ACTFL WPT

EXAMINEE HANDBOOK

LTI Language Testing International

Exclusive Licensee of ACTFL

ACTFL Language Connects

No portion of this document may be reproduced or reprinted without the written permission of Language Testing International (LTI) & the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

Table of Content

WPT Test Structure 5

Test Proctoring and System Check 5
On-site Proctoring with a Local Proctor 5
Off-site Proctoring with a Remote Proctor 5
System Check 5
Background Survey: Identifying your personal activities and interests 6
Self-Assessment: Determining the level of the WPT 7
WPT Test Administration 8

Linguistic Functions and WPT Question Types 10

NOVICE LEVEL 10
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL 11
ADVANCED LEVEL 11
SUPERIOR LEVEL 12

Writing Prompts in the WPT 13

Sample tasks 13
Question #1 13
Question #2 13

Rating the WPT 15

Tips for Optimal Performance on the WPT 16

Logistics 16
Personal Preparation 16
Test-taking Tips 16

Frequently Asked Questions 18

How do I request the WPT? 18
What is the cost of the WPT? 18
In what languages is the WPT available? 18
Who takes the WPT test? 18
Why do candidates take the WPT? 18
How is the WPT administered? 19
How do I prepare to take the WPT? 19

Policies & Guidelines for the Use of the WPT 20

Confidentiality 20
Rehearsed Material 20

Questions? Contact us 21

About the ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT)

The ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT), which is administered by Language Testing International (LTI), is a standardized test for the global assessment of functional writing ability in a language. The WPT measures how well a person spontaneously writes in a language (without access to revisions and/or editing tools) by comparing his or her performance of specific writing tasks with the criteria stated in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Writing*, Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Skill Level Descriptions— Writing, or the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), depending on the type of language proficiency certification needed. For the purposes of this orientation, all explanations of standards and protocols are based on the *ACTFL Guidelines*. These principles apply to all rating tools and criteria.

The WPT assesses general language proficiency. It is not designed to assess what you learned in a specific language program, class, school, or university, nor is it tied to a specific teaching method or book. Rather than assessing what you "know" about writing in the language, the WPT is an assessment of what you "can do" with the language. Proficiency, that is, how well a person can use the language as described in the ***ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Writing***, is the only factor that is assessed by the WPT.

The ACTFL WPT is a proctored 20- to 80-minute test, depending on your functional ability. The test is a carefully constructed assessment with four or five requests for written responses that cover different topics. It can be written using a paper and pencil format or by using a computer or tablet that can access the internet. The WPT elicits a series of writing tasks such as those you might encounter in real life. The prompts represent a range of proficiency levels, functions and topics, in formal and informal contexts, dealing with practical, social, and/or professional topics. The tasks and prompts are open-ended and written in English with the expectation that the responses be written in the target language.

The WPT is not an achievement test that assesses a writer's acquisition of specific aspects of course and curriculum content. The tasks do not address when, where, why, or the way in which an individual learned to write in the target language. There is no right answer to the tasks, so you should focus on providing a spontaneous and genuine response to each task, rather than using memorized material. The WPT is evaluated in terms of your ability to write effectively and appropriately for real-life writing purposes. The writing sample is evaluated by an ACTFL-trained and certified rater to determine the level of proficiency demonstrated while performing these linguistic functions.

The ACTFL WPT is appropriate for a variety of purposes: language fluency certification, employment selection, program entrance and exit exams, course placement, college credit, program evaluation, and Translator or Teacher Credentialing.

To take a Demo version of the WPT, click here.

WPT Test Structure

The goal of the WPT is to obtain a ratable written sample that both demonstrates the highest level at which you can write consistently and the quantity and quality of your functional ability. The tasks explore functions at different proficiency levels to identify the level at which you demonstrate sustained control and the level at which evidence of breakdown is observable. Your responses provide detail about your ability to perform these functions and allow raters to assess your general writing proficiency. All raters in all languages are trained to follow the ACTFL rating protocols. Since all samples are compared to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Writing*, all ratings in all languages refer to the same criteria.

Test Proctoring and System Check

There are two possibilities for how your test will be proctored:

On-site Proctoring with a Local Proctor

Organizations can arrange to proctor WPTs on location. An authorized, responsible individual, ideally a member of the HR department or faculty of the organization requesting the assessment, must proctor the test. This individual, nominated by the organizing agency, will review the Proctoring Guidelines to understand the steps required to confirm the identity of the candidate and the conditions under which the test will be taken. The actual test is taken via a computer or a tablet with an internet connection.

