



**APPT**

ACTFL PROFICIENCY PLACEMENT TEST

# ACTFL PROFICIENCY PLACEMENT TEST FAMILIARIZATION GUIDE

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## What is the ACTFL Proficiency Placement Test?

The ACTFL Proficiency Placement Test (APPT®) is a non-proctored, internet-delivered assessment of interpretive reading and listening proficiency in a language. It is a computer-adaptive test in which the computer algorithm selects questions based on the test taker's performance on previous ones. The APPT lasts for a maximum of 60 minutes for the listening and reading sections together.

The listening and reading sections consist of audio passages and reading texts across a range of proficiency levels. Listening passages and reading texts are drawn from diverse sources and vary in genre, content, length, and complexity depending on the level being assessed. A variety of topics addressed, including business and economics, politics and current events, education, science and technology, arts and entertainment, and others. Each passage or text is followed by one multiple-choice question in English, with four response options with only one correct answer.

The goal of the APPT is to assess general language proficiency, rather than what is learned in a specific program. The listening section measures how well the test taker understands spoken language that has not been encountered previously, as described in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Listening*. Similarly, the reading section measures how well the test taker understands written texts that have not been encountered previously, as described in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024—Reading*. The APPT provides separate proficiency ratings for listening and reading ranging from Novice Low to Advanced Low.

The APPT is designed for learners entering university language programs who wish to determine their reading and listening proficiency levels for placement in language courses. It assists language program faculty in making informed decisions regarding which would be the best course of study based on the learner's language ability. The APPT is currently available in French and Spanish.

The APPT was developed in partnership with Brigham Young University. It is a valid and reliable assessment of listening and reading proficiency. It was developed in alignment with a well-defined construct, following a rigorous development process. Items were written according to test specifications and field-tested for validation and calibration for the computer-adaptive model. Items are revised, recalibrated, archived, or reviewed as necessary and based on regular feedback. Further, new items are added regularly, following the rigorous item development procedures, field testing, and validation processes.


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

## How Does the APPT Work?

The test consists of two sections, reading and listening, which assess the Interpretive mode of communication. When the APPT is ordered, each test taker receives two unique passcodes, one for the listening section and the other for the reading section. The APPT begins on a landing page where the test taker selects the test section (listening or reading) to take and then enters the appropriate passcode.

The next screen is an information page where the test taker enters identifying information, including first name, last name, email address, and student ID, if appropriate. This page also provides a restart access code. In case of loss of power, break in internet connection, or other interruption, the test taker can enter the restart access code to continue the test where they left off. Tests must be restarted within 2 hours of the original start time.

Test takers are also asked to adhere to an honor code that appears after they log in to the test. They agree not to use any human support or language resource materials (paper, electronic or otherwise) during the test, and not to copy, record, or share any test content in any way.

  
**Honor Code**

When taking the ACTFL Proficiency Placement Test, we ask you to pledge to the following:

- I will not solicit nor accept help from anyone.
- I will not offer or provide help to anyone else taking the test, including discussing or sharing test content.
- I will not use any dictionaries, books, or other language materials.
- I will not use any electronic devices during the test.
- I will not photograph or record any part of the test.
- I understand that my school will receive a report and recording of my test if any of these prohibited activities are suspected to have been utilized during my test.

By checking this box, I agree to follow the APPT Honor Code.

## Screen Layout

Items for listening and reading are displayed in a similar format in the two test sections, with slight modifications as appropriate. The instructions, questions, and answers appear in English, while audio passages and reading texts are delivered in the language being tested.

