



ACTFL

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE
TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ACTFL
PROFICIENCY
GUIDELINES

SPEAKING, WRITING, LISTENING, and READING

2012



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Introducing the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012

ILR Plenary Presentation
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Today's Agenda

- Background
- The Revision Process
- Goals and challenges
- NEW for Guidelines 2012
- Online support for Guidelines Text
- Next Steps



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About the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

They are a global characterizations of integrated performance in each of four language skills:

- ▣ Speaking
- ▣ Writing
- ▣ Reading
- ▣ Listening

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines Describe

- ❑ Functional language ability
- ❑ The ability to **USE** language for real world purposes
 - Not what a learner knows about language
- ❑ What users of a language can and cannot do
 - Guidelines describe what a language user can do (say, write, understand) consistently at one level and cannot do at the next higher level
 - Descriptions are representative but not exhaustive for the level
 - Variety of linguistic profiles may be rated at the same level
 - Each rating describes a range of performance

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines Provide

- ❑ “Common metric” for describing language abilities
 - Across all languages
- ❑ National (US) standard for proficiency testing and rating
- ❑ Framework for language assessment
 - Serve as rating criteria for ACTFL proficiency assessments (OPI, OPIc, WPT)
- ❑ “Washback” effect on curriculum and instruction
 - “Step ladder” for language learning
- ❑ Articulation across instructional levels and across languages

History of ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

□ 1986 Publication

- Derived from the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Language Skill Descriptions
 - Long government tradition of use
 - Since 1948
- Government Scale adapted to academic context
- 0+ to 5 changed to Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior
- Novice and Intermediate divided into Low, Mid, High sublevels

ILR Descriptors and ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

1950's	1980's
US Government	ACTFL
5	Superior
4	
3	
2	Advanced
1	Intermediate
0	Novice

History of ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

- 1999 Revision of Speaking
 - Addition of Advanced Low and Advanced Mid sublevels
- 2001 Revision of Writing
 - Addition of Advanced Low and Advanced Mid sublevels

Why Revise The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines?

- ❑ A matter of evolving currency and relevancy
 - The more the Guidelines are used, the more they need to correspond to the realities of academic and workplace settings for which they are intended
- ❑ For Listening and Reading
 - Logical after 25 years
 - ACTFL's desire to develop proficiency tests for reading and listening
- ❑ For Speaking and Writing
 - Critical borders needed to be revisited, clarified
 - ❑ Advanced High/Baseline Superior
 - ❑ Intermediate High/Advanced Low

Revision Process/1

- Began revisions in 2009
 - “time optimistic”
- Side by side analyses of
 - ACTFL Guidelines (1986, 1999, 2001)
 - ILR Skill Level Descriptions
 - NATO STANAG 6001.3
 - Can-do statements as in
 - Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
 - NCSSFL LinguaFolio can-do statements

Revision Process/2

- ❑ Developed a first draft version in early 2010
- ❑ Three separate rounds of review, feedback, and revision cycles
 - Concerns and criticism
 - Feedback was incorporated into subsequent drafts
- ❑ Vertical review within individual skills
- ❑ Horizontal review across skills
- ❑ Accessibility “jargon” review
- ❑ Created a General Preface and Prefaces for each skill

Reviewers

- ❑ Experts in proficiency testing
- ❑ Representatives from a variety of language groups
- ❑ Educators from K-12 and post secondary
- ❑ Government agency representatives
- ❑ Researchers
- ❑ Editors within and outside the profession

Goals for the 2012 Guidelines

- ❑ State clearly and succinctly the salient and differentiating features for major levels
- ❑ Update descriptions to reflect communication in the 21st century
- ❑ Define proficiency for the receptive skills
- ❑ Update descriptions to reflect current findings and research
- ❑ Limit negative statements to those necessary to define boundaries between major levels
- ❑ Ensure usability for lay populations
- ❑ Paperless dissemination
- ❑ Provide exemplars and rationales