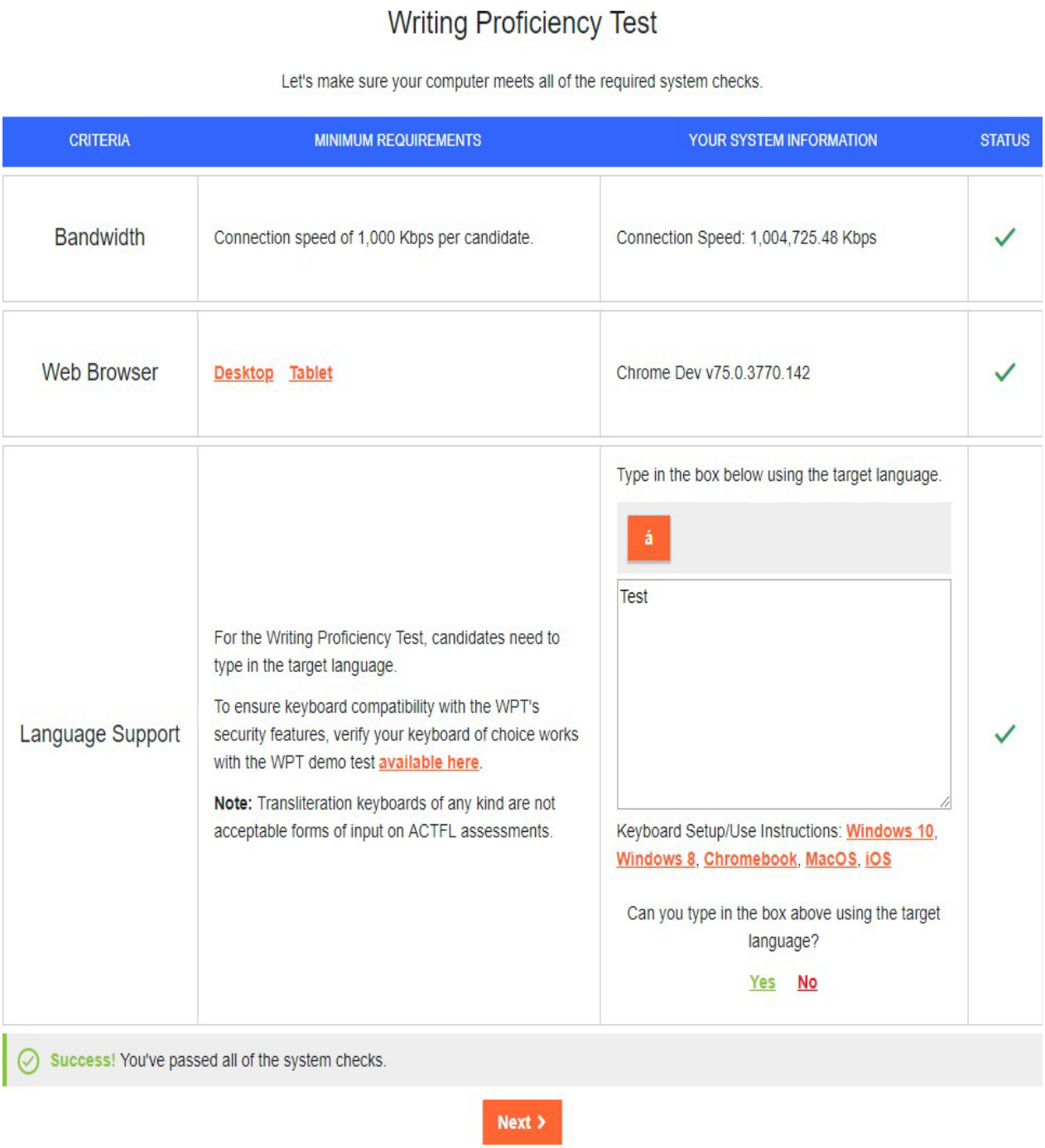
Off-site Proctoring with a Remote Proctor

Remote proctoring is a service that emulates the role of an on-site proctor—confirming your identity and safeguarding the integrity of the exam—using an internet-delivered assessment monitored by our off-site proctor. It allows you to take the test anywhere you can access a quiet room and a computer (in addition to a webcam and a headset) at a time that is convenient for you.

Please Note: In addition to ensuring that the testing room is quiet, you must also be alone in the room for the entire time that you take the test. Additionally, tablets cannot be used with the remote proctoring feature.

