LISTENING & READING
COMPUTERIZED ADAPTIVE TEST
FAMILIARIZATION MANUAL &
ACTFL PROFICIENCY
GUIDELINES 2012 – LISTENING
GUIDELINES 2012 – READING
What Is ACTFL?

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is a national membership organization of foreign language professionals dedicated to promoting and fostering the study of languages and cultures as an integral component of American education and society. ACTFL strives to provide effective leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning of languages at all levels of instruction and in all languages. Its membership of more than 12,000 language professionals includes elementary, secondary, and post-secondary teachers as well as administrators, specialists, supervisors, researchers, and others concerned with language education. ACTFL represents all languages and all levels of language instruction.

What are the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines?

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 are descriptions of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. For each skill, these guidelines identify five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels.

These Guidelines present the levels of proficiency as ranges and describe what an individual can do with language at each level and cannot do at the next higher level, regardless of where, when, or how the language was acquired. Together, these levels form a hierarchy in which each level subsumes all lower levels. The Guidelines are not based on any particular theory, pedagogical method, or educational curriculum. They neither describe how an individual learns a language nor prescribe how an individual should learn a language, and they should not be used for such purposes. They are an instrument for the evaluation of functional language ability.

Listening is an interpretive skill. Listening comprehension is largely based on the amount of information listeners can retrieve from what they hear and the inferences and connections that they can make. By describing the tasks that listeners can perform with different types of oral texts and under different types of circumstances, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening describe how listeners understand oral discourse. These Guidelines do not describe how listening skills develop, how one learns to listen, nor the actual cognitive processes involved in the activity of listening. Rather, they are intended to describe what listeners understand from what they hear.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening can be found in the appendix of this document.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening can also be found on the ACTFL website along with authentic text samples associated with each major level. To access this website, go to http://www.actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org/listening.
Reading is also an interpretive skill. Reading comprehension is largely based on the amount of information readers can retrieve from a text, and the inferences and connections that they can make within and across texts. By describing the tasks that readers can perform with different types of texts and under different types of circumstances, the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 - Reading* describe how readers read texts and retrieve information. These Guidelines do not describe how reading skills develop, how one learns to read, nor the actual cognitive processes involved in the activity of reading. Rather, they are intended to describe what readers are able to understand from what they read.

*The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 - Reading* can be found in the appendix of this document.


---

1The *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012* may be used for non-profit, educational purposes only, provided that they are reproduced in their entirety, with no alterations, and with credit to ACTFL.
WHAT IS THE ACTFL LISTENING AND READING COMPUTER ADAPTIVE TEST (L&Rcat)?

The ACTFL L&Rcat is the Internet-Based Test (iBT) CAT version of the ACTFL English Listening and Reading Proficiency Tests (LPT and RPT).

L&Rcat stands for “Listening and Reading Computerized Adaptive Testing.” It is a dynamic test that selects test items based on what it learns about the candidate’s proficiency from the candidate’s answers to questions. From the perspective of the test taker, the texts and oral passages in the ACTFL L&Rcat seem to be tailored to the test taker’s own listening and/or reading ability.

Compared to static multiple-choice tests that are traditionally used for listening and reading tests, the ACTFL L&Rcat requires fewer test items to determine the candidate’s ability level, making it efficient in terms of both time and effort.

WHAT IS THE ACTFL RATING SCALE?

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Reading describe five major levels of listening proficiency (Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice). The ACTFL L&Rcat assesses listening and reading proficiency across three of these levels. The rating scale for the ACTFL L&Rcat is:

Superior
Advanced
Intermediate
Novice

The major levels are delineated according to a hierarchy of global tasks. This hierarchy is summarized in a rating scale spanning a full range of listening and reading abilities from *Distinguished (a highly articulate, well-educated speaker) to Novice (those who can recognize words and get limited information from highly predictable, simple passages in familiar contexts and formats). Major borders divide the major levels of the scale (Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice). The major levels, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels. The levels of the ACTFL Guidelines describe the continuum of proficiency from that of the highly articulate, well-educated language user to a level of little or no functional ability.

* Please Note: While the Distinguished level is currently part of the ACTFL Guidelines, it is not currently part of the testing procedures of the L&Rcat. This rating feature is expected to be added to the test soon. As shown in the inverted pyramid below, each level represents a range of functional language ability.
As shown in the inverted pyramid here, each level represents a range of functional language ability.

**WHAT IS BEING EVALUATED IN AN ACTFL L&Rcat?**

**Listening**
Listening is an interpretative skill. Listening comprehension is based largely on the amount of information listeners can retrieve as well as the inferences and connections they can make from listening to spoken language produced by one or multiple speakers under a variety of circumstances.