State clearly and succinctly the salient and differentiating features for major levels

- ❑ **Distinguished**-level listeners understand speech that can be highly abstract, highly technical, or both, as well as speech that contains very precise, often low-frequency vocabulary and complex rhetorical structures.
- ❑ **Superior**-level listeners can follow linguistically complex extended discourse such as that found in academic and professional settings, lectures, speeches and reports
- ❑ **Advanced**-level listeners can understand the main ideas and most supporting details in connected discourse on a variety of general interest topics, such as news stories, explanations, instructions, anecdotes, or travelogue descriptions
- ❑ **Intermediate**-level listeners can understand information conveyed in simple, sentence-length speech on familiar or everyday topics
- ❑ **Novice**-level listeners can understand key words, true aural cognates, and formulaic expressions that are highly contextualized and highly predictable, such as those found in introductions and basic courtesies.

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- ❑ **Intermediate**-level listeners can understand information conveyed in simple, sentence-length speech on **familiar or everyday topics**
- ❑ **Novice**-level listeners can understand key words, true aural cognates, and formulaic expressions that are **highly contextualized and highly predictable**, such as those found in introductions and basic courtesies.

Define Proficiency for the Receptive Skills

The ability to comprehend a text/passage for the purpose for which it was produced (written or spoken).

From Preface for Reading:

"These Guidelines do not describe how reading skills develop, how one learns to read, nor the actual cognitive processes involved in the activity of reading. Rather, they are intended to describe what readers are able to understand from what they read."

Update to Reflect Communication in the 21st Century

Excerpt from Preface – Speaking

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

Update to Reflect Communication in the 21st Century

Excerpt from Preface – Writing

These Guidelines can be used to describe written text that is either Presentational (essays, reports, letters) or Interpersonal (**instant messaging, e-mail communication, texting**). Moreover, they apply to writing that is spontaneous (immediate, unedited) or reflective (revised, edited).

Update Descriptions to Reflect Current Findings and Research

Ex: Degree to which familiarity with the subject matter impacts reading comprehension

- ▣ **Advanced Mid** Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject-matter knowledge but also from knowledge of the language itself.
- ▣ **Intermediate Mid** ...readers are able to understand short, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with basic personal and social topics to which the reader brings personal interest or knowledge, although some misunderstandings may occur.

Limit negative statements to those necessary to define boundaries between major levels

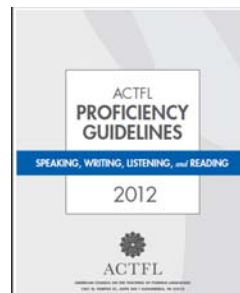
Ex: Intermediate High - Speaking

However, their performance of these Advanced-level tasks will exhibit one or more features of breakdown, such as the **failure** to maintain the narration or description semantically or syntactically in the appropriate major time frame, the **disintegration** of connected discourse, the **misuse** of cohesive devices, a **reduction** in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary, the **failure** to successfully circumlocute, or a significant amount of hesitation.

NEW for the 2012 Guidelines

- ❑ Addition of a major level above Superior
 - Speaking and Writing
- ❑ Addition of a general level description
 - Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced
- ❑ Addition of a Glossary of Terms
- ❑ Publication in a downloadable pdf format

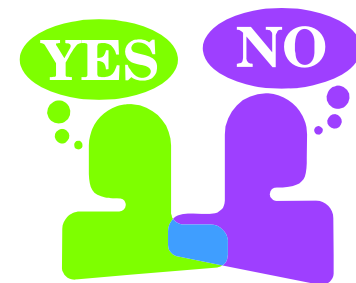
<http://www.actfl.org/profguidelines2012>



NEW

Addition of a Major Level above Superior

- ❑ The 1986 Guidelines included a Distinguished level for Reading and Listening
- ❑ Do we make all skills parallel?
 - Delete Distinguished from Reading and Listening or
 - Add Distinguished to Speaking and Writing
- ❑ Discussion
 - Is there a need? Is there a market?
 - Is this level appropriate for the ACTFL context and constituency?



