ACTFL**OPI**c
ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW
COMPUTER

ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW - COMPUTER FAMILIARIZATION GUIDE

ACTFL
Language Connects

ACTFL OPIc
FAMILIARIZATION GUIDE

WHAT IS ACTFL?

ACTFL is a membership organization of world language professionals dedicated to promoting and fostering the study of languages and cultures as an integral component of education and society. ACTFL's membership includes more than 13,000 language educators and administrators from elementary through graduate education, as well as government and industry. Since 1967, ACTFL has led the field in world language research and assessments, while publishing, and disseminating performance and proficiency standards that guide best practices for language learning, teaching, and assessment.

WHAT IS CARD?

The ACTFL Center for Assessment Research and Development (CARD) supports PK-12 schools and institutions of higher education in areas of assessment, articulation, and research. To that end, CARD develops and maintains high-quality language proficiency assessments, and certifies, norms, and maintains highly reliable testers and raters of the assessments. Research focuses on proficiency and performance standards and outcomes that inform language teaching and learning. CARD collaborates with state and national language organizations and government agencies to support research in quality language teaching and learning, including examination of the implications for teacher education. CARD aims to help bridge the divide between language research and classroom practice.

WHAT ARE THE ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES?

The *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012*[1] 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.

The *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012* – Speaking describe spoken language ability from that of a highly articulate, well-educated speaker (Distinguished) to that of an individual with little or no functional ability in spoken language (Novice). These Guidelines are the basis for rating ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs) and the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview-computer (OPIc).

To access the proficiency guidelines online, go to:
www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manual

1 The 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 t
o ACTFL.

WHAT IS THE ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW?

The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) assesses how well a person speaks a language. It is an assessment of the Interpersonal Listening and Speaking mode of communication, as described in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages.* It uses a standardized elicitation procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability. The ACTFL OPI is interactive and continuously adapts to the i speaking abilities of the test taker. Through a series of personalized questions, a sample of speech is elicited. At the conclusion of the OPI, the test taker's performance is compared to the criteria described in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012* - Speaking, and a proficiency rating is awarded.

Because the OPI is proficiency-based, it assesses a speaker's ability to use the language effectively and appropriately in real-life situations, in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context, regardless of when, where, why, or how a speaker has acquired their language. The OPI is not an achievement test, assessing a speaker's acquisition of specific aspects of course and curriculum content, nor is it tied to any specific method of instruction. In addition, the OPI rating protocol does not compare an individual's performance to another's performance. Rather, the OPI tester compares the features of the language to assessment criteria in the Guidelines in order to award a holistic proficiency rating.

WHAT IS THE ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW-COMPUTER?

The Oral Proficiency Interview-Computer (OPIc) is an internet-delivered test which provides valid and reliable oral proficiency testing for both small-group and large-scale testing. The computer-delivered assessment emulates the qualities of the "live" OPI. A virtual avatar takes the place of a live tester and asks questions based the test taker's response to a background questionnaire. The selection and delivery of the questions is through a carefully designed computer program. The goal of the OPIc is the same as the "live" OPI: to obtain a ratable sample of speech which a rater can evaluate and compare to the descriptors in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012* – Speaking in order to assign a rating. The OPIc measures the full range of proficiency on the ACTFL scale, from Novice to Superior.

The ACTFL OPIc is appropriate for both small-group and large-scale testing. Hundreds of speakers can take the test online at the same time. The recording of their responses is made available via the Internet to Certified OPIc Raters and is evaluated by them within a short period of time. Because of the availability of access to the test, speakers can take an OPIc easily, anywhere in the world.

WHAT IS THE ACTFL RATING SCALE?