**Reading**
Reading is an interpretative skill. Reading comprehension is based largely on the amount of information readers can retrieve from a text as well as the inferences and connections that they can make within and across texts, and under different circumstances.
ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening and Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>Argumentation</td>
<td>Familiar and Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Complex Lengthy</td>
<td>Broad Precise Specialized</td>
<td>Complex Structures</td>
<td>Cultural References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supported Opinion</td>
<td>Abstract Topics</td>
<td>Academic Literary</td>
<td>Passages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aesthetic Properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Concrete Current and General</td>
<td>Public Education Work</td>
<td>Paragraph-Length</td>
<td>Broad General Vocabulary</td>
<td>Simple Sentence Patterns and Strings of Sentences</td>
<td>Most Common Cultural Patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narration</td>
<td>Interest Topics</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>Connected Passages with Clear, Predictable Structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Basic Information</td>
<td>Highly Familiar Everyday</td>
<td>Highly Familiar</td>
<td>Simple, Predictable,</td>
<td>High Frequency Vocabulary</td>
<td>Simple Sentence Patterns and Strings of Sentences</td>
<td>A Few of the Most Common Cultural Patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Everyday Contexts</td>
<td>Loosely-Connected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>Limited Amount of</td>
<td>Most Common Aspects of Daily</td>
<td>Most Common Informal</td>
<td>Highly Contextualized</td>
<td>Memorized Words and</td>
<td>Memorized Words, Phrases, and Lists</td>
<td>Only the Most Common Cultural Patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Settings</td>
<td>Texts Consisting of Single, Simple, and Predictable Phrases</td>
<td>Phrases, Cognates and International Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT IS THE FORMAT OF THE ACTFL L&RCat?

Each full test (with both the Listening and Reading sections, combined) may contain up to twenty (20) total passages, with a maximum of ten (10) passages for the candidate to listen to, or read, respectively. Each listening or reading passage has three (3) multiple-choice questions.

There is a maximum amount of time allotted to answer the questions associated with a passage. The time depends on the difficulty/length of the passage. A count-down clock on the page tells candidates how much time they have before the program automatically advances the test to the next task.

WHAT ARE ACTFL L&RCat TASKS LIKE?

Each task contains a listening or reading passage with three questions, each followed by multiple-choice response items about the passage.

The task presentation for the Listening portion of the test has four phases. In the first phase, the title of the passage and the questions pertaining to the passage appear. This gives the test taker time to become familiar with the topic and the questions before he or she hears the passage. The passage is then played, and, while it is played, the test taker is instructed to take notes on a notepad that is provided within the test. When the passage ends, there is a five-second period to review notes before the multiple-choice options to the questions appear.

A variety of texts are presented in the target language for the Reading portion of the test. They vary in genre, content, length, and complexity depending on the proficiency level targeted. These are real-world types of texts ranging from informal notes, e-mails,
letters, and announcements to short, technical reports, excerpts from literary texts, articles, and commentaries. The texts cover social, academic, and professional topics. Each text is followed by three questions with multiple-choice response items. Each question has four possible answers; only one answer is correct. The questions target the main idea, supporting detail(s) and, for some texts, the inferences and connections the candidate can make from the content and organization of the text.

**An Example of a Listening Task**

**Transcript of Listening Task:**

Jacob: Universal Exports, Jacob Thompson speaking.

Allison: Mr. Thompson, it’s Allison Barnes from Allied Shipping Company. I wanted to give you a call concerning changes that will be made in our pricing plan. I’ll e-mail the specifics to your office at the end of this call, but, in short, there will be an across-the-board increase in charges for all of our services. The one that will impact our business relationship the most will be a 30% increase in fees for merchandise shipped by truck.

Jacob: That’s a significant increase! We use your company’s services to send merchandise to customers by plane, ship, and train, but you know that the bulk of the merchandise is sent by truck. A 30% increase would either cut our profits substantially or require us to charge our customers more. We could lose a lot of business.

Allison: I understand you concerns, but the price of fuel has made this increase a necessity.

Jacob: We may have to switch to a different shipping company. I’ll have to discuss this with the president of the company and get back to you.

**Screenshots of Listening Task**

![Screen shot of ACTFL Listening Test](image)
An Example of a Reading Task

Screenshots of Reading Task
More examples of Listening and Reading tasks can be found in the Demo Test at: http://216.139.241.84/lrcatdemo/lrcatdemo.html.
WHAT DOES THE ACTFL L&Rcat LOOK LIKE?

