



ACTFL OPIC
ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW
COMPUTER

ACTFL ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW - COMPUTER FAMILIARIZATION GUIDE



ACTFL
Language Connects

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What Is the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview–Computer?

The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview-Computer (ACTFL OPic®) is a proctored, internet-delivered test of oral communication. It imitates the experience of a “live” ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI®) in a virtual format. Interview questions are selected by a carefully designed computer program and delivered using a virtual avatar. On average, the ACTFL OPic takes 20 to 40 minutes to complete.

The goal of the ACTFL OPic is the same as that of the ACTFL OPI: to obtain a speech sample that a rater can evaluate in relation to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Speaking* in order to assign a rating. The recordings of the test taker’s responses are made available electronically through a secure internet site to ACTFL-certified OPic raters. The ACTFL OPic measures a range of proficiency on the ACTFL scale from Novice to Superior.

The ACTFL OPic was developed in response to increasing worldwide demand for oral language proficiency testing that is appropriate for both small-group and large-scale testing. It provides valid and reliable oral proficiency assessment in a format that allows hundreds of examinees to take the test online at the same time; it can be completed on demand from anywhere in the world, and at a time that is convenient for both the candidate and the proctor.

The ACTFL OPic is a valid and reliable assessment of speaking proficiency. It has been externally evaluated by a number of studies, including Surface, Poncheri, & Bhavsar, 2008; Surface, 2018; and Thompson, Cox, & Knapp, 2016. ACTFL assessments also undergo regular external reviews as part of the American Council on Education’s College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT®) review process (<https://www.actfl.org/assessments/college-credit>). A bibliography of ACTFL’s ACE Review studies can be found at <https://www.actfl.org/assessments/ace-review-bibliography-of-technical-reports>.

Language Testing International (LTI) is the exclusive licensee of ACTFL assessments. As such, the OPic, like all ACTFL assessments, is available only through LTI.

How Does the ACTFL OPic Work?

Before beginning the ACTFL OPic, test takers are presented with the Assessment Integrity Policy, which they must review and acknowledge before moving on. Examinees are then presented with an online Background Survey and Self-Assessment; the choices made in response to these items ensure that each test taker receives a level-appropriate and unique test. Next, there is a Pre-Test Setup check to ensure proper device settings for playing and recording audio, where test takers can confirm their sound system and microphone are functioning as expected. This is followed by a sample question in the language being tested, and finally, test takers are presented with basic instructions and tips on how to navigate the test. The instructions are presented in writing and, based on the account setup, can be

delivered in English, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Korean, Japanese, or Spanish.

Background Survey: Selecting Topics of Conversation

The Background Survey is a questionnaire that elicits information about the test taker’s work, school, home, personal activities, and interests. The individual’s responses determine the pool of prompts from which the computer program will randomly select for the speaking tasks. The variety of topics, the types of questions, and the range of possible computer-generated combinations allows for individualized assessments. Even if two test takers select the same combination of Background Survey responses, the resulting tests will not be the same.

Self-Assessment: Defining the Level of the ACTFL OPIC

The Self-Assessment provides five different descriptions of how well a person can speak a language. Test takers select the description that they feel most accurately describes their speaking ability.

Self-Assessment

Choose the best description of your speaking ability. This test will be based on your response.

- 1 ◇ I can name basic objects, colors, days of the week, foods, clothing items, numbers, etc. I cannot always make a complete sentence or ask basic questions.
- 2 ◇ I can give some basic information about myself, work, familiar people and places, and daily routines while speaking in simple sentences. I can ask some simple questions.
- 3 ◇ I can participate in simple conversations about familiar topics and routines. I can talk about things that have happened, but sometimes my forms are incorrect. I can handle a range of everyday transactions to get what I need.
- 4 ◇ I can participate fully and confidently in all conversations about topics and activities related to home, work/school, personal and community interests. I can speak in connected discourse about things that have happened, are happening, and will happen. I can explain and elaborate when necessary. I can handle routine situations, even when there may be an unexpected complication.
- 5 ◇ I can engage in all informal and formal discussions on issues related to personal, general or professional interests. I can deal with these issues abstractly, support my opinion, and construct hypotheses to explore alternatives. I am able to elaborate at length and in detail on most topics with a high level of accuracy and a wide range of precise vocabulary.

The Self-Assessment choice determines which ACTFL OPIC test form is generated for the specific individual.