While the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Speaking describe five major levels of spoken language proficiency (Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, Novice), the ACTFL Rating Scale (derived from the Guidelines) encompasses four major levels. These are:
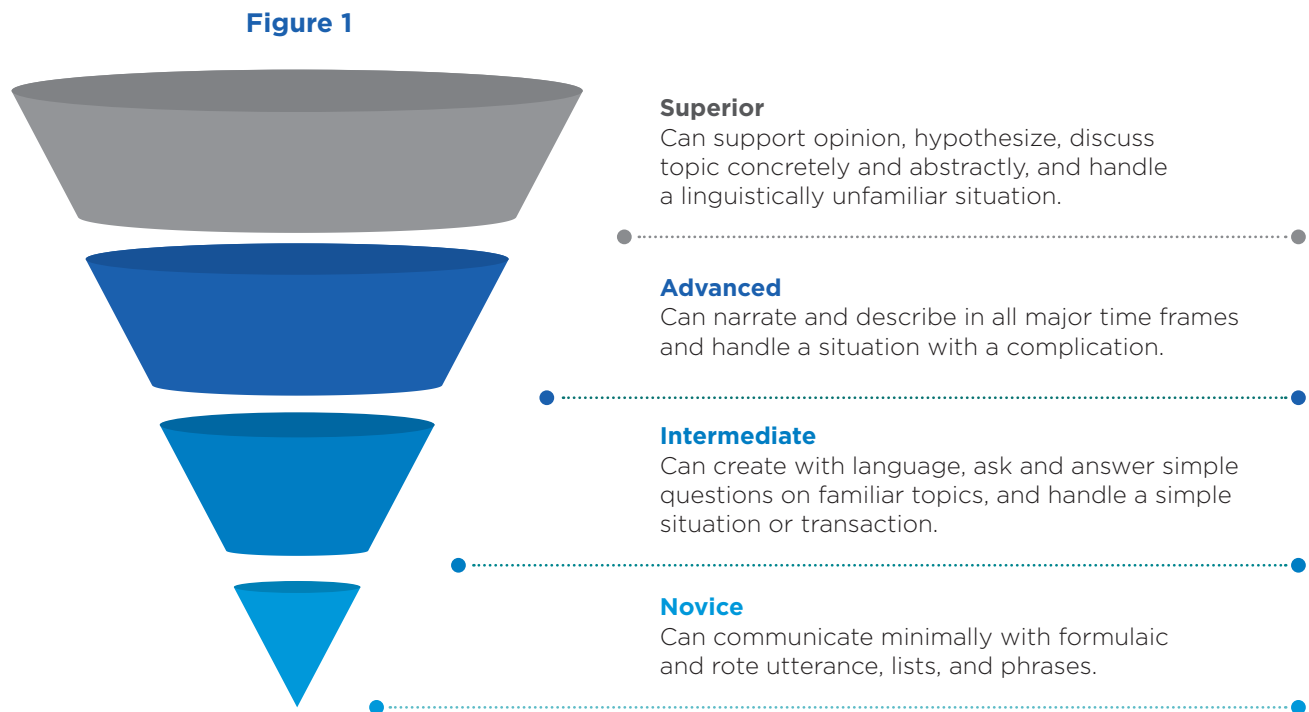
Figure 1

Superior
Can support opinion, hypothesize, discuss topic concretely and abstractly, and handle a linguistically unfamiliar situation.

Advanced
Can narrate and describe in all major time frames and handle a situation with a complication.

Intermediate
Can create with language, ask and answer simple questions on familiar topics, and handle a simple situation or transaction.

Novice
Can communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterance, lists, and phrases.

Figure 1: Inverted Pyramid Representing ACTFL Rating Scale with Major Levels and Global Tasks.

The four major levels are delineated according to a hierarchy of global tasks. This hierarchy is summarized in a rating scale spanning a wide range of performance profiles, from those of speakers who are able to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics and issues to those of beginning learners. The scale describes a full range of proficiency, from Superior to Novice.

Major borders divide the major levels of the scale (Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, Novice). As shown in the inverted pyramid **(see Figure 2)**, each level represents a different profile of functional language ability.

Three of the major levels are further divided by minor borders into High, Mid and Low sublevels. These sublevels differ from each other in terms of the quantity as well as the quality of language produced and in some cases by the tasks performed.

> **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 much of the time at the next higher major level and may spontaneously raise the exchange to that level, but they are unable to sustain language at the next higher level without intermittent lapses or evidence of difficulty.