The ACTFL L&Rcat is appropriate for individual, small-group, and large-scale testing. By offering the L&Rcat over the Internet, the test is accessible to test-takers in any area of the world where there is reliable Internet availability. Below is an overview of the ACTFL L&Rcat with screen shots of the test pages.

System Check Page
To ensure connectivity and full operational status, the site opens with a System Check page to confirm that the computer over which the test will be delivered is set to support the test. Every test taker should then do the sound check found at the bottom right hand corner of the page to make certain that the headset is working properly before starting the test.

System Check Page Screenshot

![System Check Page Screenshot](image-url)
Login Page
After the System Check page, there is a login page requiring a login and password. These logins and passwords can be created by a proctor on a secure LTI client site. Once created, the login and password are valid for two weeks, after which time the login expiration date can be extended by the proctor on the LTI client site. If the date is not extended, the login and password will become invalid and a user trying to enter an expired login or password will receive an “invalid login” message.

Once a test taker logs into a test, he or she can choose to start whichever section of the test he or she prefers by clicking on the appropriate button:

LISTENING TEST INSTRUCTIONS AND SAMPLE TEST
After the system check, the test taker will be given directions to the test and the option to view a sample test item called a “Sample Test” to become familiar with the layout of a test page and the progression of a Listening Test item. If the test taker is already familiar with ACTFL Listening Tests, he or she can click on “Start Test” to begin the Listening Test. Once started, the test will end within 45 minutes, or as soon as the test taker has answered a sufficient number of questions for the program to determine the listening proficiency rating.
Directions Page Screenshot

ACTFL Listening Test

You are about to start the Listening test.

Each testlet consists of a listening passage in the target language with three written questions. The sequence of each listening testlet is as follows:

01. The testlet consists of 6-10 testlets.

02. Each testlet consists of a listening passage with three questions, which you will view as you listen to the listening passage.

03. You will hear the listening passage once.

04. You can take notes as you listen using the note pad on the right.

05. Then you will answer the three questions. For each question, you will have four answers to choose from. Only one choice is correct. To select an answer, click once on the circle next to it. You may choose only one answer per question.

Once you have completed enough of the provided testlets for the test program to determine a listening proficiency score, the test will end.

Click on the Sample Test button below to go to the first passage.

Sample Test  Start Test

Test Page Screenshot

ACTFL Listening Test

Stage Time Clock: This box indicates the stage of the test and counts down the time the program will stay in this stage/activity and screen.

Instructions: The above test box lists the instructions for each stage and indicates the instructions for the current stage/activity in red.

Study the questions below (30 seconds).

Listen to the passage and take notes on the pad to the right.

There will be an extra 5 seconds to complete your notes after the listening passage.

On the next page, there will be multiple choice answers to each question.

Study the questions below. Passage will play in 30 seconds.

Question:

1. What is Susan’s favorite hobby?
2. Who does Susan go shopping with?
3. How often does Susan go swimming?

Stage 1: Preview Questions. This stage allows you to preview the questions before the passage starts playing. You have up to 30 seconds to read the questions.
**Test Page**

*Test takers should not try to open any other windows, browsers or pop-ups while in the test.* They should remain only in the Listening section of the test. If a test taker clicks outside of the test, the test will automatically shut down, and the test taker will need to sign in to the test again. Re-access to the test is also limited to two times before the test will close out.

**Time Clock:** The time clock in the upper left-hand corner shows how much time is remaining before the test will automatically close.

**Task Navigation Tree:** This tool is found on the left side of the screen, and displays on every test page. It is a quick reference to track completion of the test, as it shows Incomplete Tasks (red), Partially Completed Tasks (orange) and Completed Tasks (green). The test taker can move to different questions within a task. Once a test taker has moved on to the next task, he or she cannot go back.

**Task:** The window to the right of the navigation tree shows the Task, which is composed of the title of the passage, the questions, and multiple-choice answers about the text.

**Questions and Answers:** The question and associated answers are found at the bottom of the Task screen. To select an answer, test takers click on the bubble to the left of the answer. To change an answer, test takers click on one of the other selections and the program will highlight the new selection and automatically erase the previous choice. To advance to other questions associated with this text, test takers can click on the “Next Question” button on the bottom right. When the program advances to the next question, the text will remain on the screen and the question will change. Whenever an answer is selected, the navigation tree will change the color of that question to green and the color of the task from red (no questions answered), to orange (some but not all questions are answered,) and finally to green, when all questions for that task are answered.