- Form 1 focuses on levels Novice Low through Novice High, though any rating from Novice Low through Intermediate Low can be assigned.
- Form 2 focuses on proficiency levels Novice High through Intermediate Mid though any rating from Novice Low through Intermediate High can be assigned.
- Form 3 focuses on proficiency levels Intermediate Mid through Advanced Low, though any rating from Novice Low through Advanced Low can be assigned.

- Form 4 focuses on proficiency levels Advanced Low through Advanced Mid, though any rating from Intermediate High through Advanced High can be assigned.
- Form 5 focuses on proficiency levels Advanced High & Superior, though any rating from Advanced Low to Superior can be assigned.

ACTFL OPIc Test Instructions

The ACTFL OPIc provides detailed instructions on how to listen to the questions and record responses. A non-rated sample question is also provided before the ACTFL OPIc® begins so the test taker can practice with the functionality of the ACTFL OPIc®. The test taker has the opportunity to review the instructions and sample question twice before beginning the test.

Ava, the Avatar-based ACTFL OPIc® Interviewer

The ACTFL OPIc interviewer is personified by an avatar, whose name and image varies depending on the language being tested (see below for some sample images). Having a picture of the avatar on the screen helps to engage the test takers and mimics a one-on-one conversation with a live tester, as in the ACTFL OPI®.



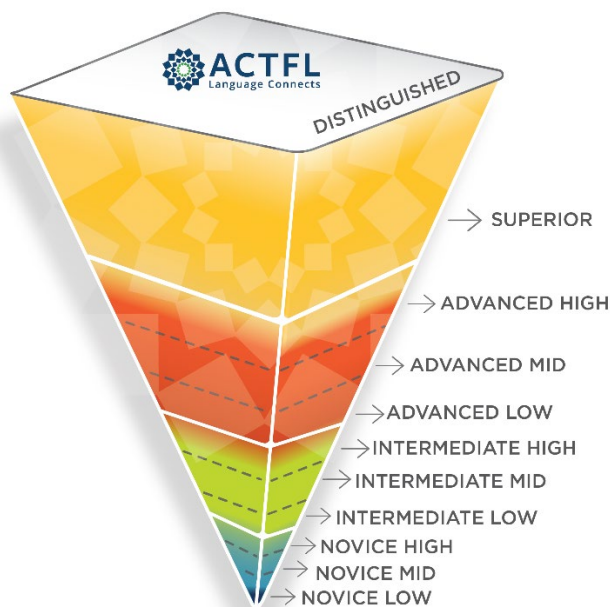
When the test taker is ready, the ACTFL OPIc begins with the avatar stating: “Let’s start the interview now. Tell me something about yourself.” This serves as a warm-up and an opportunity for the test taker to begin using the language and to interact with the avatar before the main test begins. This warm-up activity is not rated.

The ACTFL OPIc then proceeds with the avatar asking randomly selected questions from within the predetermined pool of prompts, and the test taker providing responses. After completing the last response, the test taker sees an ending screen with the message “Congratulations! You have successfully completed your test.” The test taker’s recorded speech sample is then automatically uploaded to a secure rater site.

What Does the ACTFL OPIc Assess, and What Are the Assessment Criteria?

The ACTFL OPIc assesses spoken language in terms of proficiency, that is, the ability to use

language effectively and appropriately in situations the speaker has not rehearsed or encountered previously, as outlined in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Speaking*. The *Guidelines* characterize the development of language proficiency as a continuum with five major levels: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished; ACTFL assessments evaluate proficiency at all levels through Superior. Each level represents a range of ability (what an individual can do with language) that includes all of the prior levels.



The primary distinction between the levels is the functions and tasks (**F**) that an individual at that level can accomplish. With effort and exposure to the language over time, an individual develops the degree of accuracy (**A**) and control of context and content (**C**) and text type (**T**) that are required to accomplish increasingly complex functions and tasks. An individual’s level of proficiency is thus defined by the four FACT criteria:

- **Functions and tasks:** The types of speaking activities that the individual can carry out, such as responding to basic questions about personal identity, giving a set of directions or instructions, or interacting with professional colleagues in a meeting.
- **Accuracy:** The degree to which the individual can use linguistic features (including grammar and syntax, vocabulary, stress and Intonation, sociocultural knowledge, and more) to convey spoken messages.
- **Context and content:** The situations or circumstances in which the individual can achieve speaking goals, and the topic areas that the individual is able to discuss.
- **Text type:** The length and complexity of oral text that the individual can produce, ranging from words and phrases to sentences, paragraphs, and multi-paragraph discourse.