System Check

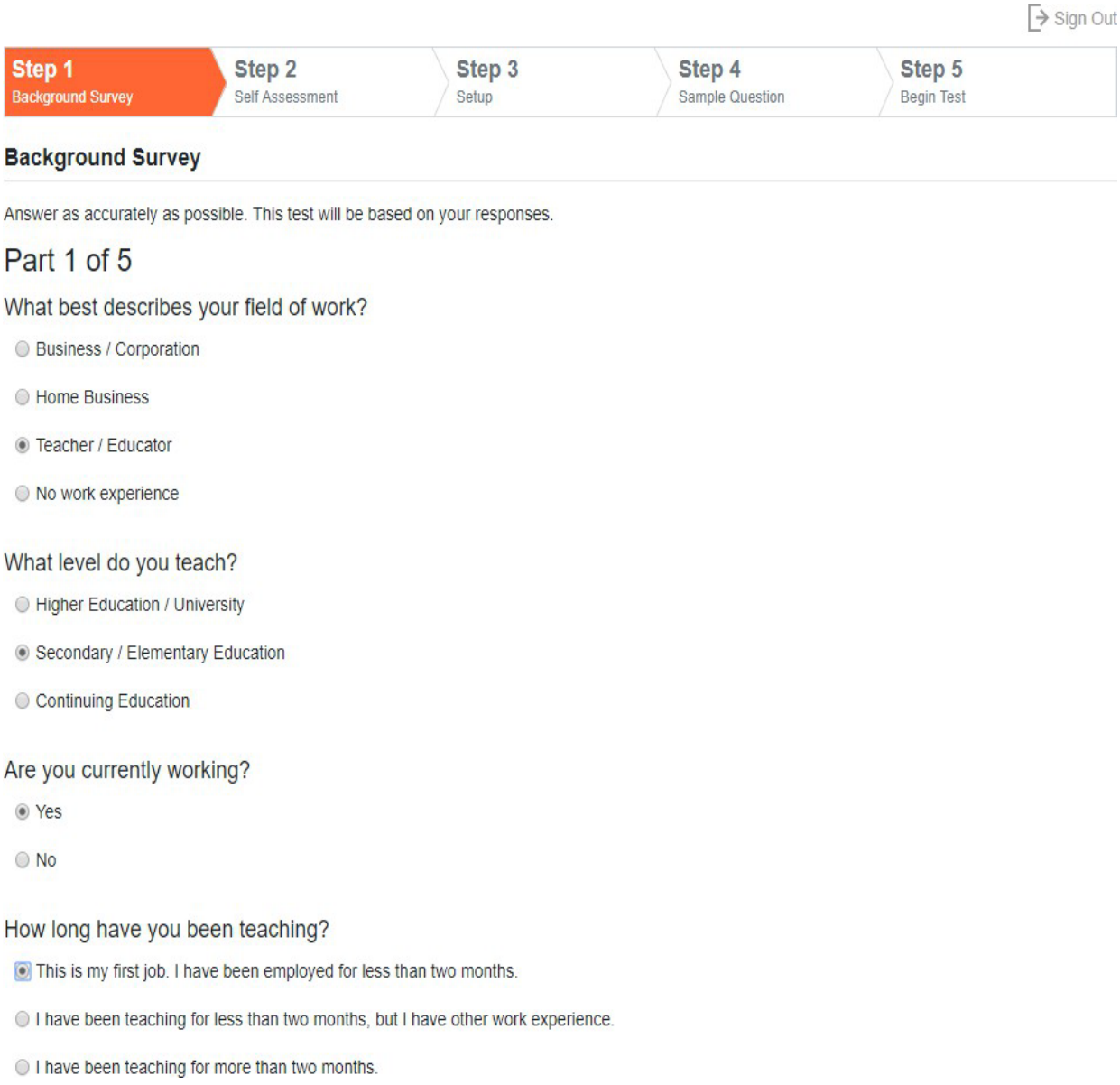
Once you have contacted LTI to set up your appointment for your WPT, the LTI test management team will communicate to your local or remote proctor the login information to access the test online at: wpt.actfltesting.org. Before you begin, the program will confirm that your computer or tablet meets the requirements to run the test.



Background Survey: Identifying your personal activities and interests

Before taking the WPT, the first step is to fill out a Background Survey, which is a questionnaire about your life, work, school, home, personal activities, and interests. The information you provide allows you to customize the WPT to your own interests. The variety of topics, the type of questions, and the range of possible combinations the computer can generate allow for individually designed WPTs.

Below is a sample of the questions you will answer in the Background Survey:



Additional questions about activities, hobbies, sports, and travel are included in the survey. To view the full Background Survey, go to the WPT demo at the site below.

https://wptdemo.lti-inc.net

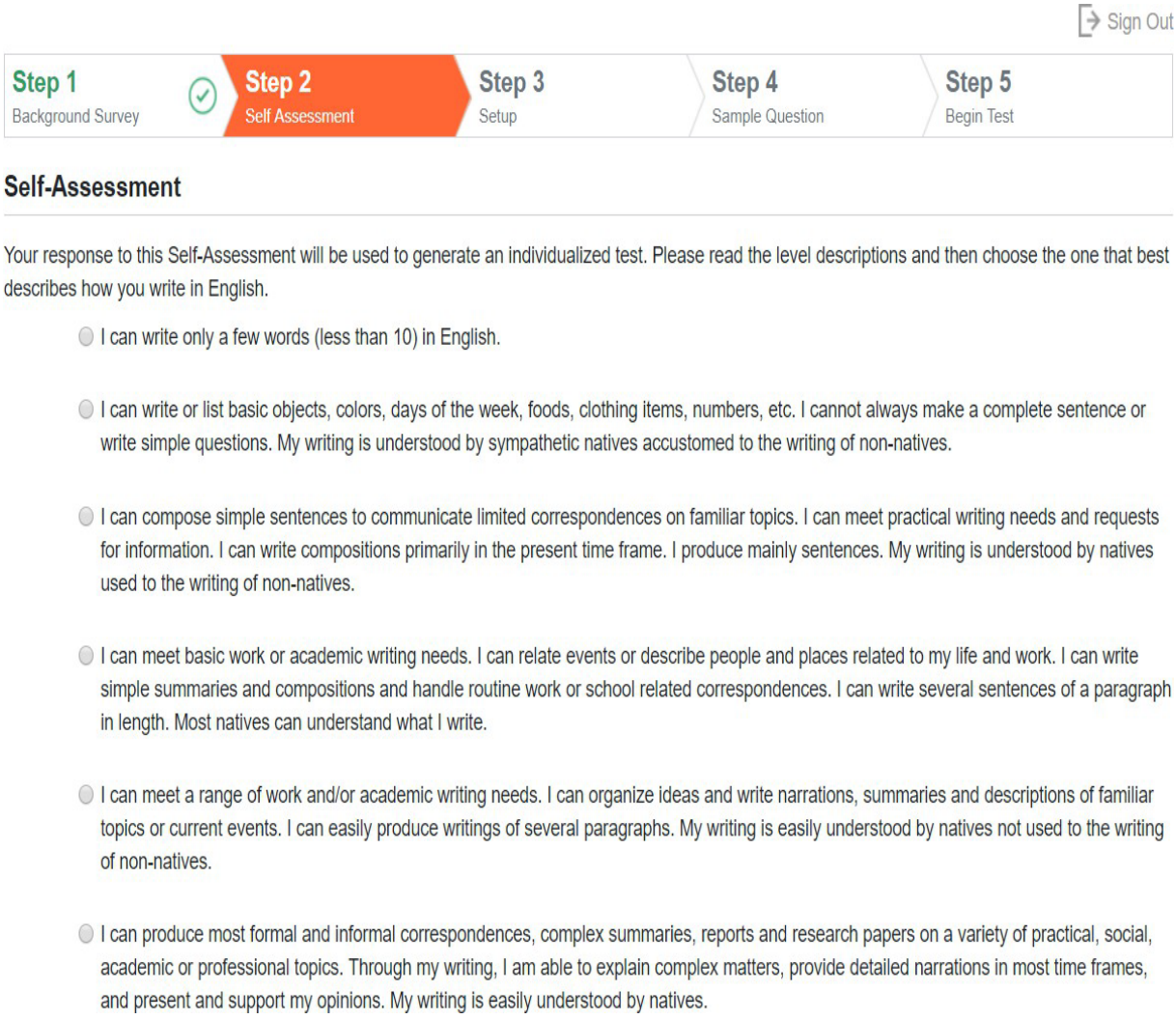
Self-Assessment: Determining the level of the WPT

