ACTFL LPT & RPT

EXAMINEE HANDBOOK

LTI Language Testing International

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ACTFL Language Connects

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About the ACTFL LPT and RPT Tests

The Listening Proficiency Test (LPT) and the Reading Proficiency Test (RPT), developed by ACTFL and administered by Language Testing International, Inc. (LTI), are valid and reliable web-based assessments of how well you understand a language while listening or reading. Individuals, companies and organizations around the world use these assessments. From students in Canada, to the New York City Department of Education in the United States, to employees at Samsung in Korea, the LPT and the RPT have become the tests people trust when they want to learn what they can do in a language.

The LPT and the RPT are carefully constructed assessments which evaluate listening and reading abilities according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Listening and Reading, the Interagency Language Roundtable Language (ILR) Skill Level Descriptors – Listening and Reading, or the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), depending on the type of language proficiency certification needed. The LPT measures how well you spontaneously understand spoken language, without the ability to re-listen or ask for clarification. The RPT measures how well you spontaneously read a language when presented with written texts without access to dictionaries or grammar references. Both assessments are standardized tests delivered by computer via the internet.

As the LPT and the RPT both assess general language proficiency, they are not designed to assess what you learned in a specific language program, class, school or university; nor are they tied to a specific teaching method or book. Rather than assessing what you "know" about the language, the LPT and the RPT are assessments of how well you can understand while listening or reading the language. Proficiency, that is, how well you can function in the language, as defined by the descriptions of listening and reading ability on the scale of your choice (ACTFL, ILR, CEFR), is the only factor assessed by these tests.

The ACTFL LPT and the RPT are appropriate for a variety of purposes: literacy certification, employment selection, program entrance, exit exams, placement, program evaluation and performance, and interpreter or translator credentialing. The official LPT and RPT ratings are also recommended for college credit based on the American Council on Education (ACE) credit-by-examination review.

Currently, there are versions of the tests in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Indonesian (available as an RPT only at this time), Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. A test may be requested through an organization or company, or individually. Individuals can order the assessments directly from LTI's website, by clicking on "Certification for Individuals," and then, "Take a Test."

Proctoring Options

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

On-site proctoring with a local proctor

Organizations requesting tests for a group can arrange to proctor the LPT and the RPT on location. An authorized, responsible individual, ideally a member of the HR department or faculty of the organization requesting the assessment, must proctor the tests. This individual, nominated by the organizing agency, will review the Proctoring Guidelines to confirm the steps required to confirm the identity of the candidate and the conditions under which the test will be taken.

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 a computer-delivered or phone-delivered assessment monitored by our off-site proctor. It allows you to take tests anywhere you can access a quiet room and a computer (in addition to a web-cam and a head-set), at a time that is convenient for you. It also frees the client from the practical chores of arranging and delivering on-site proctored exams. To ensure that the test goes smoothly, once a test is scheduled, you will receive an email with a hyperlink to a site that determines if the computer being used for the test meets the requirements for remote proctoring, so there are no surprises at the time of the actual test.

What do the LPT and the RPT assess?

The goal of the LPT and the RPT is to gather evidence of the full range of your functional ability in listening and reading. These are passive skills; that is, the message in a passage is sent to the receptor, you, and you receive and understand its meaning. The LPT and the RPT measure your ability to understand spoken or written passages by asking you comprehension questions and providing possible answers in order to confirm how well you understood the message. Instead of simple recognition of vocabulary or isolated statements, there is an expectation of a holistic (overall) understanding of the passage and its message. At all times, you are expected to demonstrate your functional ability in listening and reading, e.g., listen to a list of numbers to recognize the winning lottery numbers, read a list of things to do in order to understand what you need to do for the day, listen to a newscast to learn what happened in the community, read an editorial opinion in order to understand the author's point of view about a social issue. The expectations for the comprehension of details and nuances increase as the proficiency level increases.

The Passages

The listening or reading passages are selected to meet specific criteria assigned to specific levels of proficiency based on content and complexity. The selections include a range of topics appropriate for each level. They include informal and formal speech on general, social and academic topics, such as daily interactions, reports, discussions, and broadcasts. The internal structure of the passage (sentences, strings of sentences, paragraphs, complex development) matches the level of complexity of the passages.

Listening passages are heard only once, as you would hear in a real-life situation. The voices are clear, and there is no obstruction in the audio channel that may affect your listening (e.g., environment noises, background voices, music). The questions are provided in advance, before you listen to the passage, in order to help you to focus on the message and listen with a purpose in mind.

