questions and/or Requests
Detailed descriptions of people, places, and things from your present and your past	You said you like to go on vacation with your family. Tell me about the last place you went. Where did you go on the last trip you took? Tell me your impressions of what you saw on your last trip.
Detailed stories about something that has happened, is happening, or will happen	You said you like to ski. Tell me the story of how you learned to ski. Tell me the whole story of how you learned to ski from beginning to end in as much detail as you can.
Handle a complication that arises in a transaction	You are travelling with one of your parents. You have a pre-paid hotel reservation for a room with twin beds. When you arrive, the room the hotel gives you has only a single bed in it. Go to the receptionist, explain the problem and convince the receptionist to give you the type of room you reserved.

Report on a current event	Weather-related events are always in the news. Tell me about a recent weather event that you are following in the news.
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Sample Questions

Below are some sample question types. There is a note accompanying each sample to indicate what an appropriate response should contain at the targeted level.

NOVICE

What things are outside your house? Trees, cars . . . name all the things you see outside your house.

Note: If you are a Novice-level speaker, you should be able to provide words, lists, and phrases.

INTERMEDIATE

Tell me about the different rooms in your home. Do you have a favorite room? What does it look like?

Note: If you are an Intermediate-level speaker, you should be able to talk about your favorite room and provide some details about what the room looks like using sentences.

What is your normal routine at home? What kinds of things do you do at home during the week and on the weekends?

Note: This is also an Intermediate-level question. For this question, if you are an Intermediate-level speaker, you should be able to speak in sentences about your daily habits and the things you usually do when you are at home during the week and on the weekends.

ADVANCED

I'd like you to tell me your favorite memory about a good friend. It can be a story that involves you and your friend together, or a story that you know about your friend. Talk about this memory in as much detail as you can.

Note: This is an Advanced-level question. When you respond to it, you are expected to be able to produce a paragraph-length response. This means that the sentences you produce must be organized and connected to each other in a story with a beginning, middle and end. At this level, you are also expected to use the appropriate time frames.

You mentioned that you will be having a big party to celebrate your birthday next month. Can you describe how your cake will be decorated? Provide details so that I can imagine it.

Note: This is an Advanced-level question asking for a description. When you respond to it, organize your description and provide details so that your tester gets a clear idea of what the place is going to look like.

For these prompts, your response should be in the appropriate time frame, and the tester should be able to understand when the action or event happened in addition to what the place looks like. Advanced-level speakers do not need sympathetic listeners who have to fill in the gaps of the narrative or description in order to understand the speaker's idea. If you are at the Advanced level, you should be able to do all of these things in your response.



Expectations for Each Major Level

A final rating indicates both a major level and a sublevel on the ACTFL scale. Each level represents a range in which speakers demonstrate sustained speaking ability. The sublevel indicates a more precise range associated with the quality and quantity within the major level.

NOVICE

A Novice-level speaker can produce words and some phrases. Some of these words and phrases may be memorized. This is a natural process that happens when people first start studying a language and is perfectly acceptable at this level. It should not be confused with using Rehearsed Material (see below for more details). In fact, it is the way new students of a language build their vocabulary and a sense of sentence structure. A Novice-level speaker may be able to provide lists, such as the days of the week, colors, names of family members, objects, etc. At this level, the speaker is not able to produce sentences yet.

INTERMEDIATE

An Intermediate-level speaker can communicate at the sentence level and can engage in social interactions. Intermediate-level speakers can tell people what they want to order at a restaurant, what they regularly do during the day, what they need to do to complete an assignment, etc. They can tell people what they are thinking and formulate questions to find out information but are not able to organize and connect those sentences to form paragraphs. This type of speaker is generally unable to communicate whether an action or event happened in the past, present, or future.

ADVANCED

At this level, the language produced is paragraph-length. That means a speaker's responses are organized, with a beginning, middle, and end. It also means that there is a connection, not only among ideas, but also among the sentences of a response. Advanced-level speakers accurately tell stories about the past, present, and future. They can handle transactions at a high level, using the language to address complications that might arise and allowing them to resolve the transaction successfully. In addition, Advanced-level speakers can begin talking about things that they did not personally experience but may quickly return to topics that are part of their lives and their own experiences.