**Complete and “Finish” a Listening Test:** When all of the questions have been completed, the Listening Test will close automatically and permanently. If the Reading Test has not been taken, test takers will be able to open that portion of the L&Rcat. If the Reading Test has already been completed, then the L&Rcat will close permanently.
READING TEST DIRECTIONS AND SAMPLE TEST

As in the Listening portion of the L&Rcat, the Reading Test begins with directions to the test and the option to view a sample test item called a “Sample Test” to become familiar with the layout of a test page and the progression of a Reading Test item. If the test taker is already familiar with ACTFL Reading Tests, he or she can click on “Start Test” to begin the Reading portion. Once started, the test will end when enough questions have been answered to determine an ACTFL rating. The maximum duration is 50 minutes for this section.

Directions Page Screenshot

Test Page Screenshot
**Test Page**

Test takers should not try to open any other windows, browsers or pop-ups while in the test. They should remain only in the Reading section of the test. If a test taker clicks outside of the test, the test will automatically shut down, and the test taker will need to sign in to the test again. Re-access to the test is also limited to two times before the test will close out.

**Time Clock:** The time clock in the upper left-hand corner shows how much time is remaining before the test will automatically close.

**Task Navigation Tree:** This tool is found on the left side of the screen, and displays on every test page. It is a quick reference to track completion of the test, as it shows Incomplete Tasks (red), Partially Completed Tasks (orange) and Completed Tasks (green). The test taker can move to different questions within a task. Once a test taker has moved on to the next task, he or she cannot go back.

**Task:** The window to the right of the navigation tree shows the Task, which is composed of the title of the passage, the questions, and multiple-choice answers about the text.

**Questions and Answers:** The question and associated answers are found at the bottom of the Task screen. To select an answer, test takers click on the bubble to the left of the answer. To change an answer, test takers click on one of the other selections and the program will highlight the new selection and automatically erase the previous choice. To advance to other questions associated with this text, test takers can click on the “Next Question” button on the bottom right. When the program advances to the next question, the text will remain on the screen and the question will change. Whenever an answer is selected, the navigation tree will change the color of that question to green and the color of the task from red (no questions answered), to orange (some but not all questions are answered,) and finally to green, when all questions for that task are answered.

“**Complete and Finish**” a Reading Test: When all of the questions have been completed, the Reading Test will close automatically and permanently. If the Listening Test has not been taken, test takers will be able to open that portion of the L&Rcat. If the Listening Test has already been completed, then the L&Rcat will close permanently.

**HOW ARE L&Rcat TASKS SCORED?**

An ACTFL rating is assigned based on a system of evaluation that compares the difficulty levels of all questions that test takers have answered correctly and incorrectly.

**WHAT IS AN OFFICIAL L&Rcat RATING?**

Official ACTFL L&Rcat ratings are assigned to those tests that are conducted under the supervision of Language Testing International (LTI), the ACTFL Testing Office. Test takers can request an ACTFL rating (according to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening and Reading*). An ACTFL Certificate is issued for test-takers and the results are permanently stored in the official ACTFL Test Management System.
WHAT OTHER KINDS OF RATINGS ARE AVAILABLE FOR THE L&Rcat?

In addition to official ACTFL ratings, ILR ratings (according to the U.S. Government’s Interagency Language Roundtable Skill Level Descriptions for Listening and Reading), or CEFR ratings (according to the Common European Framework of Reference) are available if they are requested ahead of time.

HOW IS AN ACTFL L&Rcat USED?

An official L&Rcat rating documents a test taker’s ability to understand what he or she hears and reads.

The ACTFL L&Rcat can be used for a variety of purposes in the academic, commercial, and government communities. ACTFL L&Rcat ratings may be used for purposes of admission into programs, placement within a language sequence, and determination of the fulfillment of exit or graduation requirements.

L&Rcat ratings are also used by businesses and the government for purposes of hiring and promotions in multi-lingual positions.

Establishing proficiency outcomes in terms of the descriptors that are contained in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (or the U.S. Government’s Interagency Language Roundtable Skill Level Descriptions for Listening and Reading or the Common European Framework of Reference) provides a framework for the design and development of the listening and reading components of the curriculum for language courses and sequences of language courses. Proficiency testing of students is also used as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of language programs.

HOW CAN ONE BEST PREPARE FOR THE ACTFL L&Rcat?

It is helpful for test takers to read the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Listening and Reading in order to be familiar with types of texts, range of content area, and types of listening and reading tasks they will be required to perform at each level.

With that background, test takers should select a range of material to listen to and read using a wide range of topics, newspapers, magazines, and journals delivered in any medium (hard-copy or electronic). Listening to a variety of spoken English discourse such as daily interactions and dialogues, reports, presentations, discussions, and broadcasts can be helpful. Reading different types of texts, such as informal notes, emails, letters, announcements, short reports, articles, and commentaries is also a good strategy.