Reading passages are visible to you until you finish with the questions related to them. As in real life, you can go back and review the printed media (e.g., notes, newspapers, reports).

Multiple-Choice Questions

Each passage has three questions that refers to the passage's content; each question has four multiple-choice answers, of which only one is correct. While all passages are presented in the tested language, questions and multiple-choice answers at the Intermediate level and below are in English; questions and multiple-choice answers at the Advanced and Superior levels are in the target language. There is also an international version of the tests available with all passages and multiple-choice answers in the target language.

All of the possible multiple-choice answers are equally attractive. This means that all options will appear to be potentially correct. However, each item has only one correct response. Multiple reviews of each test item have confirmed the quality of these questions in order to ensure that the questions and multiple-choice options are appropriate and aligned with the level, and that

they contribute to the assessment. The wording in the responses does not repeat the wording in the passages, so you will need to understand the meaning in order to answer the questions. You will be able to select the correct answer based only on your comprehension of the passage. Even when a passage may refer to information of common knowledge, no external knowledge is needed or should be used to select the correct answer. Only your comprehension of the passage is needed to identify the correct answer.

Listening and reading with a purpose

The LPT and the RPT questions may ask for main ideas, details, implications or inferences that you can make from the message presented in the passage. This allows the test to check your ability to understand the passage. For the listening passages, you will be able to read the questions before the passage plays. For the reading passages, each passage will remain in view as each question for that passage is presented. In this manner, you can listen or read with a purpose in mind.

After you read the questions in the LPT, you will listen to the passage in order to view the answers to the three questions provided to you in advance. You will also have a space to take notes.

Below is a screenshot of a sample question from the LPT.

When taking notes in the note pad provided on the screen, you can jot down information from the passage that may help you to select the correct answer. You can go to the Test demo and the item sample at the beginning of the test to familiarize yourself with the test structure.

In contrast to the LPT, the RPT presents both the questions and the passage together. As with the LPT, reading the questions in advance provides you with the opportunity to read with a specific purpose in mind. Read the questions first, and then read the passage while focusing on the information that may help you to select the correct answer.

Below is a screenshot of a sample question from the RPT.

Sleep

With so many distractions such as the Internet, video games, and television available today, it is not hard to believe that many people are not getting their recommended amount of sleep every night. Scientists are only now discovering the dangers of too little or too irregular sleep. The risks appear to be very significant. Recent studies by a number of US and Canadian universities have linked an irregular or insufficient sleep schedule to diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. Perhaps even more shocking is the link between little sleep and obesity. Studies have found that adults between 32 and 49 who get less than seven hours of sleep a night are significantly more likely to be overweight or obese. While lack of sleep is certainly not the only factor involved, scientists believe that low amounts of sleep could disrupt the body's ability to release appetite-controlling hormones. Scientists have found that not getting enough sleep could also affect the body's regulation of other hormones as well. In order to avert any health risks involved, experts strongly recommend that all adults get between seven and nine hours of sleep every night.

According to the text, what is the most surprising thing about the studies? (G)

The most surprising thing is...
- the link between lack of sleep and cancer.
- the link between lack of sleep and diabetes.
- the link between lack of sleep and corpulence.
- the link between lack of sleep and the Internet.

What statement is NOT suggested as true according to the article? (D)

- Many people do not want to avert health risks.
- Adults should get at least seven hours of sleep every night.
- Not getting enough sleep poses considerable health risks.
- Lack of sleep may cause people to be hungrier.

Why may lack of sleep lead to health risks? (I)

- The body can't repair itself.
- It disrupts hormone regulation.
- It leads to people eating more.
- It affects the way the heart works.

The LPT and the RPT test administration

These assessments are administered via the internet on a secure computer that meets the minimum technical specifications stipulated by LTI. You will need an internet connection, webcam, headset with earphones, and microphone. The test is proctored by an authorized individual, or via LTI's remote proctoring services.

The LPT and the RPT provide detailed test instructions on how to access the questions and record your answers. You will have the opportunity to review the instructions and sample questions before the beginning of the test. It is important that you complete these practice items to practice with LPT and RPT functionality. This will also prepare you to focus on and pay attention to all aspects of the passages during the test. Once you are familiar with the system, you will be ready to begin the actual test.

The following sections provide details and illustrations regarding test functionality.

Listening Proficiency Test Functionality

Once you have contacted LTI to set up your appointment for your listening test, the LTI test management team will communicate to your local or remote proctor the login information to access the LPT online at: http://actfllr.actfltesting.org.