Figure 2
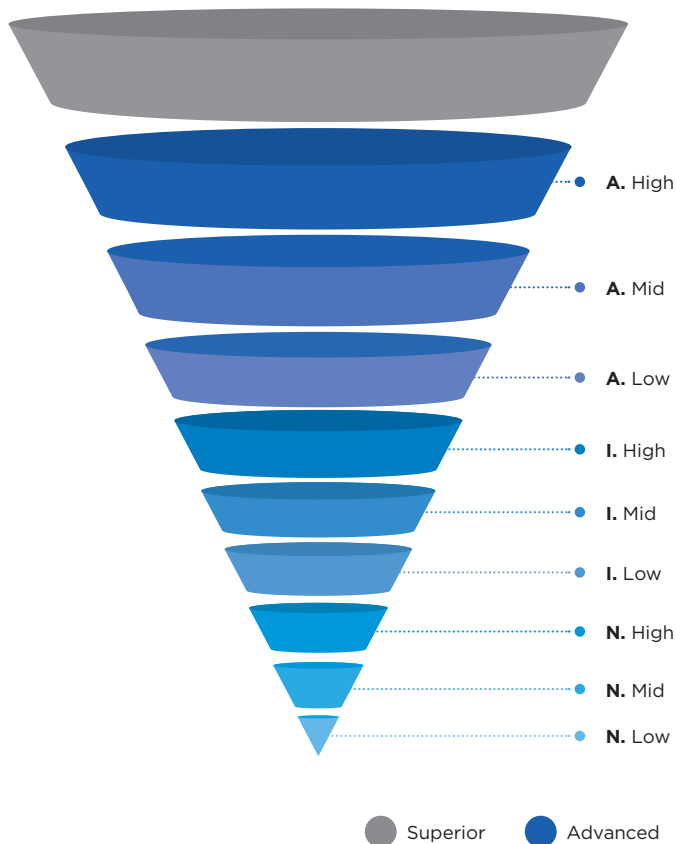
The "Mid" sublevel
Speakers at the "Mid" sublevel represent a number of speech profiles, based on their particular mix of quantity (sheer volume of speech produced) and/or quality (efficiency and effectiveness with which meaning is communicated) at level, and/or the degree to which they control language features from the next higher major level.

The "Low" sublevel
Speakers at the "Low" sublevel summon up all their linguistic energy to sustain the requirements of the level. The "Low" functions primarily within the level with minimal quantity and quality of language and little or no demonstrated ability to perform the tasks of the next higher level.

Figure 2: Inverted Pyramid Representing ACTFL Rating Scale with Major Levels

WHAT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA ARE USED?

The OPIc is an integrative test, i.e., it addresses a number of abilities simultaneously and looks at them from a global perspective rather than based on the presence or absence of any given linguistic feature. Linguistic components are viewed from the wider context of their contribution to overall speaking performance. In evaluating a speech sample, the following criteria are considered:

- the functions and global tasks the speaker performs,
- the social contexts and specific content areas in which the speaker is able to perform them,
- the accuracy or precision with which these tasks are accomplished and understood,

A summary of the assessment criteria as they relate to the four major proficiency levels of the OPIc are shown below

Proficiency Level*	Global Tasks and Functions	*Context* / Content	Text Type	Accuracy
Superior	Discuss familiar and unfamiliar topics. Support opinions, hypothesize, and deal with topics abstractly.	Most informal and formal settings *Wide range of public interest topics and some special fields of interest and expertise*	Extended discourse	No pattern of error in basic structures Errors virtually never interfere with communication or distract from the message
Advanced	Narrate and describe in major time frames and deal effectively with an unanticipated complication.	Most informal and some formal settings *Topics of personal and general interest*	Oral Paragraphs, Connected Discourse	Understood without difficulty by speakers unaccustomed to dealing with language learners (non-sympathetic listener)
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 *Predictable familiar topics related to daily activites and personal environment*	Sentences	Understood with some repetition by speakers accustomed to dealing with language learners (sympathetic listener)
Novice	Communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases.	Most common informal settings *Most common aspects of daily life*	Individual words, phrases, and lists	May be difficult to understand even for speakers accustomed to dealing with language learners.

* A rating at any major level is arrived at by the sustained performance of the functions of the level, with the degree of accuracy and the text type described for that level. The performance must be sustained across ALL of the criteria for the level in order to be rated at that level.

HOW DOES THE OPIc WORK?

Taking the ACTFL OPIc

Before beginning the OPIc, test takers complete a Background Survey and a Self-Assessment. They also receive a complete explanation of OPIc test procedures and instructions, including a sample test question. These instructions are delivered in the test taker's native language.