As stated earlier, listening and reading are interpretive skills, so test takers need to dedicate time and practice to listening and reading for greater comprehension of spoken language and texts, to understand all the facts, to interpret the connections between different parts of a conversation or text, and to make inferences based on the information, organization, style, and other rhetorical devices that are employed by speakers or writers.
WHAT TEST-TAKING TIPS ARE RECOMMENDED?

For the Listening portion of the L&Rcat, test takers should:
- Read the questions before listening to the passage. This will help test takers listen to the passage for specific information.
- Use the digital notepad on the right-hand side of the screen. Test takers should take notes on the questions while the passage is played. They should adjust their notes after the passage has been completed, and they should use their notes to answer the questions.
- Use time wisely, and they should not spend too much time on any one passage or set of questions. The test provides a test taker with enough time to listen to passages and answer questions.

For the Reading portion of the L&Rcat, test takers should:
- Read carefully. Read the questions they will need to answer before they read the text to help them read the text with specific goals.
- Use time wisely and do not spend too much time on any one text and set of questions. The test provides test takers with enough time to read texts and answer questions.
- Do their best to choose an answer to every question. There is only one correct answer for each question. Any unanswered question will count as an “incorrect” answer.

INTERESTED IN SCHEDULING AN ACTFL L&Rcat?
To schedule individuals or groups for the ACTFL L&Rcat, contact:

LTI: The ACTFL Testing Office
www.languagetesting.com
testing@languagetesting.com
Tel: (914) 963-7110
800-486-8444
Preface

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening describe five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The description of each major level is representative of a specific range of abilities. Together these levels form a hierarchy in which each level subsumes all lower levels. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are divided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels. The subdivision of the Advanced Level into High, Mid, and Low is new. This makes the Listening descriptions parallel to the other skill-level descriptions.

Listening is an interpretive skill. Listening comprehension is largely based on the amount of information listeners can retrieve from what they hear and the inferences and connections that they can make. By describing the tasks that listeners can perform with different types of oral texts and under different types of circumstances, the Listening Proficiency Guidelines describe how listeners understand oral discourse. The Guidelines do not describe how listening skills develop, how one learns to listen, nor the actual cognitive processes involved in the activity. Rather, they are intended to describe what listeners understand from what they hear.

These Guidelines apply to listening that is either Interpretive (non-participative or overheard) or Interpersonal (participative).

The written descriptions of listening proficiency are accompanied online by authentic speech samples and the functional listening tasks associated with each major level.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening may be used for non-profit, educational purposes only, provided that they are reproduced in their entirety, with no alterations, and with credit to ACTFL.
DISTINGUISHED

At the Distinguished level, listeners can understand a wide variety of forms, styles, and registers of speech on highly specialized topics in language that is tailored to different audiences. Listeners at the Distinguished level can understand language such as that found in classical theater, art films, professional symposia, academic debates, public policy statements, literary readings, and most jokes and puns. They are able to comprehend implicit and inferred information, tone, and point of view, and can follow highly persuasive arguments. They are able to understand unpredictable turns of thought related to sophisticated topics. In addition, their listening ability is enhanced by a broad and deep understanding of cultural references and allusions.

Listeners at the Distinguished level are able to appreciate the richness of the spoken language. Distinguished-level listeners understand speech that can be highly abstract, highly technical, or both, as well as speech that contains very precise, often low-frequency vocabulary and complex rhetorical structures. At this level, listeners comprehend oral discourse that is lengthy and dense, structurally complex, rich in cultural reference, idiomatic and colloquial. In addition, listeners at this level can understand information that is subtle or highly specialized, as well as the full cultural significance of very short texts with little or no linguistic redundancy.

Distinguished-level listeners comprehend language from within the cultural framework and are able to understand a speaker’s use of nuance and subtlety. However, they may still have difficulty fully understanding certain dialects and nonstandard varieties of the language.

SUPERIOR

At the Superior level, listeners are able to understand speech in a standard dialect on a wide range of familiar and less familiar topics. They can follow linguistically complex extended discourse such as that found in academic and professional settings, lectures, speeches, and reports. Comprehension is no longer limited to the listener’s familiarity with subject matter, but also comes from a command of the language that is supported by a broad vocabulary, an understanding of more complex structures and linguistic experience within the target culture. Superior listeners can understand not only what is said, but sometimes what is left unsaid; that is, they can make inferences.