Before you start, the program will confirm that your computer meets the requirements to run the test. For the listening test, you will be asked to test the audio. It is recommended to use good quality headphones for optimal quality of sound. At this point, you can adjust the volume if needed. Additionally, the computer controls and your headphones will allow you to adjust the volume if needed later.

If the System Check shows that your computer does not meet a requirement, update your

computer, or look for another computer that meets these technical requirements. The program will not allow you to proceed on a computer that does not meet the technical requirements for the test. Technical issues can affect the quality of your listening experience and your concentration, so please address any potential issues with your equipment. Make sure you have a computer system that meets all the requirements fully.

Additionally, you will receive the following reminders:

Make sure that all programs are closed and eliminate all possible distractions. You will receive another reminder at this time and throughout the test regarding time control. Once you press *Begin*, the computer will maintain time controls and will provide you with frequent time reminders.
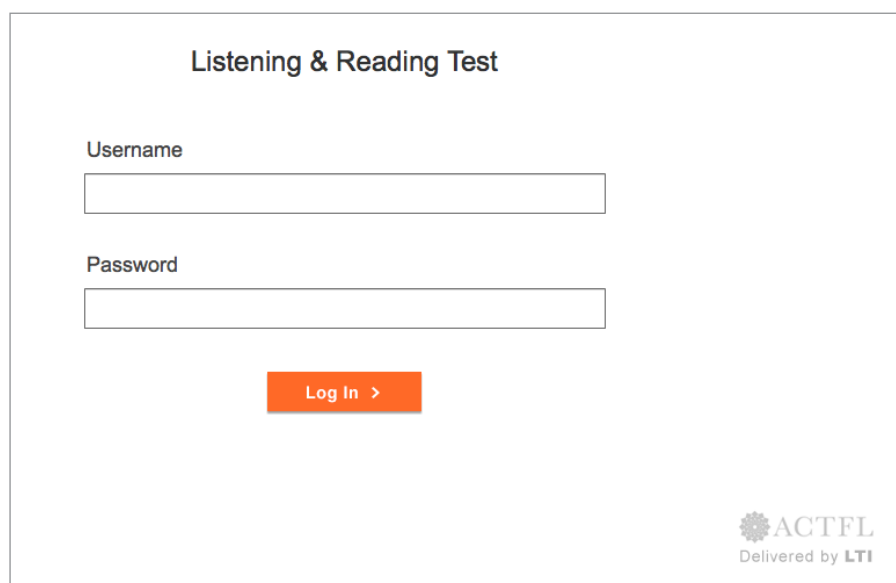
After the System Check, the program will send you to the login page. There, your proctor will log you in to the test site by using the login credentials assigned to you.

Listening & Reading Test

Username

Password

Log In >

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Once you log in, the program will introduce you to the test functionality with a couple of examples. In the screenshot below, notice the following:

- **A progress line.** In the practice section, only two steps appear. Later on, this line will indicate your progress by marking the number of items you have completed.
- **An orientation line describing what the passage is about.**
- **A 30-second time counter to indicate the time left before the recording begins to play.** This is also a reminder to be ready when the passage begins.
- **The questions related to the passage in the recording.** You should use the 30 seconds to familiarize yourself with these questions.
- **A recorder indicator for the listening passage.** You do not have control over the recording. The recording will begin to play automatically when the 30 seconds of preparation have transpired; you will not be able to stop or replay the passage. Be ready to listen from the moment the recording begins. You will listen to the recorded passage only once.
- **A notepad on which you can type any information from the recording that you deem important in order to answer the questions.** The notepad will remain on the page until you have finished with that test item.
- **A 30-second time counter to highlight the time remaining to take notes after the recording is finished.** Once the time is up, the test will automatically move to the next page. If you are ready to proceed to the questions before the 30 seconds is up, you can click on "Next" and continue to the next page immediately.

You will be able to listen to the passage only once. In the following screenshot, the questions from the previous page are presented with multiple-choice answers. Notice the following:

- The notes you wrote on your notepad will remain on the notepad.
- The questions are repeated with the multiple-choice answers.
- The time to complete your answers is limited. You have a two-minute time counter to indicate the amount of time left before the test automatically continues to the next question.
- If you have completed the questions, you can proceed to the next test item by clicking on "Next."

