

# What's the difference between the AAPPL and other language assessments?

As state and local administrators and educators evaluate language assessment options, questions sometimes arise as to why to choose one test over another. This overview details aspects unique to the **ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL)**.

## Federal Compliance Matters

- **Privacy:** The AAPPL and ALIRA test platforms are 3rd-party COPPA **certified**, which ensures student data is protected in accordance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. Other tests and test providers may seek to align with general privacy guidelines, but none are formally certified as COPPA compliant.
- **Accessibility:** AAPPL and ALIRA are ADA compliant and a minimum of WCAG 2.0 AA compliant in addition to having many accessibility features

built into the tests. All ACTFL tests have a formal accommodations request process to allow educators to meet and document 504/IEP requirements. Other tests and providers may offer some accommodation options for their tests, but none comprehensively meet or exceed *all* federal guidelines.

- **"Opt-Out" Tracking:** The AAPPL has a standard means of identifying non-participation among students.

## Proficiency Matters and Test Construct

- **Official:** The AAPPL is developed in accordance with the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* and is the **only** K-12 test which issues **official** ACTFL scores. No other test provider or test can issue official ACTFL scores.
- **Comprehensive:** Unlike other tests on the market, the AAPPL scoring is based on all **four** criteria of proficiency as defined by ACTFL (function, comprehensibility, text type, and content/context).
- **Holistic:** The AAPPL assesses all three communicative modes, including interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. In the Interpersonal Speaking and Listening portion of the AAPPL, learners engage with a video chat partner. The AAPPL is the only test that assesses the interpersonal communication mode.
- **Spontaneous and unrehearsed:** Unlimited retakes of responses are not permitted; this preserves the spontaneous and unrehearsed nature of interpersonal communication, a pillar of proficiency.
- **Form-based:** Unlike a predictive or quasi-adaptive test construct, the AAPPL test forms target a

range of proficiency levels, allowing teachers and administrators to choose the level to be administered. Some assessment providers encourage using tests outside its stated use. Doing so compromises test validity. ACTFL and LTI support intended use of the AAPPL for learners in grades 3-12.

- **Age questions:** Like other tests on the market, the AAPPL is designed for grades 3 and higher. We cannot ensure accuracy of results nor make validity claims with testing outside the intended use/test-taker population. Literacy development can change significantly between K and 4th grade, when US schools begin to introduce content through reading. Typically, literacy in a first language isn't high enough to reliably assess reading and writing skills in a second language until 3rd or 4th grade. ACTFL monitors the reliability of all our tests and regularly reviews data to ensure test validity.
- **Test length:** Some tests use fewer prompts for younger learners; however, industry standards suggest at least 3 prompts per level tested are needed to ensure validity. This allows sufficient evidence in student responses for accurate and reliable scoring.

## Testing and Reporting Features

- **Flexibility:** Each section of the test can be administered separately in any order.
- **Reports:** Reporting dashboards allow users to filter and download data, and include features such as longitudinal reporting by student, national reports, etc.
- **Rating reviews:** ACTFL tests have a formal rating review process available, and Rating Reason Codes offer insights into extraneous factors impacting a rating. The ability to see and listen to learner responses allows teachers and administrators granular review of responses.
- **Double rating:** At least 20% of tests are double rated (the industry standard), and 100% of Spanish Presentational Writing submissions are double rated with the assistance of machine scoring. This is exceptional in the field – no one else has this high of double rating percentage.
- **ACTFL-certified raters:** All human raters are ACTFL certified and undergo regular re-norming and QA activities to ensure test reliability. No other test has ACTFL certified testers and raters.
- **Content refresh:** A substantial portion of test content is revised annually.
- **External validation:** AAPPL has been externally evaluated for validity and reliability via traditional research and validation practices (see Cox and Malone, 2018). No other tests are third-party validated.
- **Bias and sensitivity:** Language teachers develop and review all AAPPL test items, and all items are extensively reviewed for bias and sensitivity.
- **ACTFL Proficiency Scale:** The AAPPL test alignment to the ACTFL Proficiency Scale facilitates articulation with advanced courses and higher ed (where ACTFL assessments are predominantly used).
- **Positive washback:** The AAPPL has been shown to promote positive washback in K-12 language teaching (see Vyn, 2024).

## Support and Test Ordering

- **Bilingual support:** LTI has bilingual (Spanish, English) customer support and success teams available during business hours.
- **Onboarding and training:** LTI's customer success team provides onboarding and test ordering training in English and Spanish.
- **Ordering:** The AAPPL can be ordered directly on the LTI's Client Site. For maximum flexibility, sections of the test can be ordered separately:
  - ▶ Interpersonal Listening and Speaking
  - ▶ Presentational Writing
  - ▶ Interpretive Listening and Reading


## References and Additional Reading


- ACTFL. (2024). *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – 2024*. Retrieved from [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org).
- ACTFL. (2024). Use of ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and Issuing of Official ACTFL Tests. Retrieved from <https://www.actfl.org/use-of-actfl-proficiency-guidelines-and-issuing-of-official-actfl-tests>.
- Cox, T.L., & Malone, M.E. (2018). A validity argument to support the ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL). *Foreign Language Annals*, 51 (3), 548-574. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12353>
- Vyn, Reuben. (2024). Leveraging the AAPPL to promote positive washback in K-12 language teaching. *Foreign Language Annals*, 57 (3), 675-697. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/flan.12761>

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