Superior-level listeners understand speech that typically uses precise, specialized vocabulary and complex grammatical structures. This speech often deals abstractly with topics in a way that is appropriate for academic and professional audiences. It can be reasoned and can contain cultural references.
ADVANCED

At the Advanced level, listeners can understand the main ideas and most supporting details in connected discourse on a variety of general interest topics, such as news stories, explanations, instructions, anecdotes, or travelogue descriptions. Listeners are able to compensate for limitations in their lexical and structural control of the language by using real-world knowledge and contextual clues. Listeners may also derive some meaning from oral texts at higher levels if they possess significant familiarity with the topic or context.

Advanced-level listeners understand speech that is authentic and connected. This speech is lexically and structurally uncomplicated. The discourse is straightforward and is generally organized in a clear and predictable way.

Advanced-level listeners demonstrate the ability to comprehend language on a range of topics of general interest. They have sufficient knowledge of language structure to understand basic time-frame references. Nevertheless, their understanding is most often limited to concrete, conventional discourse.

Advanced High

At the Advanced High sublevel, listeners are able to understand, with ease and confidence, conventional narrative and descriptive texts of any length as well as complex factual material such as summaries or reports. They are typically able to follow some of the essential points of more complex or argumentative speech in areas of special interest or knowledge. In addition, they are able to derive some meaning from oral texts that deal with unfamiliar topics or situations. At the Advanced High sublevel, listeners are able to comprehend the facts presented in oral discourse and are often able to recognize speaker-intended inferences. Nevertheless, there are likely to be gaps in comprehension of complex texts dealing with issues treated abstractly that are typically understood by Superior-level listeners.

Advanced Mid

At the Advanced Mid sublevel, listeners are able to understand conventional narrative and descriptive texts, such as expanded descriptions of persons, places, and things, and narrations about past, present, and future events. The speech is predominantly in familiar target-language patterns. Listeners understand the main facts and many supporting details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject-matter knowledge, but also from an increasing overall facility with the language itself.

Advanced Low

At the Advanced Low sublevel, listeners are able to understand short conventional narrative and descriptive texts with a clear underlying structure though their comprehension may be uneven. The listener understands the main facts and some supporting details. Comprehension may often derive primarily from situational and subject-matter knowledge.
INTERMEDIATE

At the Intermediate level, listeners can understand information conveyed in simple, sentence-length speech on familiar or everyday topics. They are generally able to comprehend one utterance at a time while engaged in face-to-face conversations or in routine listening tasks such as understanding highly contextualized messages, straightforward announcements, or simple instructions and directions. Listeners rely heavily on redundancy, restatement, paraphrasing, and contextual clues.

Intermediate-level listeners understand speech that conveys basic information. This speech is simple, minimally connected, and contains high-frequency vocabulary.

Intermediate-level listeners are most accurate in their comprehension when getting meaning from simple, straightforward speech. They are able to comprehend messages found in highly familiar everyday contexts. Intermediate listeners require a controlled listening environment where they hear what they may expect to hear.

**Intermediate High**

At the Intermediate High sublevel, listeners are able to understand, with ease and confidence, simple sentence-length speech in basic personal and social contexts. They can derive substantial meaning from some connected texts typically understood by Advanced-level listeners although there often will be gaps in understanding due to a limited knowledge of the vocabulary and structures of the spoken language.

**Intermediate Mid**

At the Intermediate Mid sublevel, listeners are able to understand simple, sentence-length speech, one utterance at a time, in a variety of basic personal and social contexts. Comprehension is most often accurate with highly familiar and predictable topics although a few misunderstandings may occur. Intermediate Mid listeners may get some meaning from oral texts typically understood by Advanced-level listeners.

**Intermediate Low**

At the Intermediate Low sublevel, listeners are able to understand some information from sentence-length speech, one utterance at a time, in basic personal and social contexts, though comprehension is often uneven. At the Intermediate Low sublevel, listeners show little or no comprehension of oral texts typically understood by Advanced-level listeners.
NOVICE

At the Novice level, listeners can understand key words, true aural cognates, and formulaic expressions that are highly contextualized and highly predictable, such as those found in introductions and basic courtesies.

Novice-level listeners understand words and phrases from simple questions, statements, and high-frequency commands. They typically require repetition, rephrasing and/or a slowed rate of speech for comprehension. They rely heavily on extralinguistic support to derive meaning.

Novice-level listeners are most accurate when they are able to recognize speech that they can anticipate. In this way, these listeners tend to recognize rather than truly comprehend. Their listening is largely dependent on factors other than the message itself.

Novice High

At the Novice High sublevel, listeners are often but not always able to understand information from sentence-length speech, one utterance at a time, in basic personal and social contexts where there is contextual or extralinguistic support, though comprehension may often be very uneven. They are able to understand speech dealing with areas of practical need such as highly standardized messages, phrases, or instructions, if the vocabulary has been learned.

