

ACTFL RPT
READING PROFICIENCY TEST

ACTFL READING PROFICIENCY TEST FAMILIARIZATION GUIDE

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What Is the ACTFL Reading Proficiency Test?

The ACTFL Reading Proficiency Test (RPT) is a proctored, standardized test of Interpretive Reading ability as described in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*. It assesses a test taker’s ability to understand and interpret written language that has not been encountered previously, without the ability to use a dictionary, grammar, or other language tools. Test takers read text passages and then answer multiple-choice questions about what they have read. Each passage has three questions; each question has four multiple-choice answers of which only one is correct. All texts, questions, and multiple-choice answers are presented in the language being tested.

The ACTFL RPT is delivered by computer or tablet via the internet. It presents 10 to 25 test items and is 50 minutes to two hours in length, with the length and the number and types of test items dependent on which of eight test forms is being administered. Each of the eight forms assesses a specific proficiency range, in order to minimize the length of the test.

The goal of the ACTFL RPT is to assess general Interpretive Reading proficiency, rather than what has been learned in a specific program. The RPT reading texts vary in genre, content, length, and complexity depending on the proficiency level targeted. These are real-world types of texts ranging from informal notes, emails, letters, and announcements to short technical reports, excerpts from literary texts, articles, and commentaries. The texts cover social, academic, and professional topics. The test items target the main idea, supporting detail and, at the higher levels, the inferences and connections the test-taker can make from the content and organization of the text.

The ACTFL RPT can measure Interpretive Reading ability in relation to one of three proficiency taxonomies, depending on the type of language proficiency certification needed:

- The ACTFL Proficiency Scale, as described in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Reading*
- The Interagency Roundtable (ILR) Skill Level Descriptors
- The Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR)

The ACTFL RPT was developed in partnership with the Institute for Test Research and Test Development. It provides valid and reliable reading proficiency assessment in a format that allows hundreds of candidates to take the test online at the same time. Online access means that an RPT 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 RPT is currently available in the following languages: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), English, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

The ACTFL RPT has a rigorous validity argument, constructed using content-related, criterion-

related, and construct-related evidence. Validity and reliability reports can be found at [ACTFL | ACE Review: Bibliography of Technical Reports](#).

How Does the ACTFL RPT Work?

Test Forms

The ACTFL RPT is offered in eight test forms, where each form assesses a specific range of proficiency. In institutional settings, the form(s) to be administered are identified by the educational institution or organization. Table 1 provides information on the different test forms, proficiency ranges, and time allotments. These options ensure that the test administered is appropriate for the test taker’s reading ability and is economical in terms of time and effort.

Table 1. ACTFL RPT Test Forms with Proficiency Ranges and Time Allotments

Superior				D		F	G	H
Advanced								
...			C		E	F	G	H
Advanced		B						
Intermediate								
Intermediate	A	B			E	F	G	H
Intermediate								
Novice High								
Novice Mid								
Novice								

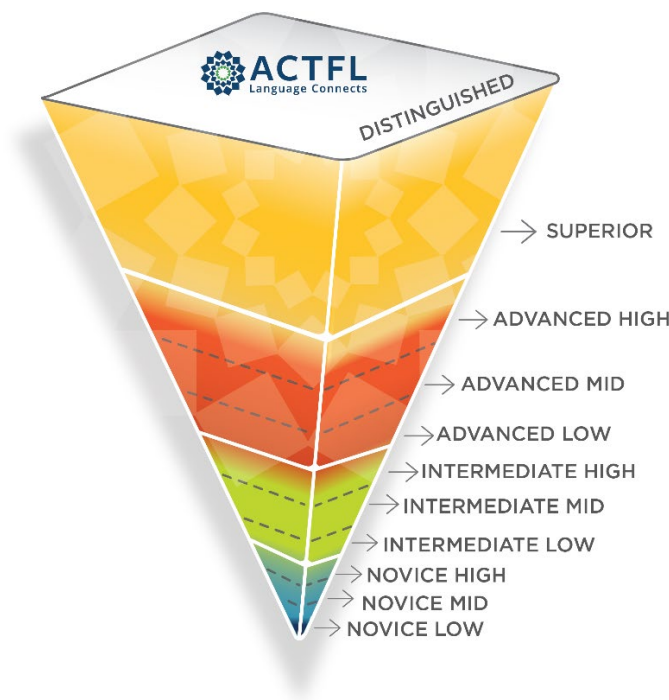
Test Length 50 minutes for a two-level test (A, B, C, or D)
 75 minutes for a three-level test (E, F, or G*)
 125 minutes for the full-range test (H**)

* This is a semi-adaptive version of the test, which ranges in time from 50 to 75 minutes and offers tasks at higher or lower levels depending on the test taker’s responses. This is the test to choose if the test taker’s proficiency is unknown and/or when all candidates should be administered the same test and not select ranges individually.