Additionally, you will complete a Self-Assessment survey that helps to determine an appropriate writing proficiency range at which to target the assessment. The information you provide allows the computer to generate a test tailored specifically to your linguistic capabilities.

The Self-Assessment will allow you to assess your abilities in the target language. It includes six descriptions of how well a person can write in a language. You should select the description you feel most accurately describes your writing ability. This will determine which one of the three WPT test forms is generated for you.

IMPORTANT: If you need to meet a requirement of Advanced High or Superior, you must choose either statements 5 or 6 so that the WPT elicits linguistic functions required for those ratings.

Below are the self-assessment options.



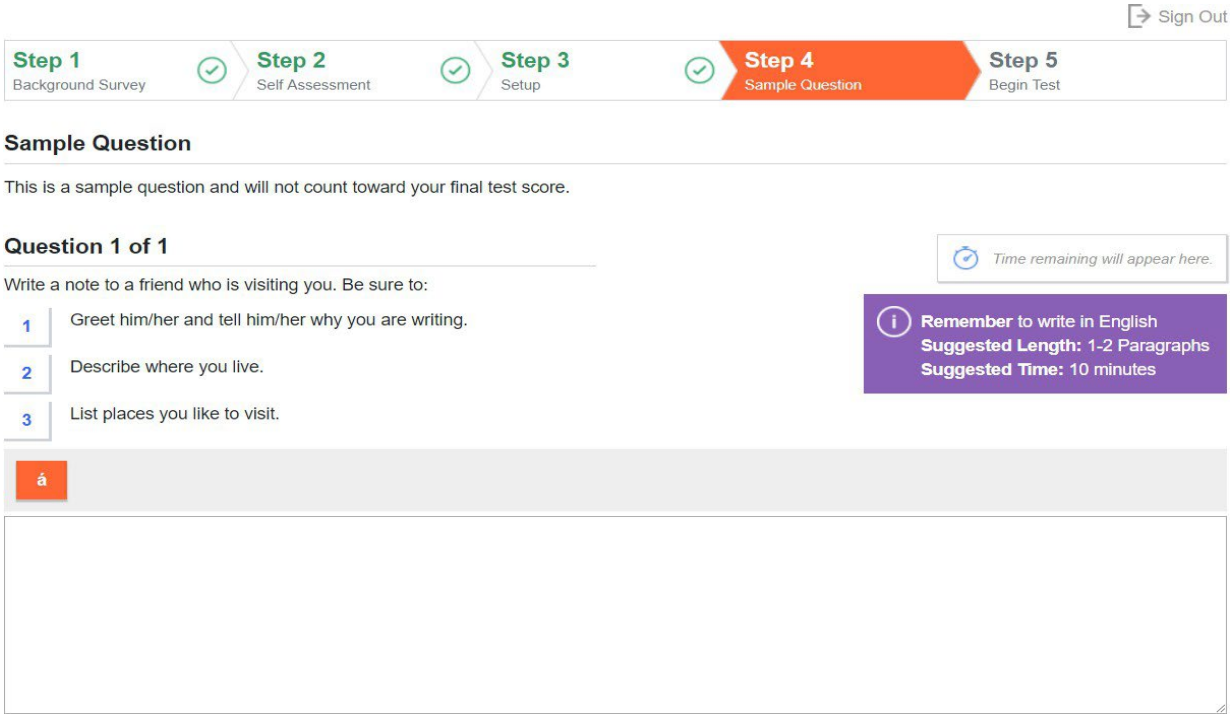
The Self-Assessment choice determines which test format will be generated for you. The choices made in response to the Background Survey and the Self-Assessment assure that the WPT generated for you will target your range of abilities and provide questions on topics familiar to you. Each WPT is customized and unique, tailored to your interests and your level of functional ability.