Sublevels

Sublevels provide a more precise description within a level. The three sublevels are: High, Mid, and Low. Sublevels are assigned in the ACTFL scale for Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced. Sublevels provide detail of the major level in terms of the quantity and quality of language produced and functional ability demonstrated at each major level.

The HIGH Sublevel

Speakers at the High sublevel communicate with ease and confidence when performing the functions of their respective level. They are capable of functioning most of the time at the next higher major level and may spontaneously raise the exchange to that level, but they are unable to sustain speech at the next higher level without lapses or evidence of difficulty.

The MID Sublevel

There are many kinds of speakers that match the description of the Mid sublevel, depending on the amount of speech produced, the quality of the speech (how well the speaker communicates) in all of the functions associated with the level, and/or the degree to which he or she controls language features from the next higher major level.

The LOW Sublevel

Speakers at the Low sublevel work hard to hold on to the major level of proficiency for which they have qualified. They meet the minimal requirements for the level, and do not break down to the major level below.

Each rating is fully described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012. You can study the guidelines in detail by clicking on this link: [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012](#).



Tips for Optimal Performance on the OPI

Logistics

- **CALL IN ON TIME.** Scheduling is very precise, so be sure you are on the line at your exact scheduled time. If you have last-minute problems and you cannot be on time, be sure your proctor contacts LTI immediately.
- Make sure that the area where you are taking the OPI is quiet and that the phone lines are clearly audible. The proctor will have prepared the area where you are taking the test.
- LTI highly recommends taking the OPI with a land-line as cell phone communication is not always reliable. The OPI will be recorded, and if the sound quality is faulty, the test might not take place.
- During the interview, you are not allowed to review documents or dictionaries, or ask for help. Rely exclusively on what you can do. If the tester detects that you are receiving assistance, the test will be discontinued or canceled.

Personal Preparation

The best advice for doing well on the OPI is PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! The OPI is an assessment of what you can do with your language at the time of the test. Your final rating describes your general speaking ability and your current communicative skills. Only language development over time will affect your rating. Last-minute preparation will most likely not affect your performance during the interview. Practice communicating naturally in the language, focusing on the message rather than just the language forms.

As with any test, you should prepare by being well-rested and alert and by maintaining a positive attitude throughout the test. Your tester is trained to help you in the process, so relax and enjoy the conversation.

Test-taking Tips

- While the Warm-up is a time to connect with the interview process, it is to your advantage to warm up by speaking the language before the assessment begins so that you do not waste the first few minutes getting used to speaking the language. Doing so will prepare your mind to communicate in the language at your best.
- Listen carefully to the tester's questions and respond accordingly. If your answer is incomplete or does not respond fully to the request, the tester may restate, or follow up with other questions. Listen to the tester carefully and address the tester's request. Make sure you provide a response to the question that is being asked.
- Speak only in the target language and avoid using slang or words from other languages. The tester may ask you to explain or restate in order to demonstrate that you can function in only the target language without help. If you do not know a word or expression, explain or paraphrase in order to convey your message to the tester. Use other words, explain, or give examples to get the message across and maintain the conversation.