** This is the full-range test.

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

The ACTFL RPT assesses reading in terms of proficiency, that is, the ability to derive meaning effectively and appropriately from texts that the reader has not practiced or encountered previously, as outlined in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Reading*. The Guidelines characterize the development of language proficiency as a continuum with five major levels: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished. Each level represents a range of ability (what an individual can do with language) that includes all of the prior levels. The RPT assesses reading ability from Novice Low through the Superior level.



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 reading activities that the individual can carry out, such as recognizing words and phrases, following written instructions, or reading and critiquing articles written by professional colleagues.

- **Accuracy:** The degree to which the individual can use linguistic features (including grammar and syntax, vocabulary, stress and intonation, discourse structure, sociocultural knowledge, and more) to process written messages.
- **Context and content:** The situations or circumstances in which the individual can achieve reading goals, and the topic areas that the individual is able to handle.
- **Text type:** The length and complexity of written text that the individual can understand and process, ranging from words and phrases to sentences, paragraphs, and multi-paragraph texts.

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 reader's global proficiency.

Table 1 summarizes the assessment criteria as they relate to the first four major proficiency levels.

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

Proficiency Level	Global Tasks and Functions	Context & Content	Text Type	Accuracy
Novice	Can derive meaning by recognizing key words and formulaic phrases that are highly contextualized and have been encountered previously.	The most common informal settings. <i>Most common aspects of self and daily life.</i>	Individual words, lists, phrases, and some limited formulaic information.	Primarily relies on vocabulary to derive meaning from written messages. May derive meaning by recognizing structural patterns that have been practiced in familiar contexts.
Intermediate	Can follow oral input related to familiar, routine tasks such as understanding announcements, instructions, directions, and other highly contextualized messages. Can comprehend simple stories and short descriptive messages within familiar contexts.	Routine informal settings and limited tasks involving the communication of simple information. <i>Familiar, predictable topics related to self and daily routines and activities.</i>	Understands sentence-level structures and some longer texts.	Has sufficient control of the structures and conventions of written language to understand short, non-complex texts on familiar topics. Can recognize when understanding is incomplete. Generally relies heavily on knowledge of familiar cultural norms and expectations.
Advanced	Can comprehend the main idea and supporting details of narrative, descriptive, and straightforward persuasive text in all major time frames. Can follow when narration or description includes an unexpected turn of events.	Informal settings and some routine formal settings. <i>Topics of personal and general interest.</i>	Understands connected, cohesive discourse of at least a paragraph in length. Can extend to two or more paragraphs on familiar topics.	Can fully understand complex and descriptive discourse with connected language and cohesive devices.

Superior	Can follow reasoned argumentation expressed through supported opinion, conjecture, and hypothesis. Can process writing that deals with abstract concepts, contains cultural references, and uses specialized vocabulary and complex grammatical structures. Can understand formal and informal language on general social and professional topics, and can comprehend linguistically complex extended text.	Most informal and formal settings. <i>Practical, professional, and social topics treated both concretely and abstractly.</i>	Understands clearly organized and articulated text that can extend from several paragraphs to extended discourse.	Understands widely used idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and the cultural norms and expectations that commonly apply in routine and professional writing. Understands the mood, feeling, emotion, or stance expressed in written communication, including emotional overtones such as irony, sarcasm, or humor.
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What Are the Test Items Like?

ACTFL RPT test items focus on the main idea, supporting detail, and at higher levels the inferences and connections the test taker can make in relation to the content and organization of the texts they read.