Background Survey: Selecting Topics of Conversation

The Background Survey is a questionnaire which elicits information about the test taker's work, school, home, personal activities and interests. The test taker completes the survey and the answers determine the pool of topics from which the computer will randomly select questions. The variety of topics, the types of questions, and the range of possible combinations the computer can generate allow for individually designed interviews. Even if two test takers selected the same combination of Background Survey responses, the resulting test would not be the same.

Self-Assessment: Defining the Level of the OPIc

The Self-Assessment provides six different descriptions of how well a person can speak a language. Test takers select the description that they feel most accurately describes their language ability. Samples of speech accompany each descriptor, so test takers can also listen to samples to help select the most appropriate description. The Self-Assessment choice determines which OPIc test form is generated for the specific individual. The choices made by the test taker in response to the Background Survey and the Self-Assessment assure that each test taker receives an appropriate and unique test.

OPIc Test Administration

The OPIc provides detailed test instructions and directions on how to listen to the questions and record answers. In order to ensure that the test taker understands these instructions, a sample question is provided for the test taker to practice with the functionality of the OPIc. The test taker has the opportunity to review the instructions and sample question again before beginning the test. After becoming familiar with the functionality of the online system, the test taker then begins the OPIc test.

Avatar-based OPIc "Tester"

The OPIc tester is personify by an avatar. Test takers listen to the avatar's questions and respond. Having the picture of Ava or Avery on the screen helps to engage the test takers and mimics a one-on-one conversation with a speaker of the target language.

All OPIc tests start with: Let's start the interview now. Tell me something about yourself.

This functions as a warm-up and an opportunity for the test taker to begin using the language. This activity is not rated.

OPIc Test Structure

The OPIc test structure is based on one of five test forms:

Form 1
Ratings from Novice Low through Intermediate Low can be assigned to a speech sample that is elicited using Form 1.

Form 2
Ratings from Novice Low through Intermediate High can be assigned to a speech sample that is elicited using Form 2.

Form 3
Ratings from Novice Low through Advanced Low can be assigned to a speech sample that is elicited using Form 3.

Form 4
Ratings from Intermediate High through Advanced High can be assigned to a speech sample that is elicited using Form 4.

Form 5
Ratings from Advanced Mid through Superior can also be assigned to a speech sample that is elicited using Form 5.

HOW IS THE SAMPLE RATED?

Once OPIc test is complete, the speech sample is uploaded and saved automatically on a secure Internet site. Certified OPIc Raters listen to each sample and select the best match between the sample and the assessment criteria of the rating scale. A rating at any major level is arrived at by the sustained performance across ALL the criteria of the level. An appropriate sublevel can then be determined, and the rating is assigned.

WHO ARE THE 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 Raters uphold the highest professional and ethical standards in test administration, rating, and confidentiality. They maintain the confidentiality of the test takers and their responses. ACTFL Certified Raters adhere to the rating protocol under the supervision of the ACTFL Quality Assurance Office while serving as raters for Language Testing International (LTI), the Exclusive Licensee of ACTFL assessments. ACTFL Certified OPIc Raters agree to abide by the exclusivity of the OPIc as ACTFL property. Raters are required to follow all OPIc procedures and guidelines, as well as any other information received on behalf of ACTFL and LTI.

HOW IS THE ACTFL OPIc CURRENTLY BEING USED?

Official ACTFL OPIc ratings provide a common metric for describing a speaker's functional ability in a spoken language. For this reason, the ACTFL OPIc is currently being used for a variety of purposes in academic, commercial, and government communities.

In academic contexts, the OPIc is used for purposes of placement as well as formative and summative assessments, and determination of the fulfillment of exit or graduation requirements. Establishing proficiency outcomes in terms of the descriptors contained in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Speaking* provides a framework for design and development of 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. In commercial and government contexts, the OPIc is used as a means of certification, qualification, and promotion

WHAT ACCOMODATIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

Accommodations for ACTFL assessments can be requested from Language Testing International (LTI), Exclusive Licensee of ACTFL. Available accommodations include, and are not limited to, extended testing time, extended breaks, screen magnification, human reader, oral interpreter for directions, testing environment adjustments, blank scratch paper, etc. LTI's accommodation team works with candidates to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations.