- There may be instances when the tester may need to interrupt you. Do not worry. Interruptions or changes of topic may happen when the sample is sufficient, and it is necessary to move on to another question or topic. If the tester restates the initial question, make sure you address the question being asked.
- Do not prepare for the OPI by memorizing responses. Do not try to lead the tester into topics that you may have practiced in advance. The tester has been trained to recognize rehearsed/memorized material, which may negatively affect your rating, whereas creating authentic answers to the questions will provide better at-level responses.
- If the tester requests that you ask questions, make sure you formulate your questions appropriately for the target language about the proposed topic.
- If you are asked to tell a story about an experience that took place in the past, make sure you tell the story in detail using appropriate time frames and structures. If you are asked to speak about a future plan, you should also make sure you use the appropriate forms and structures for that time frame. Sustained control of the time frames is required for the Advanced level.
- Do not focus on verb formations (or any other grammar point) exclusively. The Advanced level requires control over the use of connectors, time indicators, and other language elements that may contribute to the development of paragraph-length narration.
- Short answers can work against you because they do not show the breadth and depth of your speaking ability. Provide as many details as you can.
- If you are asked to speculate about some possible conditions and/or outcomes, make sure you use the appropriate hypothetical structures for that language. Maintain the hypothetical treatment throughout your response. Consider the topic from an abstract perspective.



WPT Test Structure

The goal of the WPT is to obtain a ratable written sample that both demonstrates the highest level at which you can write consistently and the quantity and quality of your written production. The tasks explore functions at different levels to identify the level at which you maintain control of the language and the level at which that control is lost. Your responses provide detail about your writing ability and allow raters to assess your general writing proficiency. All raters in all languages are trained to follow the ACTFL rating protocols. Since all samples are compared to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012—Writing, all ratings in all languages refer to the same criteria.

Test Proctoring and System Check


Your test will be proctored on location by an authorized, responsible individual. This individual will review the Proctoring Guidelines to understand the steps required to confirm the identity of all test-takers and the conditions under which the test will be taken. The actual test is taken via a computer or a tablet with an internet connection.

System Check

For the WPT, you will need a computer (desktop or laptop) or tablet with Internet access. Before testing, set up the keyboard on the computer or tablet that will be used to administer the WPT as described above and then test it by conducting a [System Check](#). This process should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

- **Note:** The WPT will use any language keyboard input except pop-up, on-screen keyboards.
- **Note:** Transliteration keyboards of any kind are not acceptable forms of input on ACTFL assessments.
- For Amharic, Bangla, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Dari, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Malayalam, Pashto, Russian, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese, language-specific keyboard layouts must be set up to enable typing in the language. Select the operating system for the device being used and follow the directions provided to complete the set-up: [Windows 10](#), [Windows 8](#), [Chromebook](#), [MacOS](#), [iOS](#). For Android tablets, consult your device's online support to determine how to change keyboard input settings.
- Please note that the System Check page includes a space in which to practice typing for any of the above languages that require the installation of a keyboard layout.
- The System Check page also provides an example of the on-screen special character functionality; the palette included on the page shows special characters from several different languages as an example. When taking the test in Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Haitian Creole, Polish, Tagalog, Turkish, and Yoruba, the on-screen special character support will provide the special characters specific to each of those languages wherever students will be entering text.

When it is time for you to take the test, you will be provided with login information to access the test online at: wpt.actfltesting.org. At that time, again, the program will confirm that your computer or tablet meets the requirements to run the test. (See the image of the WPT System Check screen below.)

CRITERIA	MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	YOUR SYSTEM INFORMATION	STATUS
Bandwidth	Connection speed of 1,000 Kbps per candidate.	Connection Speed: 441,098.99 Kbps	✓
Web Browser	Desktop Tablet	Chrome Dev v79.0.3945.88	✓
Language/Keyboard	<p>For the Writing Proficiency Test, candidates need to type in the target language.</p> <p>To ensure keyboard compatibility with the WPT's security features, verify that your keyboard of choice works with the WPT demo test available here.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <p>1) Pop-up, on-screen keyboards are not compatible with the WPT's security features. Please ensure that you follow the keyboard setup instructions(just below the box to the right) for your operating system, which are provided below.</p> <p>2) Transliteration keyboards of any kind are not compatible with the WPT.</p>	<p>Type in the box below using the target language.</p> <div data-bbox="948 520 1344 814">  </div> <p>Keyboard Setup/Use Instructions: Windows 10, Windows 8, Chromebook, MacOS, iOS</p>	⌛

WPT Test Administration

Once the System Check is completed, the WPT provides detailed instructions and directions on how to respond to the questions. A sample question is provided to make sure you understand what will be required of you when you take the test. You will have the opportunity to review the instructions and sample question again before beginning the test. Directions are also made available in advance of the scheduled testing date. All directions and prompts are written in English.