Novice Level Example

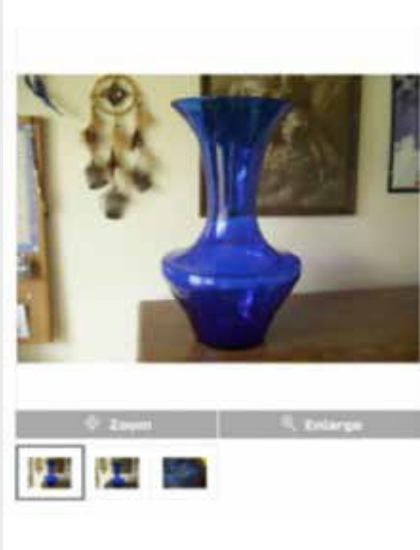


FOR SALE BY OWNER:
 2 year old used compact car.
Electric car: no gas, no noise
Clean Interior: inside looks new Metallic Green exterior.
 Low mileage (28,000 miles). Great car for city life. Small size makes parking easy.
Call (503) 902 1099 for more information.

Chevy Advertisement Rationale for Rating

The readers of this advertisement must be able to process a highly predictable, loosely organized text with limited cohesion. They may rely heavily on extralinguistic support—here, the picture—to understand the message. This is an example of a text where the readers’ recognition of images, brand names, and numbers leads in part to their comprehension. Novice-level readers are best able to comprehend a text when they are able to anticipate the information in it...

Intermediate Level Example



This is a very large, beautiful vase. There are no chips or cracks. The vase weighs over 9 lbs. This vase looks 100% better in person. Any questions, please ask.

Rationale for Rating

The readers of this text must deal with a straightforward text whose purpose is evident even before they read it. While written in complete sentences, there is very little cohesion among them, which facilitates the readers' task. The format of the text is predictable and aids the readers' comprehension.

Advanced Level Example

Hikers

When New Hampshire lawmakers decided to bill negligent hikers for their rescues, they figured they would solve some budget problems and teach hapless tourists a lesson. Then a 17-year-old Eagle Scout got lost on Mount Washington and ended up with a bill for \$25,000.

Now New Hampshire officials, facing possible litigation, are defending a law that hasn't solved their budget troubles and puts the state at odds with national search-and-rescue groups that say billing hikers is dangerous.

"It certainly has put us on the hot spot," says Lt. Todd Bogardus, head of search and rescue for the state Fish and Game Department.

Few other states bill those who are rescued — and most of the other laws target skiers who stray off marked slopes.

Oregon caps the amount that can be billed at \$500. Hawaii requires there be an "intentional disregard" for safety, and Idaho limits reimbursement to rescues from lands that are closed to the public. A Maine law that permits the state to recover costs of a search and rescue is seldom enforced.

The National Association for Search and Rescue opposes billing for rescue, contending people won't seek help if they're afraid they'll have to pay for it. "The public needs to understand that there's going to be someone there to help them and you shouldn't worry about downstream consequences," spokesman Howard Paul says.

In April, Scott Mason, then a high school junior from Halifax, Mass., set out on a 17-mile day hike in the White Mountains. The popular hiking destination includes Mount Washington, where unpredictable conditions have earned it the title "home of the world's worst weather."

Rationale for Rating

Readers of this multi-paragraph text must deal with subject matter that is concrete and likely to be of general interest. Readers process a text that reports the facts of various hiking rescues and the consequences of reimbursement policies in a straightforward and predictable manner. The author uses general vocabulary although there are occasionally words and phrases for which the readers may need to use contextual clues to derive meaning (downstream consequences). While there is a journalistic style that is light-hearted in some cases (hapless tourists), there is no evidence of author's voice that the readers need to understand.

Readers at the Advanced Level are able to read to learn from this text.

Superior Level Example

Google Books

...[T]he big issues here are well worth public attention. Should a private corporation (Google) become the librarian for the world's collected knowledge? Even if it offers to play nice, share revenues, and make books easily accessible now, what about in the future?

Google has scanned about 10 million books so far, with a goal of 40 million or more. For the price of constructing just 60 miles of new highways, the Library of Congress could digitize 10 million books and put them online to be read free of charge in perpetuity by anyone, points out Brewster Kahle, the founder and director of the Internet Archive. That nonprofit group has digitized more than a million books itself but lacks the financial resources of Google.

And what about privacy? Google will be capturing information on which books users search for and search within, as well as those they might purchase. What will it do with that information? Information on what people choose to read is sensitive and subject to abuse. The company has promised strong privacy protections under the settlement but has been unwilling so far to spell them out in detail. And no matter how good protections may sound at the outset, what assurance is there that Google's policy won't change in the future? These issues plague the Internet in general but have

especially important implications here.

The idea of digitizing the world’s written record and making it freely available to everyone is exhilarating. The ability of a student in Alabama or Albania to have access to the contents of the world’s libraries online at their fingertips, for example, is a powerful concept and just one of the ways a free and open Web can lift humanity.