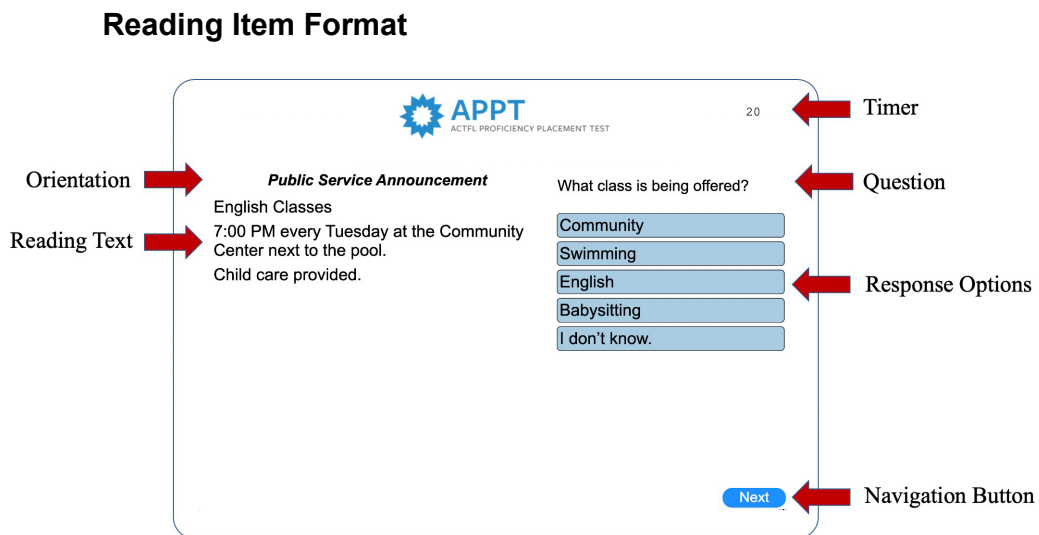
- **Orientation:** The orientation appears on the top left side of the screen. It provides a brief context in which the text or passage might be encountered.
- **Countdown Timer:** The countdown timer appears at the top right of the screen and indicates the amount of time remaining to complete the item. When the countdown timer reaches 20 seconds, the numbers turn red. If the time to answer an item runs out

before the test taker provides a response, the “I don’t know” option is automatically selected, and the test taker proceeds to the next question.

- **Questions and Answers:** The questions and answers appear just below the countdown timer. There is only one question per passage or text and five potential answers for each question. These include one correct response, three incorrect responses, and the option “I don’t know.” This fifth option is included so that test takers are not forced to guess if the item is above their ability level.
- **Navigation:** The navigation buttons appear on the bottom of the screen on the right. Because this is a computerized, adaptive test, test takers can only move forward through the assessment, not backward.

## Reading Test Item Screen Format

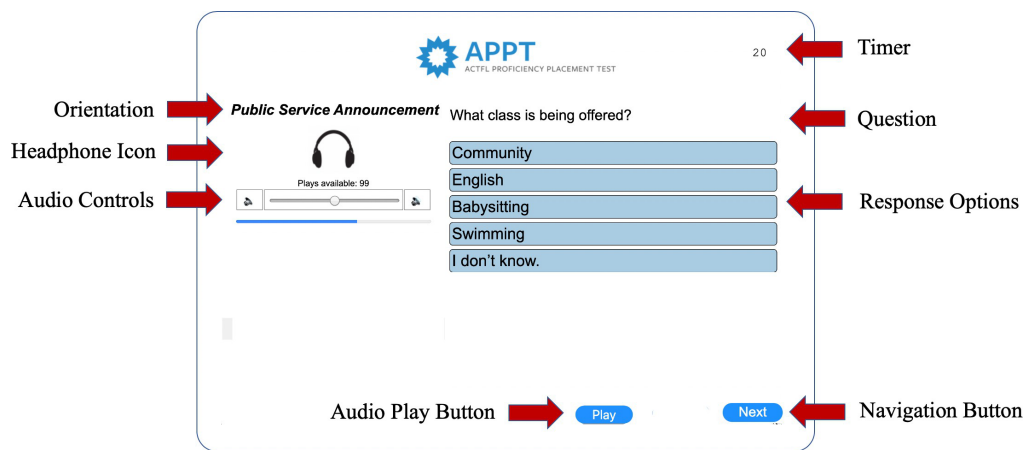
For the reading section of the APPT, the text is found on the left side of the screen below the orientation.



## Listening Test Item Screen Format

For the listening section of the APPT, a headphone icon is displayed on the left below the orientation to indicate that the item is a listening item. The audio controls are located below the headphone icon and include volume control and a number indicating how many times a passage can be played. The Play button is located at the bottom of the screen. Test takers should ensure that the volume is high enough when listening to the example item before starting the test.

## Listening Item Format



## Test Length, Scoring, and Timing

The APPT is machine scored, with each item assessed as either correct or incorrect. The algorithm presents the test in a series of testlets, each of which contains five items at the same proficiency level. Test taker performance on each testlet results in one of three outcomes:

1. The test taker was able to sustain reading or listening performance at the level.
2. The test taker was unable to sustain performance at the level.
3. More information is needed.