Novice Mid

At the Novice Mid sublevel, listeners can recognize and begin to understand a number of high-frequency, highly contextualized words and phrases including aural cognates and borrowed words. Typically, they understand little more than one phrase at a time, and repetition may be required.

Novice Low

At the Novice Low sublevel, listeners are able occasionally to recognize isolated words or very high-frequency phrases when those are strongly supported by context. These listeners show virtually no comprehension of any kind of spoken message, not even within the most basic personal and social contexts.
Preface

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Reading describe five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The description of each major level is representative of a specific range of abilities. Together these levels form a hierarchy in which each level subsumes all lower levels. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are divided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels. The subdivision of the Advanced level is new. This makes the Reading descriptions parallel to the other skill level descriptions.

Reading is an interpretive skill. Reading comprehension is based largely on the amount of information readers can retrieve from a text, and the inferences and connections that they can make within and across texts. By describing the tasks that readers can perform with different types of texts and under different types of circumstances, the Reading Proficiency Guidelines describe how readers understand written texts. These Guidelines do not describe how reading skills develop, how one learns to read, nor the actual cognitive processes involved in the activity of reading. Rather, they are intended to describe what readers are able to understand from what they read.

These Guidelines apply to reading that is either Interpretive (books, essays, reports, etc.) or Interpersonal (instant messaging, texting, email communication, etc.).

The written descriptions of reading proficiency are accompanied online by authentic text samples and the functional reading tasks associated with each major level.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Reading may be used for non-profit, educational purposes only, provided that they are reproduced in their entirety, with no alterations, and with credit to ACTFL.
DISTINGUISHED

At the Distinguished level, readers can understand a wide variety of texts from many genres including professional, technical, academic, and literary. These texts are characterized by one or more of the following: a high level of abstraction, precision or uniqueness of vocabulary; density of information; cultural reference; or complexity of structure. Readers are able to comprehend implicit and inferred information, tone, and point of view and can follow highly persuasive arguments. They are able to understand unpredictable turns of thought related to sophisticated topics.

Readers at the Distinguished level are able to understand writing tailored to specific audiences as well as a number of historical, regional, and colloquial variations of the language. These readers are able to appreciate the richness of written language. Distinguished-level readers understand and appreciate texts that use highly precise, low-frequency vocabulary as well as complex rhetorical structures to convey subtle or highly specialized information. Such texts are typically essay length but may be excerpts from more lengthy texts.

Distinguished-level readers comprehend language from within the cultural framework and are able to understand a writer’s use of nuance and subtlety. However, they may still have difficulty fully understanding certain nonstandard varieties of the written language.

SUPERIOR

At the Superior level, readers are able to understand texts from many genres dealing with a wide range of subjects, both familiar and unfamiliar. Comprehension is no longer limited to the reader’s familiarity with subject matter, but also comes from a command of the language that is supported by a broad vocabulary, an understanding of complex structures and knowledge of the target culture. Readers at the Superior level can draw inferences from textual and extralinguistic clues.

Superior-level readers understand texts that use precise, often specialized vocabulary and complex grammatical structures. These texts feature argumentation, supported opinion, and hypothesis, and use abstract linguistic formulations as encountered in academic and professional reading. Such texts are typically reasoned and/or analytic and may frequently contain cultural references.

Superior-level readers are able to understand lengthy texts of a professional, academic, or literary nature. In addition, readers at the Superior level are generally aware of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles, but may not fully understand texts in which cultural references and assumptions are deeply embedded.
ADVANCED

At the Advanced level, readers can understand the main idea and supporting details of authentic narrative and descriptive texts. Readers are able to compensate for limitations in their lexical and structural knowledge by using contextual clues. Comprehension is likewise supported by knowledge of the conventions of the language (e.g., noun/adjective agreement, verb placement, etc.). When familiar with the subject matter, Advanced-level readers are also able to derive some meaning from straightforward argumentative texts (e.g., recognizing the main argument).

Advanced-level readers are able to understand texts that have a clear and predictable structure. For the most part, the prose is uncomplicated and the subject matter pertains to real-world topics of general interest.

Advanced-level readers demonstrate an independence in their ability to read subject matter that is new to them. They have sufficient control of standard linguistic conventions to understand sequencing, time frames, and chronology. However, these readers are likely challenged by texts in which issues are treated abstractly.

Advanced High

At the Advanced High sublevel, readers are able to understand, fully and with ease, conventional narrative and descriptive texts of any length as well as more complex factual material. They are able to follow some of the essential points of argumentative texts in areas of special interest or knowledge. In addition, they are able to understand parts of texts that deal with unfamiliar topics or situations. These readers are able to go beyond comprehension of the facts in a text, and to begin to recognize author-intended inferences. An emerging awareness of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles permits comprehension of a wide variety of texts. Misunderstandings may occur when reading texts that are structurally and/or conceptually more complex.