But history shows that when a company – even one with talent and good intentions – acts like a monopoly, it is subject to abuses. Despite the potentially monumental effects of this settlement, it has had little public scrutiny. Yet it needs a rigorous examination.

If it stands, the agreement must include long-term safeguards that allow public access to the full collection at reasonable cost, maintain the rights of copyright holders, and ensure the necessary privacy of those who use the service.

Rationale for Rating

Readers of this text must deal with subject matter that is most likely unfamiliar. Their comprehension comes in part from command of the language that is supported by a broad vocabulary, an understanding of more complex structures and knowledge of the target culture.

Readers must be able to process a reasoned, thoughtful argument about an abstract topic—copyright, both explicit and implicit—with cultural references (Google, Library of Congress). They must also understand the author’s use of precise and specialized vocabulary (in perpetuity) and complex grammatical structures (And no matter how good protections may sound at the outset, what assurance is there that Google’s policy won’t change in the future?).

Readers at the Superior Level will read to learn from this text and learn from reading it.

What Are the Possible Test Outcomes (Proficiency Ratings)?

The ACTFL RPT is machine-scored, with each item assessed as either correct or incorrect. The scoring procedure considers the difficulty of the text, the level of difficulty of the three questions, and the test taker’s responses to the questions. An algorithm then uses the data points to assign a final rating.

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

- **Novice:** The individual can understand key words and cognates, as well as formulaic phrases that are highly contextualized. Novice-level readers are able to obtain a limited amount of information from highly predictable texts in which the topic or context is very familiar, such as a street sign, a store receipt, or a photo caption. Individuals at the Novice level may rely heavily on their own background knowledge and on extralinguistic support (such as photo imagery or the format of a store receipt) to derive meaning.
- **Intermediate:** Individuals can understand information conveyed in simple, predictable

texts, relying on contextual clues and familiar text formats. They can understand texts that convey basic information such as that found in announcements, notices, and online collaborative tools 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 mostly high-frequency vocabulary.

- **Advanced:** The individual can understand the main idea and supporting details of narrative and descriptive texts that have a clear and predictable structure and pertain to topics of general interest, such as news articles, blog posts, and travelogue descriptions. Comprehension is also supported by knowledge of the conventions of the language, such as noun/adjective agreement and verb placement. Readers at this level are able to compensate for limitations in their lexical and structural knowledge by using contextual clues. They have sufficient control of standard linguistic conventions to understand sequencing, time frames, and chronology.
- **Superior:** The individual can understand written texts from many genres dealing with a wide range of subjects, both familiar and unfamiliar. Comprehension comes from a command of the language that is supported by a broad vocabulary, an understanding of complex structures, and knowledge of the culture. Readers at the Superior level can draw inferences from textual and extralinguistic clues. Superior-level readers are able to understand lengthy texts of a professional, academic, or literary nature, including those that use abstract language and feature argumentation, supported opinion, and/or hypothesis.

At the Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels, the RPT 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 written 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 without evidence of difficulty.

Possible RPT ratings are thus as follows:

- Novice Low
- Intermediate Low
- Advanced Low
- Superior
- Novice Mid
- Intermediate Mid
- Advanced Mid
- Novice High
- Intermediate High
- Advanced High

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

What Is an Official ACTFL RPT Rating?

Official ACTFL RPT ratings are assigned to those ACTFL RPTs that are conducted under the supervision of a proctor and delivered and scored by Language Testing International (LTI), the exclusive licensee of ACTFL assessments. Clients can request an ACTFL rating (according to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024 – Reading*), an ILR rating (according to the U.S. Government’s Interagency Language Roundtable *Skill Level Descriptions for Reading*), or a CEFR rating (according to the *Common European Framework of Reference*). Results are stored in LTI’s Test Management System and are made available, along with the ACTFL Certificate of Listening 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).

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, oral interpreter for directions, testing environment adjustments, and blank scratch paper, depending on the test type and the individual candidate’s needs. Accommodations can be requested from LTI. LTI’s accommodation team works with candidates and the organizations they’re testing 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>.

How Is the ACTFL RPT Currently Being Used?

Official ACTFL RPT ratings can be used for a variety of purposes in academic, commercial, and government communities.

- In academia, ACTFL RPT ratings can be used for admissions, placement into language

programs, general assessments, or exit/graduation requirements.