Add a Level above Superior?



- What does it mean that an organization for foreign language teaching includes a level of language ability that even few educated native speakers of the language can achieve?
- Practical considerations for testing
 - ▣ Numbers of testers that are able to test beyond the Superior level

Add a Level above Superior?



- Create stronger connections between the educational system and post-education professional world
 - ▣ Demand for higher levels of proficiency in workplace to serve in a professional field as a highly articulate, well educated speaker of the language
- Target educational goals of higher linguistic proficiency
 - ▣ Students are reaching higher levels of proficiency
 - ▣ Ex: Language Flagship and Wharton School's Lauder IMBA Program

Add a Level above Superior?



- Coordinate definitions of proficiency at the highest levels with standards used by the government
- Better align with the highest level (C2) described in the Common European Framework of Reference
- Differentiate that which is Superior from that which is more than Superior

NEW

Addition of a General Level Description for Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced for all Skills

- General descriptions of the major level provide the overall progression of the levels
 - Deal with the “big picture” before dealing with the details

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – **SPEAKING**

ADVANCED

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

INTERMEDIATE

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

NOVICE

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

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – **WRITING**

ADVANCED

Writers at the Advanced level are characterized by the ability to write routine informal and some formal correspondence, as well as narratives, descriptions, and summaries of a factual nature. They can narrate and describe in the major time frames of past, present, and future, using paraphrasing and elaboration to provide clarity. Advanced-level writers produce connected discourse of paragraph length and structure. At this level, writers show good control of the most frequently used structures and generic vocabulary, allowing them to be understood by those unaccustomed to the writing of non-natives.

INTERMEDIATE

Writers at the Intermediate level are characterized by the ability to meet practical writing needs, such as simple messages and letters, requests for information, and notes. In addition, they can ask and respond to simple questions in writing. These writers can create with the language and communicate simple facts and ideas in a series of loosely connected sentences on topics of personal interest and social needs. They write primarily in present time. At this level, writers use basic vocabulary and structures to express meaning that is comprehensible to those accustomed to the writing of non-natives.

NOVICE

Writers at the Novice level are characterized by the ability to produce lists and notes, primarily by writing words and phrases. They can provide limited formulaic information on simple forms and documents. These writers can reproduce practiced material to convey the most simple messages. In addition, they can transcribe familiar words or phrases, copy letters of the alphabet or syllables of a syllabary, or reproduce basic characters with some accuracy.

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – **READING**

ADVANCED

At the Advanced level, readers can understand the main idea and supporting details of authentic narrative and descriptive texts. Readers are able to compensate for limitations in their lexical and structural knowledge by using contextual clues. Comprehension is likewise supported by knowledge of the conventions of the language (e.g., noun/adjective agreement, verb placement, etc.). When familiar with the subject matter, Advanced-level readers are also able to derive some meaning from straightforward argumentative texts (e.g., recognizing the main argument).

Advanced-level readers are able to understand texts that have a clear and predictable structure. For the most part, the prose is uncomplicated and the subject matter pertains to real-world topics of general interest.

Advanced-level readers demonstrate an independence in their ability to read subject matter that is new to them. They have sufficient control of standard linguistic conventions to understand sequencing, time frames, and chronology. However, these readers are likely challenged by texts in which issues are treated abstractly.

Advanced High

At the Advanced High sublevel, readers are able to understand, fully and with ease, conventional narrative and descriptive texts of any length as well as more complex factual material. They are able to follow some of the essential points of argumentative texts in areas of special interest or knowledge. In addition, they are able to understand parts of texts that deal with unfamiliar topics or situations. These readers are able to go beyond comprehension of the facts in a text, and to begin to recognize author-intended inferences. An emerging awareness of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles permits comprehension of a wide variety of texts. Misunderstandings may occur when reading texts that are structurally and/or conceptually more complex.