There are three questions associated with each passage. You have two minutes to complete each set. While you are responding to the questions, you can make changes to your answers, but once the time is up, you will automatically advance to the next passage, and you will not be able to return to these questions. Once you finish the test, the computer will announce that you have completed the test.
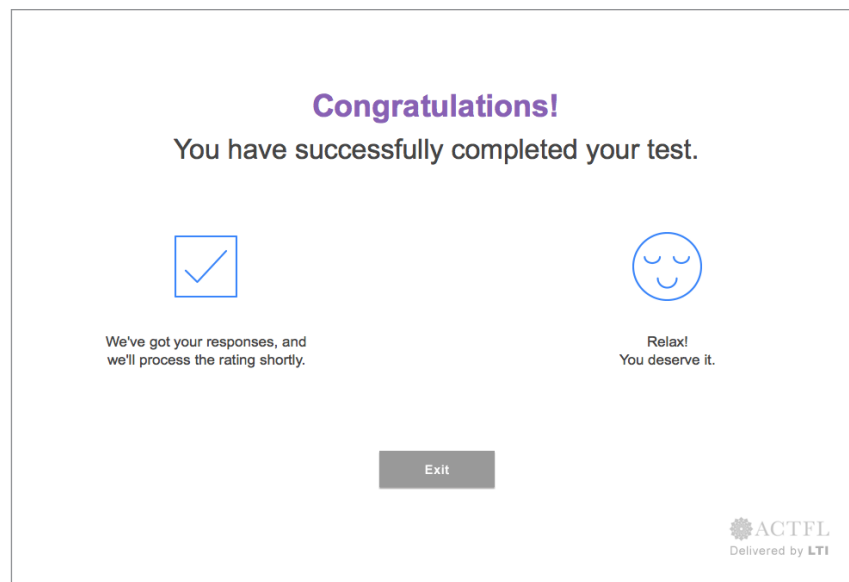
Reading Proficiency Test Functionality

Just as in the case of the LPT, once you have contacted LTI to set up your appointment for your reading test, the LTI test management team will provide your proctor with the login information to access the RPT online at http://actfllr.actfltesting.org.

Before you start, the program will confirm that your computer meets the requirements to perform the test.

If the System Check shows that your computer does not meet a requirement, update your computer, or look for another computer that meets the technical requirements. The program will not allow you to proceed on a computer that does not meet the technical requirements for the test. Problems with the technology may be distracting, and lack of concentration will hinder your ability to do your best work. Make sure you have a computer system that meets the requirements completely.

Additionally, you will receive the reminder shown below:

Make sure that all programs are closed. Technical issues can affect your concentration, so eliminate any possible distractions. You will need total focus to perform at your best on the test. If there is a problem that requires shutting down the computer, the test will remain available to you for an additional two hours. If you need more time, you must contact LTI immediately. Another reminder that you will receive at this time, and throughout the test, is about time control. Once you click on *Begin*, the computer will show a timer and provide you frequent time reminders.

After the System Check, the program will send you to the login page. There, your proctor will help you log in and begin the test by using the login credentials assigned to you.

Once you log in, the program will introduce you to the test functionality with a couple of examples, similar to the examples above in the listening test. Make sure to practice with these samples in order to be fully prepared to take the test. As with the LPT, all of the passages will have three multiple-choice questions. While the LPT does not allow for listening to a passage a second time, or navigating between test items, the RPT provides more flexibility if necessary. Still, you must pay attention to time and not linger on individual test items unless you are sure you have enough time to do so.
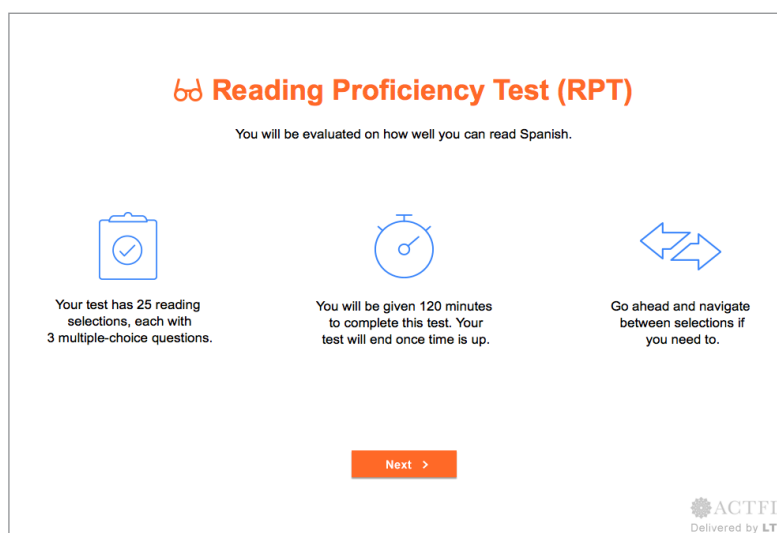
The RPT test functionality differs from that of the LPT. From the sample test item screenshot, notice the following:

- **A zoom line to expand the font size**, so you can read the text more comfortably.
- **An orientation line (in blue) telling you what the passage is about.**
- **The reading passage together with the multiple-choice questions related to the passage.** You will be able to re-read the passage while responding to the questions.
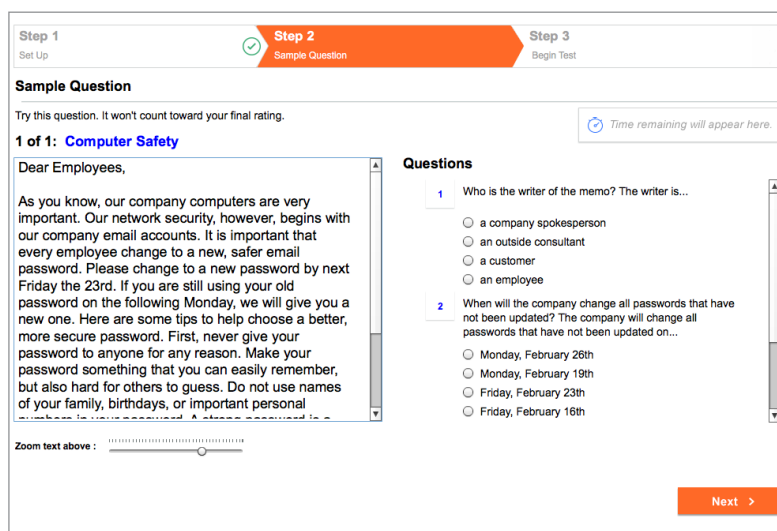
During the test, the program will provide more indicators of your progress:

- **A progress line indicating your progress by marking the number of items you have completed.**
- **The time counter to help you to pace yourself.** While the page gives you a recommendation for the time you should spend on a passage, once you have completed your answers, you can click on "Next" to continue to the next page immediately.
- **The "Back" button that allows you to navigate to previous items.**
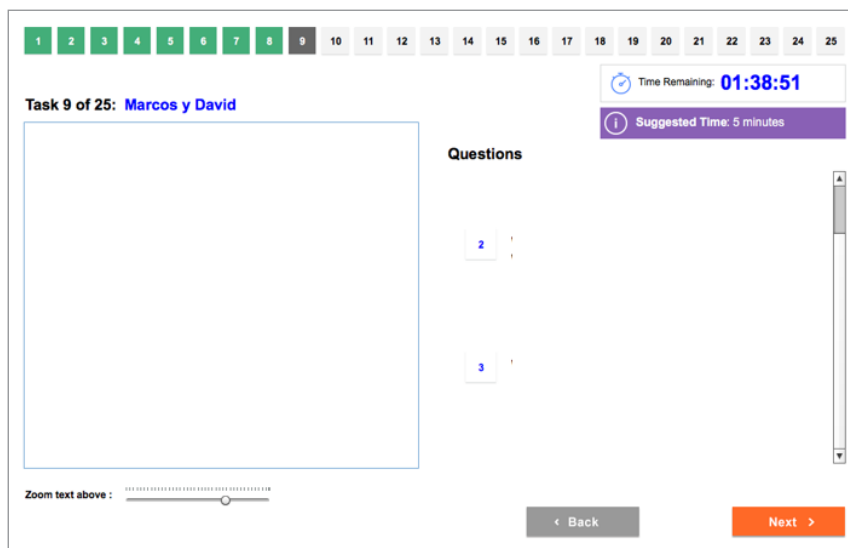
Time control in the RPT will work differently from that of the LPT. Since the passage and the questions are presented at the same time, you will have the opportunity to re-read the passage before you finalize your answers. Still, you have a limited amount of time to complete the test, so you should not linger more than the recommended amount of time (see "Suggested Time" in the screenshot below) on each item.
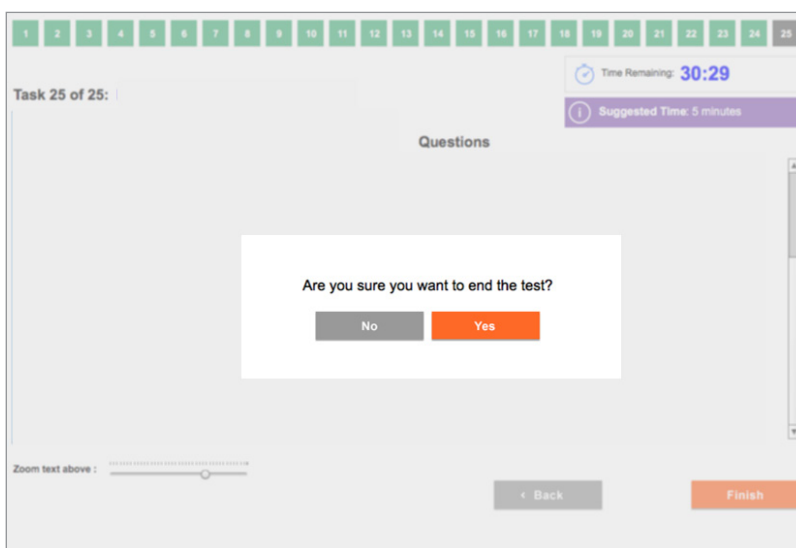
Once you have answered the last question, the computer will advance you to a page congratulating you. Until you click "Exit" (see the screenshot below), the test will remain open, and you can go back and review and change your answers, if necessary. The time counter will let you know how much time you have left to review your answers. Once you click on "Exit," you will not be able to return to the test, and a closing remark will indicate that the test is over.