The general introduction suggests a time allotment (e.g., 10 minutes) for completing each writing task. The total time to read the directions and complete all the writing tasks is a maximum of 90 minutes.

Once you are familiar with the system, you will be ready to begin the WPT.

The screenshot shows the WPT interface during the 'Sample Question' step. At the top, a progress bar indicates five steps: Step 1 (Background Survey), Step 2 (Self Assessment), Step 3 (Setup), Step 4 (Sample Question, highlighted in orange), and Step 5 (Begin Test). Below the progress bar, the text reads 'Sample Question' and 'This is a sample question and will not count toward your final test score.' The main content area is titled 'Question 1 of 1' and asks the user to 'Write a note to a friend who is visiting you. Be sure to:' followed by three numbered instructions: 1. Greet him/her and tell him/her why you are writing. 2. Describe where you live. 3. List places you like to visit. A timer box on the right says 'Time remaining will appear here.' A purple information box on the right contains the text: 'Remember to write in English', 'Suggested Length: 1-2 Paragraphs', and 'Suggested Time: 10 minutes'. At the bottom, there is a text input area with a red 'a' icon on the left.

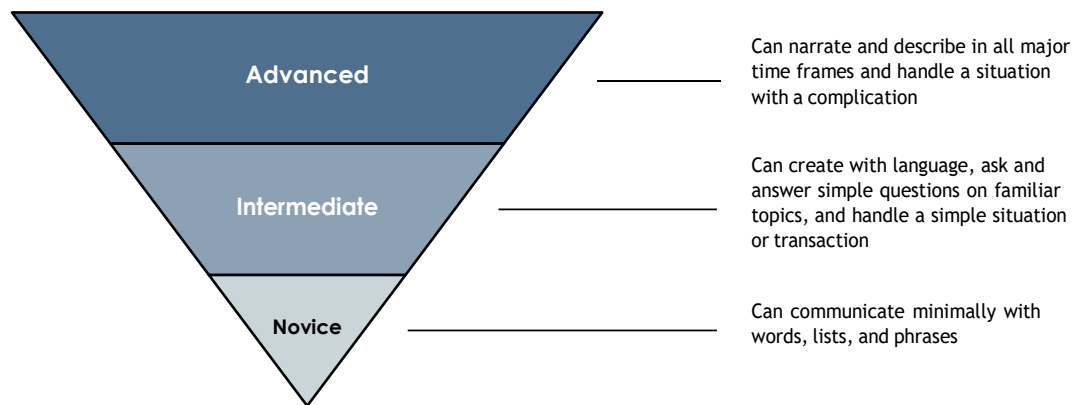
Before you begin the test, you will receive the following reminders.

The screenshot shows the WPT interface with reminders before the test. At the top, a progress bar indicates five steps: Step 1 (Background Survey), Step 2 (Self Assessment), Step 3 (Setup), Step 4 (Sample Question), and Step 5 (Begin Test, highlighted in orange). A 'Sign Out' link is in the top right corner. The main content area is titled 'Before we start...' and features four reminders, each with an icon and text: 1. 'Shut Down Programs' with a window icon: 'Before starting your test, shut down all other programs running on your computer.' 2. 'Technical Issues' with a warning sign icon: 'If you experience technical difficulties, relax. You can always sign back in within 2 hours.' 3. 'Writing' with a pencil icon: 'Write as much as you can to show us what a great writer you are!' 4. 'Time is Precious' with a stopwatch icon: 'You have 45 minutes to complete this test. The clock starts after clicking **Begin**.' At the bottom, the text 'Are you ready?' is displayed in orange, and a 'Begin >' button is in the bottom right corner.