These assessment criteria are evaluated holistically based on the test taker’s overall performance. A proficiency rating is awarded based on how evidence of all the criteria contributes to the description of a speaker’s global proficiency.

Table 1 summarizes the assessment criteria as they relate to the first four major proficiency levels. With a rating range of Novice low to Superior, the ACTFL OPIc assesses speaking skills at the Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels.

Table 1. Assessment Criteria for Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior Levels

Proficiency Level	Global Tasks and Functions	Context & Content	Text Type	Accuracy
Novice	Communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases	Most common informal settings <i>Most common aspects of daily life</i>	Individual words, lists, and phrases	May be difficult to understand, even for listeners accustomed to dealing with language learners
Intermediate	Create with language, initiate, maintain, and bring to a close simple conversations by asking and responding to simple questions	Some informal settings and a limited number of transactional situations <i>Predictable familiar topics related to daily activities and personal environment</i>	Sentences	Understood with some repetition by listeners accustomed to dealing with language learners
Advanced	Narrate and describe in major time frames and deal effectively with unanticipated complications	Most informal and some formal settings <i>Topics of personal and general interest</i>	Oral paragraphs, connected discourse	Understood without difficulty by listeners unaccustomed to dealing with language learners
Superior	Discuss familiar and unfamiliar topics. Support opinions, hypothesize, and deal with topics abstractly	Most informal and formal settings <i>Wide range of public interest topics and some special fields of interest and expertise</i>	Extended discourse	No pattern of errors in basic structures. Errors almost never interfere with communication or distract from the message

What Are the Possible Test Outcomes (Proficiency Ratings)?

An ACTFL OPIc can be rated at one of the first four major levels of the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*:

- **Novice:** The individual can express basic personal information and satisfy a limited number of personal needs using formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases.

- **Intermediate:** The individual can participate in short conversations on predictable topics, ask and answer simple questions, and handle simple transactions using sentence-level communication.
- **Advanced:** The individual can participate in interactions on topics of personal and public interest, narrate and describe in present, past, and future time frames, and handle a situation with a complication using paragraph-length communication.
- **Superior:** The individual can support opinions, hypothesize, discuss topics in abstract terms, and handle a linguistically unfamiliar situation using multi-paragraph discourse.

At the Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels, the ACTFL OPIc rating can also reference one of three sublevels: Low, Mid, or High. The sublevels indicate how well the individual meets the criteria for the major level, and also how close the individual’s proficiency is to sustaining the criteria for the next major level.

- **Low:** Baseline performance at the level. Individuals at this sublevel have consistent ability to meet the criteria for the level in all level-relevant communication situations. They may demonstrate some hesitation in doing so, but they are able to sustain communication with regard to all of the criteria. They demonstrate little ability to carry out communication functions that typify the next-higher major level.
- **Mid:** Solid performance at the level. Individuals at this sublevel demonstrate skill in carrying out the functions of the major level in all level-relevant communication situations. They may also exhibit partial ability to carry out communication tasks that typify the next-higher major level.
- **High:** Performance with quality and quantity at the level. Individuals at this sublevel communicate with ease and confidence when performing the functions of the level. They are capable of functioning much of the time at the next higher major level, but they are unable to sustain language at that level.

Possible ACTFL OPIc ratings by form number are thus as follows:

Test Form	Proficiency Levels	Range of Possible Proficiency Ratings
Form 1	Novice Low to Novice High	Novice Low to Intermediate Low
Form 2	Novice High to Intermediate Mid	Novice Low to Intermediate High
Form 3	Intermediate Mid to Advanced Low	Novice Low to Advanced Low
Form 4	Advanced Low and Advanced Mid	Intermediate High to Advanced High
Form 5	Advanced High and Superior	Advanced Low to Superior

For more information on the proficiency ratings, see the documents *Overview of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024* and *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Speaking*.

What Is an Official ACTFL OPIc Rating?