HOW TO SCHEDULE AN ACTFL OPIc?

To schedule an ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview-Computer, contact:

Language Testing International (LTI)

580 White Plains Road, Suite 660

Tarrytown, NY 10591

www.languagetesting.com

testing@languagetesting.com

Tel: (914) 963-7110

800-486-8444

ACTFL PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES 2012
SPEAKING

PREFACE

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Speaking 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 Guidelines describe the tasks that speakers can handle at each level, as well as the content, context, accuracy, and discourse types associated with tasks at each level. They also present the limits that speakers encounter when attempting to function at the next higher major level. These Guidelines can be used to evaluate speech that is either Interpersonal (interactive, two-way communication) or Presentational (one-way, non-interactive).

These Guidelines can be used to evaluate speech that is either Interpersonal (interactive, two-way communication) or Presentational (one-way, non-interactive).

The written descriptions of speaking proficiency are accompanied online by speech samples illustrating the features of each major level **www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012**

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Speaking 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

Speakers at the Distinguished level are able to use language skillfully, and with accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness. They are educated and articulate users of the language. They can reflect on a wide range of global issues and highly abstract concepts in a culturally appropriate manner. Distinguished-level speakers can use persuasive and hypothetical discourse for representational purposes, allowing them to advocate a point of view that is not necessarily their own. They can tailor language to a variety of audiences by adapting their speech and register in ways that are culturally authentic.

Speakers at the Distinguished level produce highly sophisticated and tightly organized extended discourse. At the same time, they can speak succinctly, often using cultural and historical references to allow them to say less and mean more. At this level, oral discourse typically resembles written discourse.

A non-native accent, a lack of a native-like economy of expression, a limited control of deeply embedded cultural references, and/or an occasional isolated language error may still be present at this level.

SUPERIOR

Speakers at the Superior level are able to communicate with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They discuss their interests and special fields of competence, explain complex matters in detail, and provide lengthy and coherent narrations, all with ease, fluency, and accuracy. They present their opinions on a number of issues of interest to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured arguments to support these opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities.

When appropriate, these speakers use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations. Such discourse, while coherent, may still be influenced by language patterns other than those of the target language. Superior-level speakers employ a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic, lexical, and phonetic devices.

Speakers at the Superior level demonstrate no pattern of error in the use of basic structures, although they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in complex high-frequency structures. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication.

ADVANCED

Speakers at the Advanced level engage in conversation in a clearly participatory manner in order to communicate information on autobiographical topics, as well as topics of community, national, or international interest. The topics are handled concretely by means of narration and description in the major time frames of past, present, and future. These speakers can also deal with a social situation with an unexpected complication. The language of Advanced-level speakers is abundant, the oral paragraph being the measure of Advanced-level length and discourse. Advanced-level speakers have sufficient control of basic structures and generic vocabulary to be understood by native speakers of the language, including those unaccustomed to non-native speech.

Advanced High

Speakers at the Advanced High sublevel perform all Advanced-level tasks with linguistic ease, confidence, and competence. They are consistently able to explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. In addition, Advanced High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Superior level but cannot sustain performance at that level across a variety of topics. They may provide a structured argument to support their opinions, and they may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. They can discuss some topics abstractly, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise, but in general, they are more comfortable discussing a variety of topics concretely.

Advanced High speakers may demonstrate a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms or for limitations in vocabulary by the confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration. They use precise vocabulary and intonation to express meaning and often show great fluency and ease of speech. However, when called on to perform the complex tasks associated with the Superior level over a variety of topics, their language will at times break down or prove inadequate, or they may avoid the task altogether, for example, by resorting to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis.

Advanced Mid

Speakers at the Advanced Mid sublevel are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as topics relating to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in the major time frames of past, present, and future by providing a full account, with good control of aspect. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse.

Advanced Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as circumlocution or rephrasing are often employed for this purpose. The speech of Advanced Mid speakers performing Advanced-level tasks is marked by substantial flow. Their vocabulary is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature, except in the case of a particular area of specialization or interest. Their discourse may still reflect the oral paragraph structure of their own language rather than that of the target language.