Linguistic Functions and WPT Question Types

WPT prompts elicit different writing functions associated with the levels in the ACTFL Proficiency scale. For each of the major proficiency levels, there are specific types of communicative tasks that you must demonstrate. The WPT may touch on the same functions in different topics in order to determine the quantity and quality of your functional ability.

Below is a visual representation of the ACTFL scale with concise information about the major levels tested by the WPT. As you can see, the ACTFL scale covers a full range of proficiency levels. However, this WPT, designed for candidates for the Seal of Biliteracy, encompasses the Novice Low to Advanced Mid range.



NOVICE LEVEL

Novice level prompts will provide a context in which you might have to create a list of words.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	Examples of Novice-Level Questions and/or Requests
Lists	What colors do you want to paint your house? Make a list of the rooms in the house and the colors you want to use in each room.
Phrases	In preparation for your friend’s party, make a list of the activities you want to prepare.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

At the Intermediate level, you can write about your routines and personal interests. Questions will invite you to write in complete sentences.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	Examples of Intermediate-Level Questions and/or Requests
Simple description of a person, place, or thing	Write a note to your parents in which you describe your best friend. What does he or she look like?
Simple description of an activity or event	Write an e-mail in which you tell a new friend about what you usually do at an American picnic.
Ask questions to get something you want or need	Write a letter to your host family to ask about their house and the family. Ask three or four questions to find out what you want to know.

ADVANCED LEVEL

Advanced-level questions invite you to write about yourself and about your school or community. Questions invite you to provide detail in full paragraphs.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	Examples of Advanced-Level Questions and/or Requests
Detailed descriptions of people, places, and things from your present and your past	You are writing a report about your internship in a computer company. Write about the area where you worked at the company. Provide a detailed description of the office and the people who worked there.
Detailed stories about something that has happened, is happening, or will happen	You just arrived from a camping vacation. Write a story about an interesting situation that happened while camping.
What started the situation, and how was it finally resolved?	Write a letter to your host family to ask about their house and the family. Ask three or four questions to find out what you want to know.
Handle a complication that arises in a transaction	You bought an item on the internet, but when the package arrived the item was not what the description had advertised. Write a note to customer service. Explain what happened and request a replacement.

<p>Report on a current event</p>	<p>You are writing a report for your school newspaper about the impact of climate changes in local weather. Report on the recent weather changes in your area and what has happened most recently. Comment on the most recent news.</p>
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Writing Prompts on the WPT

The WPT contains four separate prompts that target the Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels of proficiency. Each prompt describes the audience, context, and purpose of the writing task, and also describes the suggested length of the response (e.g., several sentences, multiple paragraphs).

Sample Tasks

Question #1

An e-mail to a local student in a study abroad program

You are going abroad for a week-long culture class. The school has put you in contact with a local student so that you can get to know more about the school and the course. Write an e-mail to the student. Introduce yourself and ask questions about the class environment.

1. Introduce yourself. Write about where you come from and your academic institution.
2. Briefly explain why you want to take the class and what you want to learn during the week.
3. Ask 4-5 questions to learn about the class and the learning environment in the school abroad.

While the requests at lower levels are of a simple nature, it is important to read the instructions carefully to understand the specific context presented by the prompts. For example, in this sample prompt, the context is an e-mail to a local student on the topic of a study abroad program. The prompts ask you to introduce yourself and your academic institution, to explain the purpose of taking the class, and to ask questions about the school environment. Since you are writing an e-mail, full performance of the task will include a text of a few sentences with some personal details and questions. Because it is an e-mail to a fellow student, it is expected that the communication will be casual and informal.

Question #2

A newspaper article

You are writing a newspaper article about a recent weather disaster in your area. The newspaper director has asked you to provide general details about the disaster, to provide a human-interest story, and to reflect on the impact and consequences of climate change in the area.

1. Provide general information about the event (what happened, when, where, local conditions)
2. Narrate a specific story that happened during the disaster. Describe the experience in detail.
3. Reflect on the impact of climate change in the area, possible causes, and consequences of more disasters in the area.

