



american council on the teaching of foreign languages

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ACTFL Policy on Oral Proficiency Interview(OPI) and Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) Retesting

A proficiency test differs from an achievement/content test in a number of ways. In a proficiency test, there are no right or wrong answers. The topics discussed are not limited by course content or curriculum. An individual cannot “cram” for a proficiency test nor can one receive a perfect score. According to the research on second language acquisition, several hundred hours of guided instruction and time on task, meaningfully engaged in honing and using language skills, are required to progress from one sub-level to the next highest sub-level or major level of the proficiency scale.

The ACTFL policy requires that each test taker wait at least **90 days between test taking occurrences** (retesting) of the ACTFL OPI and WPT.*

1. This time period is based on the number of guided instructional hours and time on task that the research indicates are required to progress from one sub-level to the next highest sub-level or major level.
2. Frequent testing within a short span of time may divert the candidate’s attention toward attempts at learning to “take the test” and away from activities that promote the development of speaking and writing proficiency, which is inconsistent with the goal of the test measuring language speaking and writing ability rather than test taking ability.
3. Frequent retesting permits the test taker to memorize techniques, probes, items and role-playing scenarios that are copyrighted and the exclusive property of ACTFL. LTI maintains this material as strictly confidential and its memorization and/or release would compromise the validity of the test as a measure of a test taker's ability to speak and/or write the target language, as described in the next point.
4. Frequent test taking tends to have an adverse effect on the quality of the speech sample gathered during the interview, actually reducing the individuals’ level of performance and subsequent rating for a variety of reasons:
 - a. Frequent test takers tend to want to rely on memorized or rehearsed materials and/or predictable content, rather than engage in an interactive conversation or respond to the scenario presented.
 - b. Frequent test takers tend to focus on test taking strategies in an attempt to manipulate the course of the interview or the intent of the probe.
 - c. Frequent test takers may tend to focus on language form rather than on communicating personal meaning.

*If the target goal is known and is more than a single sub-level away, the retest/waiting period should be at least 180 days.