Official ACTFL OPIc ratings are assigned to ACTFL OPIcs that are conducted under the supervision of a proctor and rated by ACTFL-certified OPIc raters who are contracted by LTI, the exclusive licensee of ACTFL assessments. Each Official ACTFL OPI[®] is anonymously rated by two ACTFL-certified OPIc raters, meaning the second rater is not aware of the rating assigned by the first rater. The two ratings must agree exactly in both the major level and sublevel to be considered final. If not, the test is assigned to a third rater for anonymous arbitration. Results are stored in LTI's Test Management System and are made available, along with the ACTFL Certificate of Speaking Proficiency, to authorized users through the LTI Client Site. Individual candidates testing directly through LTI (rather than through an organization) can access their results and certificate by logging into their account on [languagetesting.com](https://www.languagetesting.com).

Who Are the ACTFL OPIc Raters?

ACTFL-certified OPIc raters are highly specialized language professionals who have completed a rigorous certification and calibration process that concludes with a rater's demonstrated ability to consistently rate samples with a high degree of reliability. ACTFL-certified OPIc raters uphold the highest professional and ethical standards in test administration, rating, and confidentiality, adhering to the rating protocol under ACTFL's supervision. They are required to follow all ACTFL OPIc procedures and guidelines, and they agree to abide by the exclusivity of the ACTFL OPIc as ACTFL property.

As a prerequisite to becoming certified, rater candidates must first demonstrate a minimum oral proficiency of Superior in the language in which they will rate.

What Accommodations Are Available?

Several types of testing accommodations are available for candidates with a documented need. These may include extended testing time, extended breaks, screen magnification, human reader, oral interpreter for directions, testing environment adjustments, and blank scratch paper. Accommodations can be requested from LTI. LTI's accommodation team works with candidates and the organizations they test through to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations. For more information on accommodation support and how to request an accommodation, please visit <https://www.languagetesting.com/academic-test-accommodations>.

Where Can I Find Tips on Preparing for the ACTFL OPIc?

ACTFL provides the following resources and suggestions:

- **For test takers:** <https://www.actfl.org/assessments/postsecondary-assessments/opi/tips-for-opi-and-opic-test-takers>

- **For educators:** <https://www.actfl.org/assessments/postsecondary-assessments/opi/tips-for-language-educators-opi-opic>

An English ACTFL OPic Demo Test is available at <https://opicdemo.actfltesting.org/systemcheck>.

How Is the ACTFL OPic Currently Being Used?

Official ACTFL OPic ratings provide a common metric for describing functional speaking ability in a language. For this reason, the ACTFL OPic ratings are used for a variety of purposes in academic, commercial, and government communities.

- In academic contexts, the ACTFL OPic is used for purposes of admission into programs, placement within a language sequence, formative and summative assessment, and for determination of the fulfillment of exit or graduation requirements. Establishing proficiency outcomes in terms of the descriptors contained in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Speaking* provides a framework for design and development of curricula for language courses and course sequences. Proficiency testing of students is also used as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of language programs.
- In commercial and government contexts, the ACTFL OPic ratings are used as a means of certification, qualification, hiring, and promotion in multilingual positions.

How Is the ACTFL OPic Proctored?

The ACTFL OPic must be administered in a secure, proctored environment. ACTFL Proctoring options are communicated at the time of order from LTI's website (for individual candidates not testing through an organization) or as part of the account setup for organizations looking to test their learners or candidates.

How Can I Schedule an ACTFL OPic?

To schedule an ACTFL OPic, contact LTI.

www.languagetesting.com
support@languagetesting.com
1-800-486-8444

About ACTFL Assessments

ACTFL is proud to offer a variety of assessments to support language educators and learners in higher education and beyond. From placement to graduation and certification, ACTFL has an assessment for each step of the postsecondary journey with options available for institutions and individuals. ACTFL assessments measure language ability based on skill level for the most accurate results possible.

ACTFL proficiency tests are used worldwide by academic institutions, government agencies, and private corporations for purposes such as academic placement, student assessment, program evaluation, professional certification, hiring, and promotional qualification.

- Placement: A non-proctored proficiency-based framework in a computer adaptive solution designed to assist in the placement of incoming post-secondary learners
- Documentation: Measure and evaluate program effectiveness or student progress and benchmarks to achieving badges, credits, or certification
- Teacher Certification: ACTFL language proficiency assessments are accepted by most states for some component of their teacher certification process. You should review your state or program's certification requirements so that you can be sure which assessment(s) are required.

For more information on ACTFL assessments, visit

<https://www.actfl.org/assessments>

For information on Proficiency and Assessment workshops, visit

<https://www.actfl.org/professional-learning/individual-workshops>

For information on ACTFL tester and rater training, visit

<https://www.actfl.org/assessments/tester-rater-certifications>