Advanced Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. They are readily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the quality and/or quantity of their speech will generally decline.

Advanced Low

Speakers at the Advanced Low sublevel are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks. They are able to participate in most informal and some formal conversations on topics related to school, home, and leisure activities. They can also speak about some topics related to employment, current events, and matters of public and community interest.

Advanced Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in the major time frames of past, present, and future in paragraph-length discourse with some control of aspect. In these narrations and descriptions, Advanced Low speakers combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length, although these narrations and descriptions tend to be handled separately rather than interwoven. They can handle appropriately the essential linguistic challenges presented by a complication or an unexpected turn of events.

Responses produced by Advanced Low speakers are typically not longer than a single paragraph. The speaker's dominant language may be evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of that language. At times their discourse may be minimal for the level, marked by an irregular flow, and containing noticeable self-correction. More generally, the performance of Advanced Low speakers tends to be uneven.

Advanced Low speech is typically marked by a certain grammatical roughness (e.g., inconsistent control of verb endings), but the overall performance of the Advanced-level tasks is sustained, albeit minimally. The vocabulary of Advanced Low speakers often lacks specificity. Nevertheless, Advanced Low speakers are able to use communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution.

- Advanced Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. Their speech can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may require some repetition or restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

INTERMEDIATE

Speakers at the Intermediate level are distinguished primarily by their ability to create with the language when talking about familiar topics related to their daily life. They are able to recombine learned material in order to express personal meaning. Intermediate-level speakers can ask simple questions and can handle a straightforward survival situation. They produce sentence-level language, ranging from discrete sentences to strings of sentences, typically in present time. Intermediate-level speakers are understood by interlocutors who are accustomed to dealing with non-native learners of the language.

- **Intermediate High**

    Intermediate High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with the routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle successfully uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to their work, school, recreation, particular interests, and areas of competence.

    Intermediate High speakers can handle a substantial number of tasks associated with the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance of all of these tasks all of the time. Intermediate High speakers can narrate and describe in all major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length, but not all the time. Typically, when Intermediate High speakers attempt to perform Advanced-level tasks, their speech exhibits one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to carry out fully the narration or description in the appropriate major time frame, an inability to maintain paragraph-length discourse, or a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary.

    Intermediate High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although interference from another language may be evident (e.g., use of code-switching, false cognates, literal translations), and a pattern of gaps in communication may occur.

Intermediate Mid

Speakers at the Intermediate Mid sublevel are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture. These include personal information related to self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel, and lodging.

Intermediate Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices, and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to produce responses typically consisting of sentences and strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations, and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. In spite of the limitations in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, Intermediate Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

Overall, Intermediate Mid speakers are at ease when performing Intermediate-level tasks and do so with significant quantity and quality of Intermediate-level language.

Intermediate Low

Speakers at the Intermediate Low sublevel are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target-language culture. These topics relate to basic personal information; for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, and some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate Low sublevel, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information. They are also able to ask a few appropriate questions. Intermediate Low speakers manage to sustain the functions of the Intermediate level, although just barely.

Intermediate Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors into short statements and discrete sentences. Their responses are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective

reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language. In spite of frequent misunderstandings that may require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

NOVICE

Novice-level speakers can communicate short messages on highly predictable, everyday topics that affect them directly. They do so primarily through the use of isolated words and phrases that have been encountered, memorized, and recalled. Novice-level speakers may be difficult to understand even by the most sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to non-native speech.

Novice High

Speakers at the Novice High sublevel are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects, and a limited number of activities, preferences, and immediate needs. Novice High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information. They are also able to ask a few formulaic questions.

Novice High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their language consists primarily of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, and may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since their language often consists of expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes sound surprisingly fluent and accurate. Pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax may be strongly influenced by the first language. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence-level discourse.