Congratulations!
You have successfully completed your test.

We've got your responses, and
we'll process the rating shortly.

Relax!
You deserve it.

Exit

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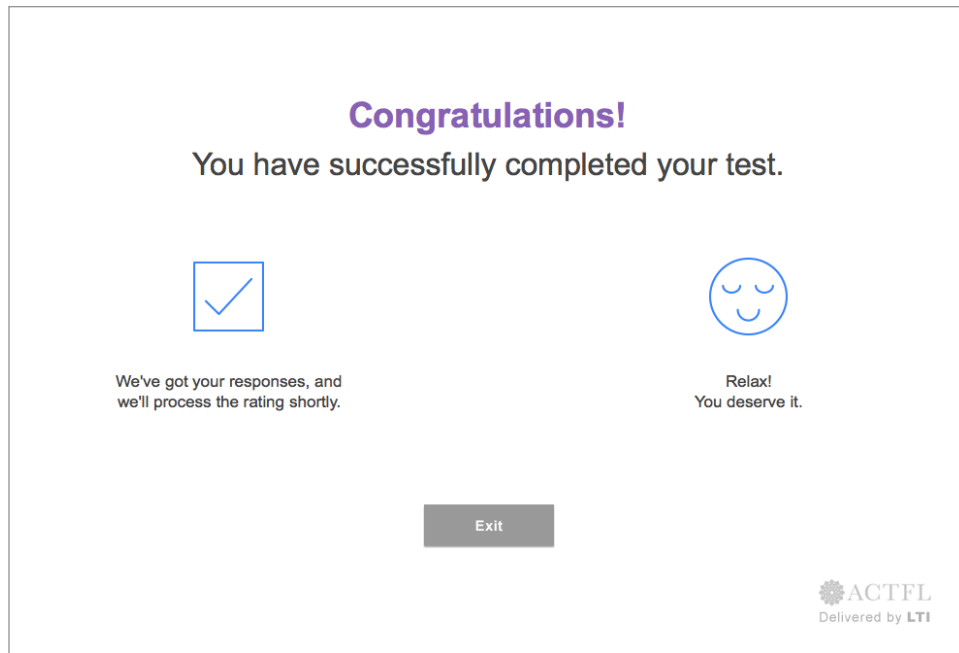
Rating the LPT and the RPT

The LPT and the RPT are machine-scored tests, and results will be available within hours. A computerized algorithm assesses test responses and assigns a final rating. The scoring procedure considers the difficulty of the passage, the items' level of difficulty, and the test-taker's ability. Hundreds of tests items were evaluated in order to create a reliable procedure. The computer score is interpreted into a proficiency rating.

Results will be reported according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012, the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Language Skill Level Descriptors, or the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), depending on the type of language proficiency certification needed. All ratings for all languages refer to the same criteria. You can study the descriptors in detail at: https://www.actfl.org/ publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012. The site includes translations of the document and samples at each major level in at least 10 languages.