In this case, reading the instructions carefully will help you to understand the context and purpose of the writing tasks and the specific functions requested. The context is a newspaper article on the topic of a weather disaster. The questions ask for a description of the disaster (Advanced), and a narration of a specific case (Advanced). Since you are writing a newspaper article, full performance of the task will include a text of several paragraphs, internal organization, details to add precision to the narration and description, and interconnection between all elements of the answer. Because it is a newspaper article, you should try to represent a formal and professional voice.



Tips for Optimal Performance on the WPT

Logistics

Your testing proctor will make sure that the area where you take the WPT is quiet and that you will not be interrupted while you take the test.

During the WPT, you are not allowed to ask for help or check documents or dictionaries. Rely exclusively on what you can do. If the proctor detects that you are using help, the test will be discontinued or cancelled.

Personal Preparation

The best advice for doing well on the WPT is PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! The WPT is an assessment of what you can do with your language at the time of the test. Your final rating describes your general writing ability and skills. The final rating describes your sustained writing ability, that is, the level at which you show full control of the language. Only language development over time will affect your rating. Last-minute preparation will not likely improve your performance on the test. Focus your writing practice on communicating naturally in the language, focusing on the message rather than the language forms.

As with any test, you should prepare by being well-rested and alert and maintaining a positive attitude throughout the test.

Test-taking Tips

Make sure that you understand the technology involved in taking the test. Follow the instructions on how to add special characters or use the appropriate script. For languages that use the Roman alphabet, you will be able to enter special characters using an on-screen palette and Alt codes for any characters not found on the palette. Certain languages require a specially configured keyboard. Information about entering special characters for each of the languages included in this test can be found in the Entering Special Characters on the WPT section of this handbook.

- Before you finish the test, review your answers to check correct spelling, punctuation, accentuation, or any other feature required in writing in the language. Be as accurate as you can.
- Read the prompts carefully and address all the requirements in the questions fully. Keep in mind that each component of the questions addresses a variety of linguistic functions. Respond accordingly. Your answers should demonstrate your ability to perform these functions fully. If your answer is incomplete or does not respond fully to the request, your final rating may be affected. Review each question before you move to the next task and make sure that you have responded to the prompt completely.
- Write only in the target language and avoid using slang or words from other languages. Express your ideas as clearly and extensively as possible. If you do not know a word or expression, explain or paraphrase what you want to say in order to convey your message. Use other words, explain, or give examples to get the message across.

- Do not prepare for the WPT by memorizing responses. Do not try to incorporate materials you have practiced in advance. The tester has been trained to recognize memorized material. Memorized responses prepared in advance can count against you, whereas creating real answers to the questions will provide better at-level responses. Focus on providing legitimate answers to the questions.
- If you are asked to write a story about an experience that took place in the past, make sure you tell the story in detail using appropriate time frames and structures. If you are asked to write about a future plan, you should also make sure you use the appropriate forms and structures for that time frame. Sustained control of the time frame is required for the Advanced level.
- Do not focus on verb formations (or any other grammar point) exclusively. The Advanced level requires control over the use of connectors, time expressions, and other language elements that may contribute to the development of full paragraph narration.
- Short answers can work against you because they do not show your full writing ability. Provide details in the most well-organized structure possible.
- If you are asked to state and support your opinion, make sure to support your point of view with well-organized arguments.



Policies and Guidelines for the OPI and WPT

Confidentiality

Your answers on the WPT shall remain the sole property of ACTFL and LTI. They will not be given to you or to anyone else under any circumstances. During the OPI, your responses will be recorded. This recording shall remain the sole property of ACTFL and LTI. Only your final rating will be released for both tests.

Recording your OPI is not permitted for any reason without ACTFL's and LTI's express written consent. Any attempt to record your OPI will result in a UR (Unratable) rating.