Novice Mid

Speakers at the Novice Mid sublevel communicate minimally by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may say only two or three words at a time or give an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor's words. Novice Mid speakers may be understood with difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics and perform functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

Novice Low

Speakers at the Novice Low sublevel have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot, therefore, participate in a true conversational exchange.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ACTFL ASSESSMENT:

Please visit
www.actfl.org/assessments

For information on Proficiency and Assessment workshops, please visit:
www.actfl.org/learn/proficiency-assessment-workshops

For information on ACTFL tester and rater certifications, please visit:
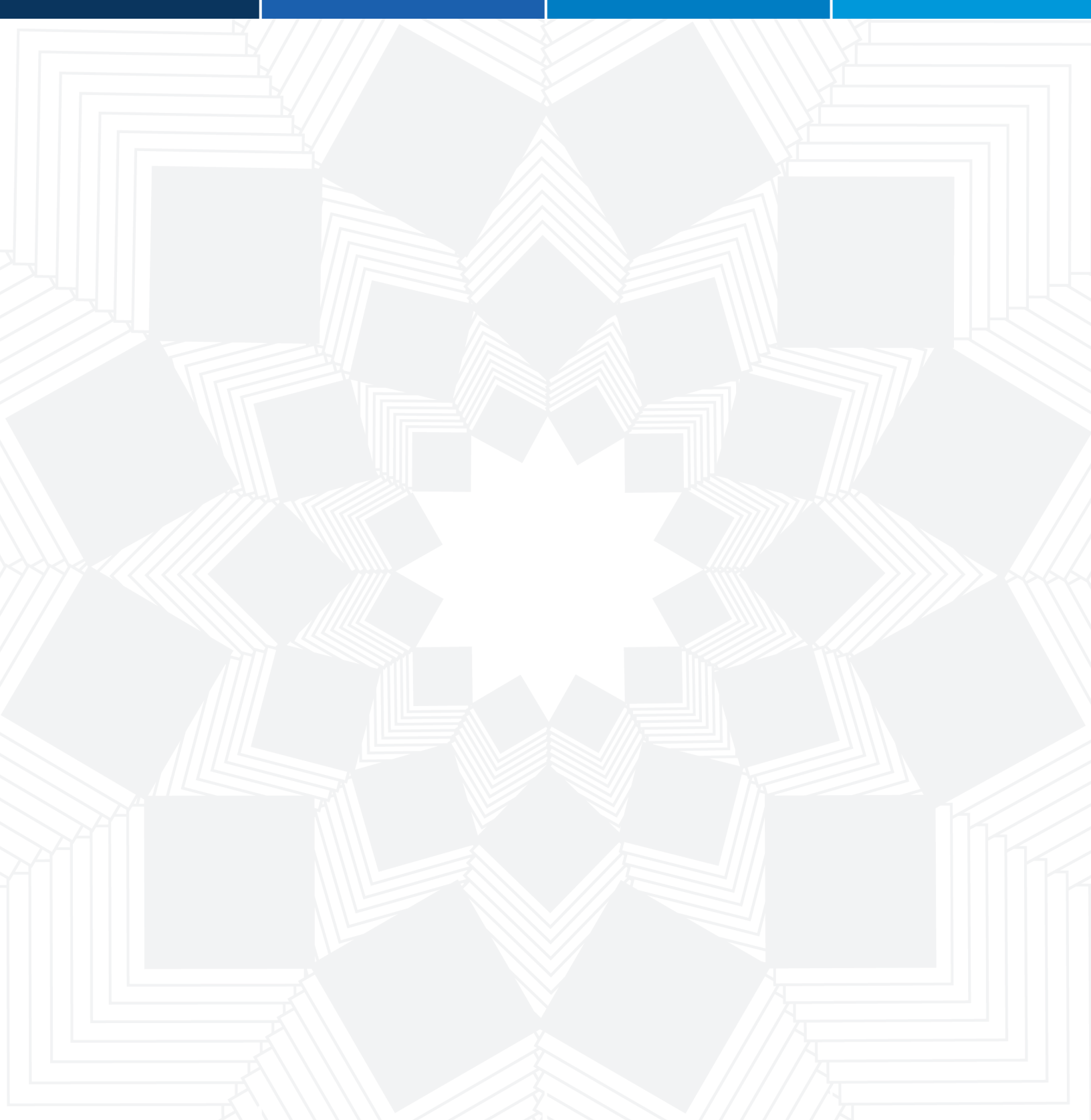**www.actfl.org/certifications**

INTERESTED IN TAKING AN OPIc?

To schedule a test, please visit Language Testing International's website at
www.languagetesting.com
or call **1-800-486-8444.**