Proficiency levels

As mentioned before, the LPT and the RPT can provide ratings based on different proficiency scales (i.e.: ACTFL, ILR, CEFR). The descriptions of the different scales follow similar criteria, and the best way to understand a rating is to read the descriptors. Here are some highlights for each major level according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – 2012:

NOVICE

	Listening	Reading
Low	I can recognize a few memorized words and phrases when I hear them spoken.	I can recognize a few letters or characters. I can identify a few memorized words and phrases when I read.
Mid	I can recognize some familiar words and phrases when I hear them spoken.	I can recognize some letters or characters. I can understand some learned or memorized words and phrases when I read.
High	I can often understand words, phrases, and simple sentences related to everyday life. I can recognize pieces of information and sometimes understand the main topic of what is being said.	I can understand familiar words, phrases, and sentences within short and simple texts related to everyday life. I can sometimes understand the main idea of what I have read.

INTERMEDIATE

	Listening	Reading
Low	I can understand the main idea in short, simple messages and presentations on familiar topics. I can understand the main idea of simple conversations that I overhear.	I can understand the main idea of short and simple texts when the topic is familiar.
Mid	I can understand the main idea in messages and presentations on a variety of topics related to everyday life and personal interests and studies. I can understand the main idea in conversations that I overhear.	I can understand the main idea of texts related to everyday life and personal interests or studies.

High	I can easily understand the main idea of texts related to everyday life, personal interests, and studies. I can sometimes follow stories and descriptions about events and experiences in various time frames.	I can easily understand the main idea of texts related to everyday life, personal interests, and studies. I can sometimes follow stories and descriptions about events and experiences in various time frames.

ADVANCED

	Listening	Reading
Low	I can understand the main idea and some supporting details in organized speech on a variety of topics of personal and general interest. I can follow stories and descriptions of some length and in various time frames. I can understand information presented in a variety of genres on familiar topics, even when something unexpected is expressed.	I can understand the main idea and some supporting details on a variety of topics of personal and general interest. I can follow stories and descriptions of some length and in various time frames and genres.
Mid	I can understand the main idea and most supporting details on a variety of topics of personal and general interest, as well as some topics of professional interest. I can follow stories and descriptions of some length and in various time frames. I can understand information presented in most genres, even when not familiar with the topic.	I can understand the main idea and most supporting details in texts on a variety of topics of personal and general interest, as well as some professional topics. I can follow stories and descriptions of considerable length and in various time frames. I can understand texts written in a variety of genres, even when I am unfamiliar with the topic.
High	I can easily follow narrative, informational, and descriptive speech. I can understand discussions on most topics that deal with special interests, unfamiliar situations, and abstract concepts. I can sometimes follow extended arguments and different points of view.	I can easily follow narrative, informational, and descriptive texts. I can understand what I read on most topics that deal with special interests, unfamiliar situations, and abstract concepts. I can sometimes understand extended arguments and different points of view.

SUPERIOR

	Listening	Reading
	I can follow a wide range of academic and professional discourse on abstract and specialized topics. I can understand all standard dialects. I can sometimes infer complex meaning that requires deep understanding of the culture.	I can follow academic, professional, and literary texts on a wide range of both familiar and unfamiliar subjects. I can sometimes infer complex meaning that requires analysis and deep understanding of the culture.

Sublevels

The listening and reading descriptors of each sublevel in the ACTFL Guidelines provide details about the quality of functional ability demonstrated within the level. Sublevels are assigned in the ACTFL scale for Novice, Intermediate and Advanced. Superior does not have sublevels. The three sublevels are: High, Mid, and Low.

The HIGH Sublevel

Listeners and readers at the High sublevel are able to function with ease and confidence when performing the functions of their baseline level (Novice, Intermediate or Advanced). They are able to understand the content and contexts, and the text type at the next higher major level most of the time, but they are unable to sustain functional ability at the next higher level without intermittent lapses or evidence of difficulty.

For example, a *Novice High* listener or reader is able to understand sentence-level discourse about the content and contexts associated with the Intermediate level, but he or she would not be able to maintain that level of comprehension all the time. There will be evidence of breakdown when the listener or reader would not be able to sustain the criteria of the Intermediate level.

The MID Sublevel

Mid sublevel listeners and readers are able to function with ease and confidence when performing the functions of their baseline level (Novice, Intermediate or Advanced). They may demonstrate some understanding of the passages at the next higher major level, but they are unable to sustain functional ability at that level most of the time.