- In business and government communities, ACTFL RPT ratings can be used for certification, hiring, and promotion in multi-lingual positions.

How Is the ACTFL RPT Proctored?

The ACTFL LPT must be administered in a secure, proctored environment. Proctoring options will be 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 RPT?

To schedule an ACTFL RPT, 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 assessments also undergo regular external reviews as part of the American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT®) review process [[ACTFL | College Credit](#)].

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

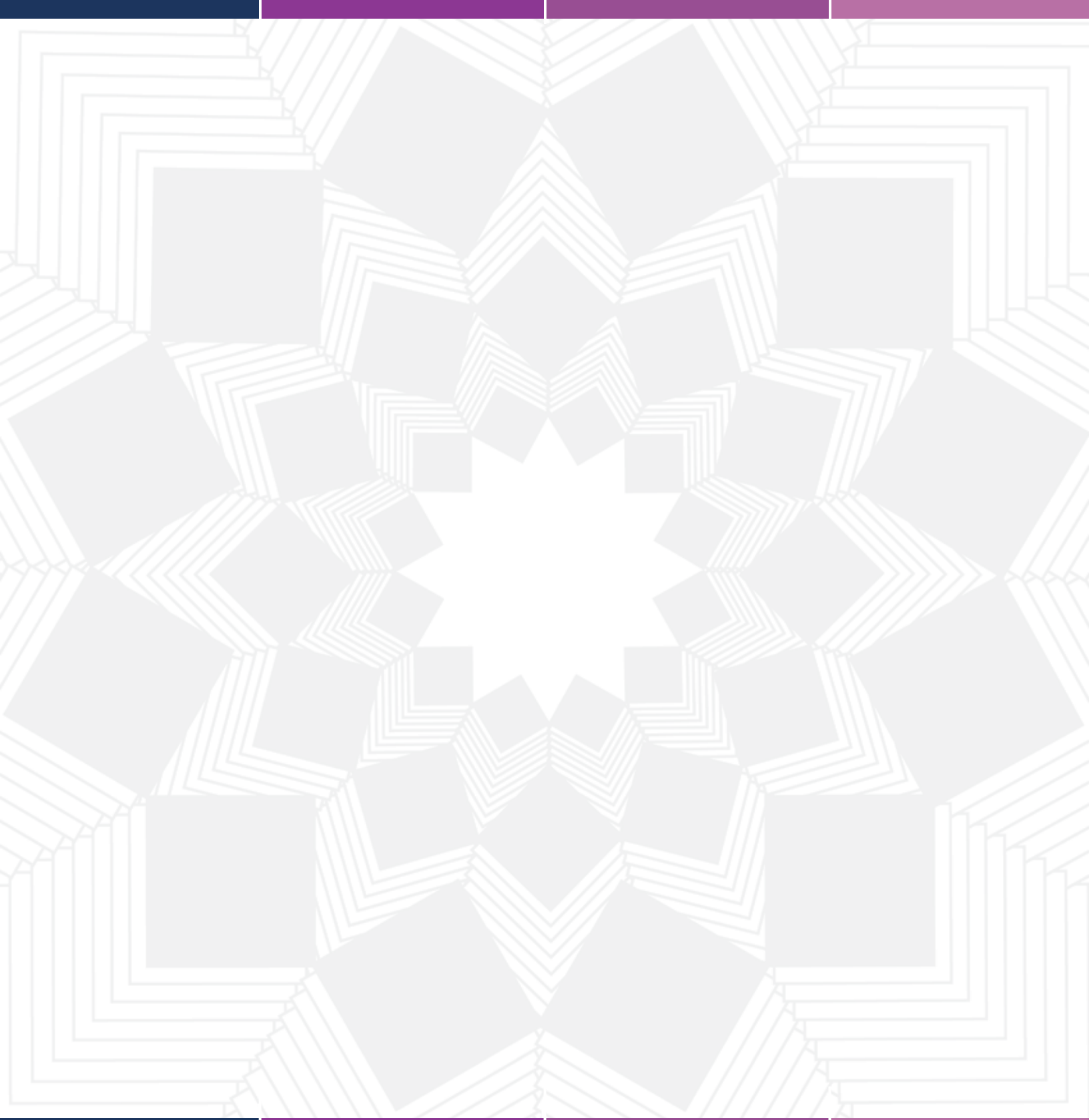
<https://www.actfl.org/assessments>

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>



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