WPT Test Administration

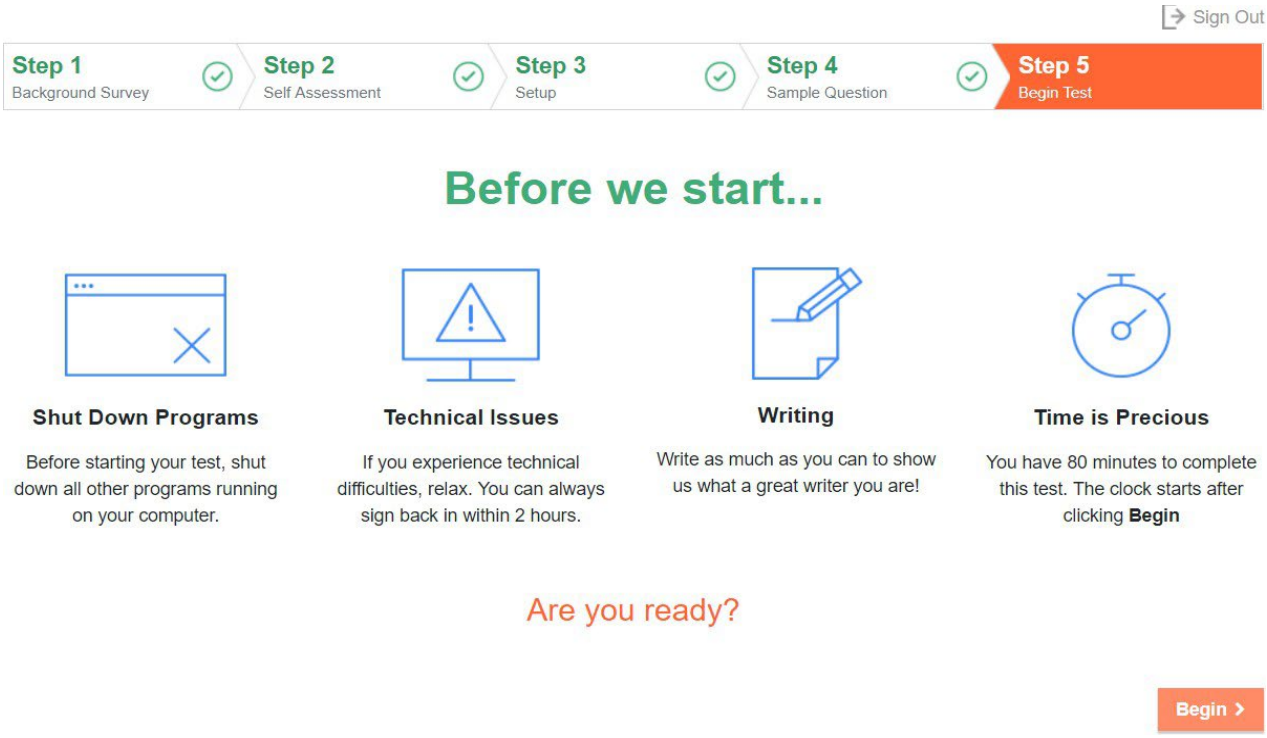
Once the Background Survey and the Self-Assessment are completed, the WPT provides detailed test instructions and directions on how to respond to the questions. A sample question is provided to make sure you understand what will be required of you when you take the test. You will have the opportunity to review the instructions and sample questions again before beginning the test. Directions are also made available in advance of the scheduled testing time. All directions and prompts are written in English. Special accommodations may be requested when directions and prompts need to be provided in a language other than English. The general introduction suggests a time allotment (e.g., 10 minutes) for

completing the response of each specific request. The total time to read the directions and complete all the writing tasks is 20–80 minutes, depending on the type of WPT required.

Once you are familiar with the system, you will be ready to begin the WPT.



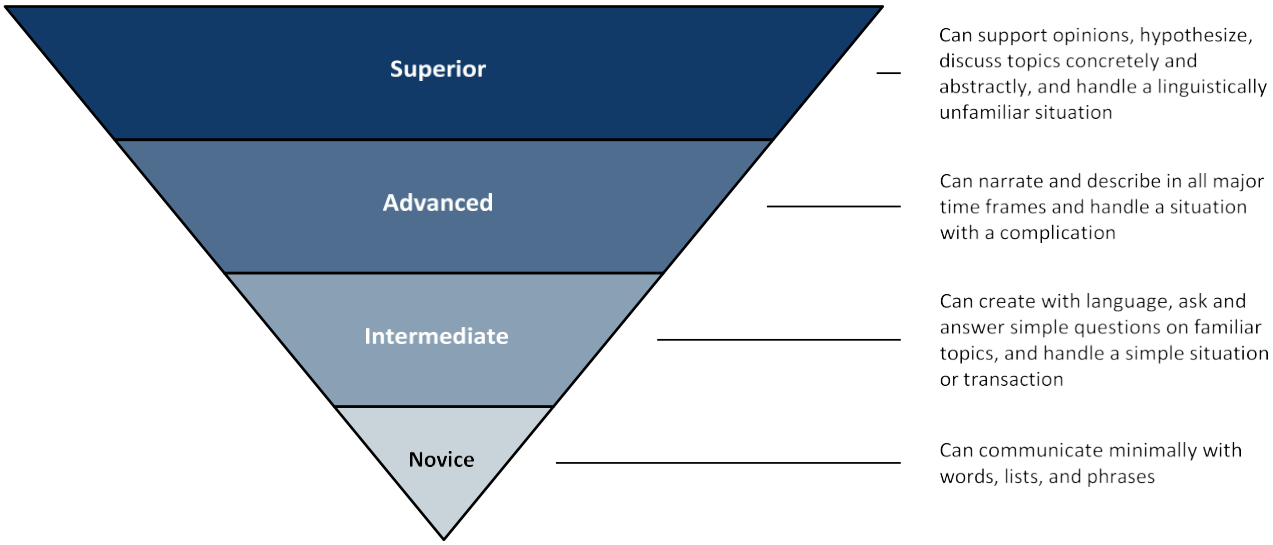
Before you begin the test, you will receive the following reminders.