Advanced Mid

At the Advanced Mid sublevel, readers are able to understand conventional narrative and descriptive texts, such as expanded descriptions of persons, places, and things and narrations about past, present, and future events. These texts reflect the standard linguistic conventions of the written form of the language in such a way that readers can predict what they are going to read. Readers understand the main ideas, facts, and many supporting details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject-matter knowledge but also from knowledge of the language itself. Readers at this level may derive some meaning from texts that are structurally and/or conceptually more complex.

Advanced Low

At the Advanced Low sublevel, readers are able to understand conventional narrative and descriptive texts with a clear underlying structure though their comprehension may be uneven. These texts predominantly contain high-frequency vocabulary and structures. Readers understand the main ideas and some supporting details. Comprehension may often derive primarily from situational and subject-matter knowledge. Readers at this level will be challenged to comprehend more complex texts.
**INTERMEDIATE**

At the Intermediate level, readers can understand information conveyed in simple, predictable, loosely connected texts. Readers rely heavily on contextual clues. They can most easily understand information if the format of the text is familiar, such as in a weather report or a social announcement.

Intermediate-level readers are able to understand texts that convey basic information such as that found in announcements, notices, and online bulletin boards and forums. These texts are not complex and have a predictable pattern of presentation. The discourse is minimally connected and primarily organized in individual sentences and strings of sentences containing predominantly high-frequency vocabulary.

Intermediate-level readers are most accurate when getting meaning from simple, straightforward texts. They are able to understand messages found in highly familiar, everyday contexts. At this level, readers may not fully understand texts that are detailed or those texts in which knowledge of language structures is essential in order to understand sequencing, time frame, and chronology.

**Intermediate High**

At the Intermediate High sublevel, readers are able to understand fully and with ease short, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with personal and social topics to which the reader brings personal interest or knowledge. These readers are also able to understand some connected texts featuring description and narration although there will be occasional gaps in understanding due to a limited knowledge of the vocabulary, structures, and writing conventions of the language.

**Intermediate Mid**

At the Intermediate Mid sublevel, readers are able to understand short, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with basic personal and social topics to which the reader brings personal interest or knowledge, although some misunderstandings may occur. Readers at this level may get some meaning from short connected texts featuring description and narration, dealing with familiar topics.

**Intermediate Low**

At the Intermediate Low sublevel, readers are able to understand some information from the simplest connected texts dealing with a limited number of personal and social needs, although there may be frequent misunderstandings. Readers at this level will be challenged to derive meaning from connected texts of any length.
NOVICE

At the Novice level, readers can understand key words and cognates, as well as formulaic phrases that are highly contextualized.

Novice-level readers are able to get a limited amount of information from highly predictable texts in which the topic or context is very familiar, such as a hotel bill, a credit card receipt, or a weather map. Readers at the Novice level may rely heavily on their own background knowledge and extralinguistic support (such as the imagery on the weather map or the format of a credit card bill) to derive meaning.

Readers at the Novice level are best able to understand a text when they are able to anticipate the information in the text. At the Novice level, recognition of key words, cognates, and formulaic phrases makes comprehension possible.

Novice High
At the Novice High sublevel, readers can understand, fully and with relative ease, key words and cognates, as well as formulaic phrases across a range of highly contextualized texts. Where vocabulary has been learned, they can understand predictable language and messages such as those found on train schedules, roadmaps, and street signs. Readers at the Novice High sublevel are typically able to derive meaning from short, non-complex texts that convey basic information for which there is contextual or extralinguistic support.

Novice Mid
At the Novice Mid sublevel, readers are able to recognize the letters or symbols of an alphabetic or syllabic writing system or a limited number of characters in a character-based language. They can identify a number of highly contextualized words and phrases including cognates and borrowed words but rarely understand material that exceeds a single phrase. Rereading is often required.

Novice Low
At the Novice Low sublevel, readers are able to recognize a limited number of letters, symbols or characters. They are occasionally able to identify high-frequency words and/or phrases when strongly supported by context.
Interested in scheduling an ACTFL L&Rcat?

To schedule an ACTFL L&Rcat, contact:
Language Testing International (LTI)
445 Hamilton Avenue, Suite 1104
White Plains, NY 10601
Tel: (914) 963-7110
testing@languagetesting.com
www.languagetesting.com

For more information on
ACTFL Professional Programs, please contact:
ACTFL Professional Programs
professionalprograms@actfl.org