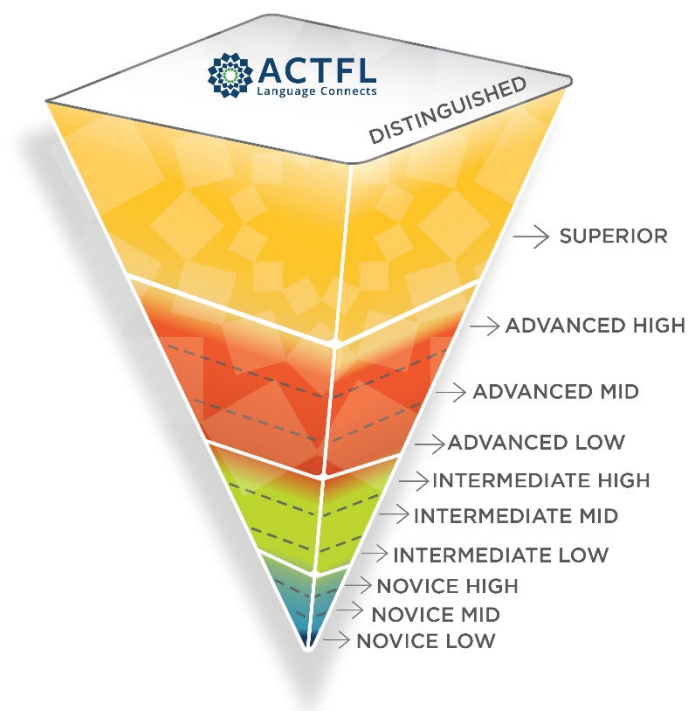
Depending on performance, the test taker is given another testlet from the same level or is given a testlet from the next higher level. The APPT algorithm presents 10 to 25 items for each test until enough information has been gathered to assign a “floor” rating (the level where the test taker has demonstrated sustained performance) and a “ceiling” rating (the level where patterns of breakdown emerge). Then the test ends.

The APPT can last up to 60 minutes for the two sections together. The test is timed, but instead of a time limit for the entire test, there is a time limit for each test item. For Intermediate level items, the time limit is 75 seconds, and for Advanced level items the time limit is 120 seconds.

## What Does the APPT Assess, and What Are the Assessment Criteria?

The APPT assesses listening and reading in terms of proficiency, that is, the ability to use Interpretive Listening and Interpretive Reading skills effectively and appropriately in situations that the listener/reader has not encountered previously, as outlined in the *ACTFL Proficiency*

*Guidelines 2024—Listening* and 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 inverted pyramid shows these distinctions.



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 listening activities that the individual can carry out, such as recognizing spoken or written words and phrases, following oral instructions, or interacting with professional colleagues in a meeting.
- **Accuracy:** The degree to which the individual can use linguistic features (including grammar and syntax, vocabulary, stress and intonation, discourse structure, sociocultural knowledge, and more) to process aural messages.
- **Context and content:** The situations or circumstances in which the individual can achieve listening and reading goals, and the topic areas that the individual is able to handle.
- **Text type:** The length and complexity of aural and written text that the individual can understand and process, ranging from words and phrases to sentences, paragraphs, and multi-paragraph discourse.

These assessment criteria are evaluated holistically based on the test taker’s overall performance. A proficiency rating is awarded based on how all the criteria contribute to the description of the test taker’s proficiency in interpretive listening or interpretive reading.

- Interpretive Listening is based largely on the amount of information listeners can understand from what is being spoken, as well as the inferences and connections they can make from listening to spoken language produced by one or multiple speakers under a variety of circumstances.
- Interpretive Reading is based largely on the amount of information readers can understand from a text, as well as the inferences and connections they can make within and across texts and within different contexts.

Table 1 summarizes the assessment criteria as they relate to the first three major proficiency levels. (With a rating range of Novice Low to Advanced Mid, the APPT assesses listening and reading ability at the Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced levels.)

**Table 1. Assessment Criteria for Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced Levels in Interpretive Listening and Interpretive Reading**

<b>Proficiency Level</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Listening</b>
<b>Novice</b>	Readers can understand key words, cognates, and formulaic phrases that are highly contextualized.	Listeners can understand key words, true aural cognates, and formulaic expressions that are highly contextualized and highly predictable.
<b>Intermediate</b>	Readers can understand information conveyed in simple, sentence-length, predictable texts. Readers rely heavily on contextual clues. They can most easily understand information if the format of the text is familiar.	Listeners can understand information conveyed in simple, sentence-length speech on familiar or everyday topics. They are generally able to comprehend one utterance at a time while engaged in face-to-face conversations or in routine listening tasks.
<b>Advanced</b>	Readers can understand the main idea and supporting details of authentic, paragraph-length narrative and descriptive texts. They can compensate for limitations in their lexical and structural knowledge by using contextual clues.	Listeners can understand the main ideas and most supporting details in connected discourse on a variety of general interest topics. They can compensate for limitations in their lexical and structural control of the language by using real-world knowledge and contextual clues.