Linguistic Functions and WPT Question Types

WPT prompts elicit different functions associated with the different levels in the ACTFL Proficiency scale. For each of the major levels of proficiency, there are specific types of communicative tasks that you must demonstrate. The WPT may touch on the same functions in different topics, in order to determine the quantity and quality of your functional ability.

Below is a visual representation of the ACTFL scale with concise information about the four major levels tested by the WPT. As you can see, the ACTFL scale covers a full range of proficiency from Novice to Superior.



NOVICE LEVEL

Test forms addressing lower levels of proficiency will include Novice level questions. These prompts will provide a context in which you might have to create a list of words.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	**Examples of Novice-Level Questions and/or Requests**
Lists	What colors do you want to paint your house? Make a list of the rooms in the house and the colors you want to use in each room.
Phrases	In preparation for your friend's party, make a list of the activities you want to prepare.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

At the Intermediate level, writers can write about their routines and personal interests. Questions will invite you to write with sentence-level discourse.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	Examples of Intermediate-Level Questions and/or Requests
Simple description of a person, place, or thing	Write a note to your parents in which you describe your best friend. What does he or she look like?
Simple description of an activity or event	Write an e-mail in which you tell a new friend about what you usually do at an American picnic.
Ask questions to get something you want or need	Write a letter to your host family to ask about their house and the family. Ask three or four questions to find out what you want to know.

ADVANCED LEVEL

Advanced-level questions invite you to write in detail about autobiographic topics and beyond. Writers will be asked to write about themselves and about their work or community. Questions invite you to provide detail in paragraph-length discourse.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	Examples of Advanced-Level Questions and/or Requests
Detailed descriptions of people, places, and things from your present and your past	You are writing a report about your internship in a computer company. Write about the area where you worked at the company. Provide a detailed description of the office and the people who worked there.
Detailed stories about something that has happened, is happening, or will happen	You just arrived from a camping vacation. Write a story about an interesting situation that happened while camping. What started the situation, and how was it finally resolved?
Handle a complication that arises in a transaction	You bought an item on the internet, but when the package arrived the item was not what the description had advertised. Write a note to customer service. Explain what happened and request a replacement.
Report on a current event	You are writing a report for the local newspaper about the impact of climate changes in local weather. Report on the recent weather changes in your area and what has happened most recently. Comment on the most recent news.

SUPERIOR LEVEL

Superior-level questions invite you to reflect thoughtfully about issues and problems in our society. These questions ask you to organize your ideas in a logical manner, which will require more complex elaboration in an essay-like discourse. The context of these questions is more formal and will invite you to deal with a problem or issue at the community, national, or global level.

Types of Questions and/or Requests	**Examples of Superior-Level Questions and/or Requests**
State and support an opinion	You have been invited to write a column for the local paper on the impact of air travel in our society. Write an essay about the most significant changes that aviation has produced for American society. In your opinion, what has been the most important contribution of air travel to contemporary American society? Explain why that contribution, and not others, is the most important.
Hypothesize about possible conditions and outcomes	Continue your essay commenting on air travel changes that could be adopted by airlines and airports to improve the travel experience. Suggest some changes and describe what impact these changes would have on the traveler if they were adopted.
Discuss topics in general, abstract terms	Your city is inviting proposals for collaboration between your university and the community. As president of the student union, you are writing a proposal to the community for a collaboration between the student community and the city governance. Provide a rationale for this collaboration. Explain why student organizations and local governance collaboration can be beneficial for the community and an educational opportunity for student leaders.

Writing Prompts in the WPT

A WPT Form 1 contains five separate prompts that target the Novice and Intermediate levels of proficiency. Both Form 2 and Form 3 contain four separate prompts, each of which encompasses multiple writing tasks (e.g., past narration, description, abstract treatment). Each prompt describes the audience, context, and purpose of the writing task. The prompts on Form 2 are designed to elicit writing at the Intermediate and Advanced levels. The prompts on Form 3 are designed to elicit responses at the Advanced and Superior levels across a variety of contexts and content areas. Each request also describes the suggested length of the response (e.g., several sentences, multiple paragraphs).

Sample tasks

Question #1

An e-mail to a local student in a study abroad program

You are going abroad for a week-long culture class. The school has put you in contact with a local student so that you can get to know more about the school and the course. Write an e-mail to the student. Introduce yourself and ask questions about the class environment.

1. Introduce yourself. Write about where you come from and your academic institution.
2. Briefly explain why you want to take the class and what you want to learn during the week.
3. Ask 4-5 questions to learn about the class and the learning environment in the school abroad.