Rehearsed Material

The OPI and WPT are tests of your ability to express yourself spontaneously in a language. Certified ACTFL Raters will evaluate what you can do in the language when you are writing and speaking. In order to do this effectively, your responses must be authentic. While you should make every effort to improve your abilities in writing and speaking, you should not try to memorize responses prior to taking the OPI and WPT. If you prepare a response or use responses from online sources or books, you will not receive an accurate rating. Proficiency is characterized by spontaneous language use. ACTFL WPT raters are experienced in identifying rehearsed responses. Thus, if you use rehearsed material, you may not receive a rating for your test.

It sounds simple, but practicing your writing, listening, and speaking skills as much as you can in the language is the best preparation for a successful assessment. We wish you success in improving your language skills and for your next OPI and WPT tests.

Preparing for the OPI and WPT

The best way for you to prepare is to practice writing, listening, and speaking the language in real-world situations. Try your best to find situations in which you have to use the language to communicate. For instance, you can try going to a restaurant where the target language is spoken and talk to the server while ordering your food.

Finding other people who speak the language and spending time with them is another good way to improve your skills. When you get together, make a rule about using only the target language when you talk to each other. Practice telling them stories about things you do regularly at home, school, or work. Tell them stories about things that happened to you in the past or your plans for the future. Getting into discussions that require you to express your opinion about anything, from the news to sports or entertainment, will also help you improve what you can do in the language. Communicating in the language as someone would do in the real world is the best way to get ready to take the OPI and WPT.

To be successful on the OPI and WPT, it is also important to understand what a writer and speaker can do at each level of proficiency so that you can understand what is expected of you when you respond to the prompts. The descriptions of the major levels of the OPI can be found in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012—Writing and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012—Speaking, available at this link: [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012](#).



Entering Special Characters on the WPT

For the following languages that do not use a Romanized alphabet, a specially configured compatible keyboard will be necessary to enter special characters on the WPT: Amharic, Bangla, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Dari, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Malayalam, Pashto, Russian, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. Instructions for changing your keyboard configuration are provided on the WPT System Check page:

<https://wpt.actfltesting.org/systemcheck>.

For the remaining languages included in this test (Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Haitian Creole, Polish, Tagalog, Turkish, and Yoruba), special characters can be entered using an on-screen special character palette or by inputting the Alt codes noted below.

Albanian

Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code
Ç	0199	Ë	0203
ç	0231	ë	0235

Bosnian

Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code
Č	0268	Đ	0272	Ž	0381
č	0269	đ	0273	ž	0382
Ć	0262	Š	0352		
ć	0263	š	0353		

Croatian

Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code
Č	0268	Đ	0272	Ž	0381
č	0269	đ	0273	ž	0382
Ć	0262	Š	0352		
ć	0263	š	0353		

Haitian Creole

Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code
À	0192	È	0200	Ò	0210
à	0224	è	0232	ò	0242

Polish

Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code
Ą	0260	Ć	0262	Ś	0346
ą	0261	ć	0263	ś	0347
Ę	0280	Ń	0323	Ź	0377
ę	0281	ń	0324	ź	0378
Ł	0321	Ó	0211	Ż	0379
ł	0322	ó	0243	ż	0380

Tagalog

Character	Alt Code
Ñ	0209
ñ	0241

Yoruba

Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code
Á	0193	Í	0205	Ò	0210
á	0225	í	0237	ò	0242
À	0192	Ì	0204	Ú	0218
à	0224	ì	0236	ú	0250
É	0201	Ó	0211	Ù	0217
é	0233	ó	0243	ù	0249
È	0200				
è	0232				

NOTE: To add the dot below the following Yoruba characters follow these steps:

1. Hold down the Alt key and enter the first 4-digit code as usual.
2. Release the Alt key.
3. Hold down the Alt key and enter the second 4-digit code.

Character	Alt Code	Character	Alt Code
Ẹ	0201 then 0803	Ọ	0211 then 0803
ẹ	0233 then 0803	ọ	0243 then 0803
Ẹ̀	0200 then 0803	Ọ̀	0210 then 0803
ẹ̀	0232 then 0803	ọ̀	0242 then 0803



Questions? Contact us

If you have any additional questions, please contact us at:

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