## What Are the Test Items Like?

### Novice Examples

Novice texts and passages relate to situations that are highly familiar or predictable. These items may include key words and cognates, as well as formulaic phrases that are highly contextualized.

Domain	Sample Text/Transcript	Rationale
Reading	<i>HUGE Year End Sale! 30% off all: tops skirts shorts accessories shoes and MORE!</i>	This text meets the requirements for the Novice level. Readers must be able to process a highly predictable, loosely organized text with limited cohesion.
Listening	<i>At the store, can you please get some milk, eggs, bread, cheese, and apples?</i>	This passage meets the requirements for the Novice level. It is a simple request for a list of grocery items that requires the test taker to pick out key words from the passage from a highly predictable situation.

### Intermediate Examples

Intermediate texts and passages relate to common, everyday situations requiring survival reading or listening skills to understand very basic information. These items may include simple descriptions and narratives in loosely connected texts or passages.

Domain	Sample Text/Transcript	Rationale
Reading	<i>November 25 The 50th Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner Noon—3:00 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 25, in the Cypress Room at the Westcott Fairgrounds, 1400 Fairground Road. Free. To donate turkeys, pies, hams, cakes, or clothing, call James at 506- 8329.</i>	This text meets the content requirements for the Intermediate level. It is an announcement from a newspaper that was selected with low accuracy expectations. The test taker will be asked to pick out some of the main ideas in the text. Test takers with abilities below the targeted level may locate key words but misapply them and select an incorrect option.
Listening	<i>You have reached the State College switchboard. The office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you wish to leave a message, please wait for the beep and then give your name and telephone number. Thank you.</i>	This passage meets the content requirements for the Intermediate level. The passage is a brief spoken message on an everyday topic and includes simple instructions. The item was constructed with low accuracy expectations, meaning that test takers with abilities below the targeted level may understand key words but misapply them and select an incorrect option.

## Advanced Examples

Advanced texts and passages relate to concrete, factual situations requiring listening and reading skills to understand detailed instructions, descriptions, and narratives in which multiple time frames may be used. The content is presented in paragraph-length discourse on current and general interest topics.

Domain	Sample Text/Transcript	Rationale
Reading	<p><i>The state transportation department announced today that construction will begin Monday on the Fredericksburg interchange with Highway 89. The \$91 million project will remove three major intersections—at Fredericksburg, Stratton, and Lindstrom Roads—and replace them with a single interchange near the Grenville Mall. This area is seriously congested. More than 63,000 vehicles travel through the area every day, according to the transportation authority.</i></p> <p><i>The work will be completed by Meadows Construction, of Hudson City, and Bridgeway Construction, of East Highlands. All construction is expected to be completed within 18 months.</i></p>	<p>This text meets the content requirements for the Advanced level. It is a news item reporting concrete facts about a construction project that was selected with the expectation that both Intermediate and readers at the Advanced level would understand the main idea, but those below the Advanced level would be uncertain about the details.</p>
Listening	<p>1st speaker: <i>"I've seen spiderwebs strung high in the branches between two trees. How is the spider able to do this—to reach a distance that's often several feet away?"</i></p> <p>2nd speaker: <i>"Well, the answer begins with the spider's ability to turn the liquid silk inside its glands into solid threads. The spider physically pulls the silk through its spinnerets. Do you know about spinnerets?"</i></p> <p>1st speaker: <i>"No."</i></p> <p>2nd speaker: <i>"Spinnerets are the spider's silk-secreting organs. Once the thread is started, the spider lifts its spinnerets into the breeze. It's the breeze that allows the spider to spin a web from one tree to another."</i></p> <p>1st speaker: <i>"What if there is no wind?"</i></p> <p>2nd speaker: <i>"Spider silk is very lightweight. Any slight breeze—even motions resulting from a patch of ground warming in the sun—can carry the thread from tree to tree. Although the thread isn't sticky or gluey, it can still stick to a tree. Most likely, it just gets tangled on small bumps or knots on the tree. Or it sticks because of static electricity."</i></p>	<p>This passage is an authentic conversation in which a speaker provides factual information to a person who asks a question. The topic is of general interest. The discourse is concrete and instructional.</p>

## What Are the Possible Test Outcomes (Proficiency Ratings)?

As described above, each section of the APPT is rated in terms of one of the first three major levels of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (Novice, Intermediate, or Advanced). In addition, APPT ratings also reference one of three sublevels: Low, Mid, or High. The sublevels indicate how well the individual meets the criteria for the major level, and also how close the individual's proficiency is to sustaining the criteria for the next major level.