While the requests at lower levels are of a simple nature, it is important to read the instructions carefully to understand the specific functions and the context presented by the prompts. For example, in this sample prompt, the context is an e-mail to a local student on the topic of a study abroad program. The prompts ask you to introduce yourself and your academic institution, to explain the purpose of taking the class, and to ask questions about the school environment. Since you are writing an e-mail, full performance of the task will include a text of a few sentences with some personal details and questions. Because it is an e-mail to a fellow student, it is expected that the communication will be casual and informal.

Question #2

A newspaper article

You are writing a newspaper article about a recent weather disaster in your area. The newspaper director has asked you to provide general details about the disaster, to provide a human-interest story, and to reflect on the impact and consequences of climate change in the area.

1. Provide general information about the event (what happened, when, where, local conditions)
2. Narrate a specific story that happened during the disaster. Describe the experience in detail.
3. Reflect on the impact of climate change in the area, possible causes, and consequences of more disasters in the area.

In this case, reading the instructions carefully will help you to understand the context and purpose of the writing tasks and the specific functions requested by the prompts. The context is a newspaper article on the topic of a weather disaster. The questions ask for a description of the disaster (Advanced), a narration of a specific case (Advanced), and an abstract consideration about climate change (Superior). Since you are writing a newspaper article, full performance of the task will include a text of several paragraphs, internal organization, details to add precision to the narration and description, and interconnection between all elements of the answer. Because it is a newspaper article, you should make an effort to represent a formal and professional voice, by writing with a high level of accuracy and complexity. Because the questions are moving from Advanced-level functions to Superior, there is an increase in the complexity of the writing as the article progresses.

Rating the WPT

ACTFL-Certified WPT raters are highly specialized language professionals who have completed a rigorous training process. They are trained to follow strict rating protocols, procedures and guidelines to rate the WPT. The responses to each question are considered, based on the purpose of the prompt and the text type required to complete the task. To determine your rating, the rater uses all of the information gained from reviewing your responses to decide the highest level of sustained functional ability. In order to achieve a rating, you must meet all of the requirements of that level (noted in the *Guidelines*). The level is decided by the evidence of sustained performance of the linguistic functions associated with the level. Once the major level is identified, the sublevel is assigned, based on the quantity and quality of the performance at that level, and the evidence of performance at the next higher level.

The WPT rating process is performed exclusively through Language Testing International (LTI), the ACTFL Testing Office. Once a WPT is completed, LTI assigns the test to a rater for rating. Your test will not be released to you or any other party under any circumstances. Only the rating will be released. Any questions about the rating should be sent to LTI directly at customercare@languagetesting.com.

Each rating is fully described in the ***ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Writing***.

Tips for Optimal Performance on the WPT

Logistics

- Scheduling the WPT is handled by LTI. Make sure to follow their instructions. If you have any questions, contact LTI immediately at customercare@languagetesting.com.
- Make sure that the area where you are taking the WPT is quiet and that you will not be interrupted while you take the test.
- During the WPT, you are not allowed to ask for help or check documents or dictionaries. Rely exclusively on what you can do. If the proctor detects that you are using help, the test will be discontinued or cancelled.

Personal Preparation

The best advice for doing well on the WPT is PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! The WPT is an assessment of what you can do with your language at the time of the test. Your final rating describes your general functional ability and your current writing skills. The final rating describes your sustained functional ability, that is, the level at which you show full control over the functions. Only language development over time will affect your rating. Last-minute preparation will not improve your functional ability throughout the test and last-minute language learning, grammar review, or vocabulary practice will most likely not improve your final results. Knowing more about the language will not affect your rating, unless it reflects on what you can do. Focus your writing practice on communicating naturally in the language, focusing on the message rather than the language forms.

As with any test, you should prepare by being well-rested and alert and maintaining a positive attitude throughout the test.

Test-taking Tips

- Respond to the questions in the Background Survey and the Self-Assessment as accurately as you can. The prompts in the test are generated based on your answers, so make sure that you provide the best answers you can to generate a test that truly fits your interests and level of ability.
- Make sure that you understand the technology involved in answering your test.
  Follow the instructions on how to add special characters or use the appropriate script. Before you finish the test, review your answers to check correct spelling, punctuation, accentuation, or any other feature required in writing in the language. Be as accurate as you can.
- Read the prompts carefully and address all the requirements in the questions fully. Keep in mind that each component of the questions addresses a variety of linguistic functions. Respond accordingly. Your answers should demonstrate your ability to perform these functions fully. If your answer is incomplete or does not respond fully to the request, your final rating may be affected. Review each question before you move to the next task and make sure that you have responded to the prompt completely.