For example, an *Intermediate Mid* listener or reader would be able to understand sentence-level discourse with the content and contexts associated with the Intermediate level consistently throughout the test. Nevertheless, they will show frequent evidence of breakdown in comprehension of passages at the Advanced level.

The LOW Sublevel

Listeners and readers at the Low sublevel work hard to hold on to the major level of proficiency for which they have qualified. They demonstrate minimal but sustained functional ability in the functions of their baseline level (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, or Superior). They meet the minimal requirements for the level and do not break down to the level below. On the other hand, they struggle to understand passages at the next higher major level.

For instance, an *Advanced Low* listener or reader is able to just hold onto the Advanced level by understanding short paragraphs about the content and contexts related to the Advanced level. He or she would be able to recognize different time frames (past, present and future), but the listener or reader may need to make an effort to understand the intent of the message. Additionally, he or she will struggle to understand Superior-level passages.

Tips for Optimal Performance on the LPT and the RPT

Logistics

- Scheduling the LPT and the RPT is handled by LTI. Make sure to follow all of the instructions issued by LTI. If you have any questions, contact LTI immediately.
- Make sure in advance that your computer meets the minimal connection requirements for the test. Technical problems can be very distracting and will affect your ability to focus on the listening and reading tasks. Please check your settings in advance.
- Make sure that the area where you are taking the LPT and the RPT is quiet and void of distractions. If you are taking a proctored test in a testing site, the proctor is responsible for taking care of the environment in which you are taking the test. If, however, the test is un-proctored, be sure to find a quiet place, without any interruptions.
- Meet your test schedule. Once LTI sends you the registration information, you will have two weeks to complete the test. Tests will automatically expire after two weeks, but your test administrator can provide extensions.
- Once you begin the test, you have a limited amount of time to complete the test. The time counters will assist you to maintain good control of time.
- During the test, you are not allowed to check documents or dictionaries, or ask for help. Rely exclusively on what you can do.

Personal preparation

To do your best on the LPT and the RPT, you must create a habit of listening and reading in the target language across a variety of contexts, formats, topics, and domains. Working to build your skills, so you can understand the language in real world contexts, is the best way to get ready to take the LPT and the RPT. Listen and read with the purpose of understanding the meaning of passages. Consider: What message is the author trying to convey?

The LPT and the RPT are assessments of what you understand in the language at the time of the test. Your final rating describes your general functional ability and your current receptive/comprehension skills. The final rating describes your sustained functional ability, which is the level at which you show full control over the functions. Only language development over time will impact your rating. Last-minute preparation will not improve your functional ability throughout the test. Last-minute language learning, grammar review, or vocabulary practice will not improve your final results. Knowing more about the language will not affect your rating unless it reflects on what you can understand when you are listening and reading. As such, focus your practice on listening and reading real-life materials (articles, books, etc.), with attention to comprehending the speaker's/writer's message rather than the language forms he or she uses.

As with any test, you should prepare by being well rested and alert, maintaining a positive attitude throughout the test. During the test, FOCUS! Concentration will help you to understand better and recognize details. Focus on understanding the passage and its message.

Test-Taking Tips

- Listen to or read material in the target language shortly before you take the LPT and/or the RPT. This will help get you warmed up and ready to take the test(s).
- Read the questions first, then proceed to the passage. Read the questions carefully making sure that you understand the purpose of the question. Then, listen to or read the passage with that purpose in mind to help you identify the correct answers to the questions.
- Pay attention to time. During the LPT, a counter will announce when the recording begins. Be ready before the recording starts, so you can try to understand the passage from the very beginning.
- The LPT provides you with space to take notes. Take advantage of this notepad, since you do not know what the possible choices for the multiple-choice questions will be until after you have finished listening to the passage.
- The RPT questions and multiple-choice answers are available to you immediately. This means that you can go back to the passage to clarify any information or better select your responses.
- Select your answers carefully. All of the choices will look like possible correct answers, but only one is correct. All choices are equally attractive, and they will not repeat the content of the passage in the same words. You will be able to select the correct answer based only on your comprehension of the passage. If you are not sure of an answer, you should still attempt a response.

Questions? Contact us.

If you have any additional questions, please contact us at:

Language Testing International (LTI)
580 White Plains Road, Suite 660 Tarrytown, NY 10591
Phone: 914-963-7110 option 1
            or 800-486-8444
Fax: 914-963-7113
Email: support@languagetesting.com
www.languagetesting.com/support

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