- **Low:** Baseline performance at the level. Individuals at this sublevel have consistent ability to meet the criteria for the level in all level-relevant communication situations. They may demonstrate some hesitation in doing so, but they are able to sustain communication with regard to all of the criteria. They demonstrate little ability to carry out communication functions that typify the next-higher major level.
- **Mid:** Solid performance at the level. Individuals at this sublevel demonstrate skill in carrying out the functions of the major level in all level-relevant communication situations. They may also exhibit partial ability to carry out communication tasks that typify the next-higher major level.
- **High:** Performance with quality and quantity at the level. Individuals at this sublevel communicate with ease and confidence when performing the functions of the level. They are capable of functioning much of the time at the next higher major level, but they are unable to sustain language at that level without evidence of difficulty.

Possible APPT ratings are thus as follows:

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

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

## What Is an Official APPT Rating?

The APPT rating consists of two summative scores, one for reading and one for listening, that are aligned with the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*. These ratings are determined based on the test taker's responses on the reading or listening sections of the test. Possible scores range from Novice Low through Advanced Low.

APPT results for reading and listening skills indicate general proficiency, but they are not official proficiency ratings. Proficiency certificates are not available for this assessment. Results are

stored in LTI's Test Management System and are made available to authorized users through the LTI Client Site.

## What Accommodations Are Available?

Several types of testing accommodations are available for APPT examinees with a documented need. These may include extended time (1.5 time or 2.0 time); unlimited replay; and extended time plus unlimited replay. Accommodations can be requested from LTI. LTI's accommodation team works with candidates and the organizations they test through to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations. For more information on accommodation support and how to request an accommodation, please visit <https://www.languagetesting.com/academic-test-accommodations>.

## What Are Some Tips for Test Takers?

- **Take the demo tests:**
  - An APPT Demo Test is available at [https://clstesting.byu.edu/ATS/ATS\\_main?LTI=ACTFLPlacement&seed=413950](https://clstesting.byu.edu/ATS/ATS_main?LTI=ACTFLPlacement&seed=413950).
  - Demo tests are provided in English, French, and Spanish for both listening and reading at [[https://clstesting.byu.edu/ATS/ATS\\_main?LTI=ACTFLPlacement&seed=665081](https://clstesting.byu.edu/ATS/ATS_main?LTI=ACTFLPlacement&seed=665081)]. While these demos are not computer adaptive, taking them will familiarize test takers with the instructions, format, and types of texts, passages, and questions they will encounter in the APPT.
- **Set the volume level:** Set the volume level for listening passages during the example item. The volume for all listening passages has been equalized, so appropriately setting the volume level before the test will help to avoid missing important information during the APPT.
- **Read the question and responses first:** Test takers should read the question they will need to answer, as well as each of the response options, before they read the text or listen to the passage.
- **Choose before reviewing:** Choose an answer before re-reading the text or re-listening to the passage (when permitted). Test takers can change this response later, but there is a time limit for each item. If time runs out and no answer has been chosen, the "I don't know option" is automatically chosen, and test takers must move to the next question.

## How Is the APPT Currently Being Used?

Language programs at colleges and universities use APPT results to place incoming students in French and Spanish language courses at the appropriate level. Results from the APPT are used for placement in cases where language programs have specified proficiency range goals for

their courses.

Results from the APPT should NOT be used for awarding certificates or for other high-stakes purposes. APPT ratings do not carry the same weight as official reading and listening proficiency ratings from the ACTFL Reading Proficiency Test (RPT®) or Listening Proficiency Test (LPT®).

## **How Can I Schedule an APPT?**

To schedule individuals or groups for the APPT, contact LTI.

[www.languagetesting.com](http://www.languagetesting.com)  
[support@languagetesting.com](mailto:support@languagetesting.com)  
1-800-486-8444

## ABOUT ACTFL ASSESSMENTS

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

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

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

For more information on ACTFL assessments, visit

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

For information on Proficiency and Assessment workshops, visit

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

For information on ACTFL tester and rater training, visit

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