- Write only in the target language and avoid using slang or words from other languages. Express your ideas as clearly as possible, and, as much as you can, demonstrate that you can function in a monolingual environment without the support of your reader. If you do not know a word or expression, explain or paraphrase what you want to say in order to convey your message. Use other words, explain, or give examples to get the message across.
- Do not prepare for the WPT by memorizing responses. Do not try to incorporate materials you have practiced in advance. The tester has been trained to recognize memorized material. Memorized responses prepared in advance can count against you, whereas creating real answers to the questions will provide better at-level responses. Focus on providing legitimate answers to the questions.
- If you are asked to write a story about an experience that took place in the past, make sure you tell the story in detail using appropriate time frames and structures. If you are asked to write about a future plan, you should also make sure you use the appropriate forms and structures for that time frame. Sustained control of the time frame is required for the Advanced level. While lack of control of aspect (i.e., present perfect vs. past perfect) does not prevent you from sustaining functional ability at the Advanced level, a lack of control over the time frame may result in breakdown to the level below.
- Do not focus on verb formations (or any other grammar point) exclusively. The Advanced level requires control over the use of connectors, time expressions, and other language elements that may contribute to the development of the narration in paragraph-length discourse.
- Short answers can work against you, because they do not show the breadth and depth of your writing ability. Provide details in as well-organized discourse as you can.
- If you are asked to state and support your opinion, make sure to support your point of view with well-organized arguments. Try to maintain the abstract treatment of the topic: a description of facts about what happened is an Advanced-level explanation, while a consideration of the issues involved in the problem provide a Superior-level treatment of the topic.
- If you are asked to speculate about some possible conditions and/or outcomes, make sure you use the appropriate hypothetical structures for the language. Maintain the hypothetical treatment of a topic throughout your response. Consider each topic from an abstract perspective and consider ideas instead of facts.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I request the WPT?

Organizations wanting to schedule a WPT for candidates must set up a free account with Language Testing International (LTI). In the account, LTI collects some basic administrative information and then provides access to a secure web-based scheduling utility. Using this utility, the organization can request assessments, track those requests, confirm appointments, and see results. Because the WPT is delivered via the internet, organizations can arrange for candidates to take the assessment in a proctored setting at any time. All that is needed is a computer or tablet that meets the minimum specifications required by LTI in an appropriate test environment. Results of assessments are also posted and stored on the client utility website, allowing organizations to track their testing activity easily in a single location.

Individuals who need to test and certify their writing ability or literacy in a target language can order and take the assessment by selecting the appropriate Language Proficiency Certification based on their need. To view individual language proficiency options and pricing, click here.

What is the cost of the WPT?

Organizations, please fill out a Contact Us form to receive discounted group or organizational pricing. Government clients can find pricing on our GSA Schedule here.

In what languages is the WPT available?

Albanian (Booklet form only), Arabic, Cantonese Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, English, French, German, Greek (Modern), Haitian Creole (Booklet form only), Hebrew (Booklet form only), Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Persian Farsi, Polish, European Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Vietnamese.

Who takes the WPT test?

The WPT is an assessment of writing skills in a target language that is used by individuals, companies, and organizations around the world: from students in Canada, to the New York City Department of Education in the United States, to employees at Samsung in Korea, and many other clients. ACTFL assessments have become the tests people trust to have an expert assessment of their communicative abilities in a language, based on well-respected and reliable language proficiency guidelines (ACTFL, ILR, CEFR).

Why do candidates take the WPT?

Many people take the WPT every year. The people who take the WPT usually fall into one of two categories: (1) individual test-takers and people who have been directed to take the WPT by a company, academic institution, etc., and (2) individuals who take the WPT to have credentials that validate their language proficiency levels so that they can work as bilingual employees, translators, interpreters, tutors, etc. Companies, universities, schools, hospitals, and other types of organizations often require current and potential employees to take the WPT to ensure that they can write in the language at a level that will

allow them to do their work successfully. In both cases, knowing exactly what a person can do in a language and being able to validate it provides individuals and potential employees with life and career opportunities. It also provides companies, universities, and other organizations with the certainty that they have employees who can use the language well enough to do their jobs successfully.

How is the WPT administered?

LTI administers the scheduling, testing, and rating of all WPTs.

How do I prepare to take the WPT?

The best way for you to prepare is to practice writing the language in real-world situations.

Try your best to find situations in which you have to write in the language to communicate. For instance, depending on your level of ability, you can write short messages to friends and colleagues. Write stories about things you do regularly at home, school, or work. Write about things that happened to you in the past or your plans for the future. Expressing your opinion about anything, from the news to sports, or entertainment, will also help you improve what you can do in the language. Working to build your skills so that you can communicate in the language as someone would do in the real world is the best way to get ready to take the WPT.

To be successful on the WPT, it is also important to understand what a writer can do at each level of proficiency so that you can understand what is expected from you when you respond to the prompts. Descriptions of the four major proficiency levels of the WPT are included in the ***ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Writing***.

Policies & Guidelines for the Use of the WPT

Confidentiality

Your answers in the WPT shall remain the sole property of ACTFL and LTI. They will not be given to you or to anyone else under any circumstances. Only your final rating will be released.

Rehearsed Material

The WPT is a test of your ability to express yourself spontaneously in a language. Certified ACTFL WPT Raters will evaluate what you can do in the language when you are writing. In order to do this effectively, your responses must be authentic. While you should make every effort to improve your abilities in writing, you should not try to memorize responses prior to taking the WPT. If you prepare a response or use responses from online sources or books, you will not receive an accurate rating. Proficiency is characterized by spontaneous language use. ACTFL WPT raters are experienced in identifying rehearsed responses, so, if you use them, you may not receive a rating for your test.

It sounds simple, but practicing your writing skills as much as you can in the language is the best preparation for a successful WPT assessment. We wish you success in improving your language skills and for your next WPT test.

Questions? Contact us

If you have any additional questions, please contact us at:	
Language Testing International 580 White Plains Rd, Suite 660 Tarrytown, NY 10591 Phone: 914-963-7110 or 800-486-8444 Fax: 914-963-7113 Email: testing@languagetesting.com www.languagetesting.com	LTI Language Testing International Exclusive Licensee of ACTFL