Advanced Mid

At the Advanced Mid sublevel, readers are able to understand conventional narrative and descriptive texts, such as expanded descriptions of persons, places, and things and narrations about past, present, and future events. These texts reflect the standard linguistic conventions of the written form of the language in such a way that readers can predict what they are going to read. Readers understand the main ideas, facts, and many supporting details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject-matter knowledge but also from knowledge of the language itself. Readers at this level may derive some meaning from texts that are structurally and/or conceptually more complex.

Advanced Low

At the Advanced Low sublevel, readers are able to understand conventional narrative and descriptive texts with a clear underlying structure though their comprehension may be uneven. These texts predominantly contain high-frequency vocabulary and structures. Readers understand the main ideas and some supporting details. Comprehension may often derive primarily from situational and subject-matter knowledge. Readers at this level will be challenged to comprehend more complex texts.

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – LISTENING

NOVICE

At the Novice level, listeners can understand key words, true aural cognates, and formulaic expressions that are highly contextualized and highly predictable, such as those found in introductions and basic courtesies.

Novice-level listeners understand words and phrases from simple questions, statements, and high-frequency commands. They typically require repetition, rephrasing, and/or a slowed rate of speech for comprehension. They rely heavily on extralinguistic support to derive meaning.

Novice-level listeners are most accurate when they are able to recognize speech that they can anticipate. In this way, these listeners tend to recognize rather than truly comprehend. Their listening is largely dependent on factors other than the message itself.

Novice High

At the Novice High sublevel, listeners are often but not always able to understand information from sentence-length speech, one utterance at a time, in basic personal and social contexts where there is contextual or extralinguistic support, though comprehension may often be very uneven. They are able to understand speech dealing with areas of practical need such as highly standardized messages, phrases, or instructions, if the vocabulary has been learned.

Novice Mid

At the Novice Mid sublevel, listeners can recognize and begin to understand a number of high-frequency, highly contextualized words and phrases including aural cognates and borrowed words. Typically, they understand little more than one phrase at a time, and repetition may be required.

Novice Low

At the Novice Low sublevel, listeners are able occasionally to recognize isolated words or very high-frequency phrases when those are strongly supported by context. These listeners show virtually no comprehension of any kind of spoken message, not even within the most basic personal and social contexts.

NEW

Glossary of Terms

Recombinations: The ways in which speakers put together linguistic elements (word, phrases, sentences) that they have learned to create in an original message.

Genre: Any category of literature, as well as various forms of art and culture, e.g., music based on a loose set of stylistic criteria.

Abstract linguistic formulations: The use of abstract expressions to communicate abstract ideas. The structure used to convey an abstract idea is itself an abstract expression. Vocabulary choices beyond the basic word in a semantic field is one example. The phrase “beltway insider” to refer negatively to career politicians is an abstract formulation.

NEW

Online support for Guidelines Text

- Available via ACTFL Website
- Ability to navigate all skills and all levels
- Mouse-over glossing
- Level-specific exemplars for all skills
 - English
- Rationales



ACTFL

Proficiency Guidelines

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Welcome to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012

Welcome to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 online. Here you will find the most current version of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading made interactive through the inclusion of glossed terms and multimedia exemplars. You can explore the Guidelines by skill or by level, listen to and read samples in English that represent abilities at each of the major **proficiency** levels.

Click here to download the complete text of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 document in a PDF format.

General Preface to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are a description of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. For each skill, these guidelines identify five major levels of **proficiency**: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels. The levels of the ACTFL Guidelines describe the continuum of **proficiency** from that of the highly articulate, well-educated language user to a level of little or no functional ability.

These Guidelines present the levels of **proficiency** as ranges, and describe what an individual can and cannot do with language at each level, regardless of where, when, or how the language was acquired. Together these levels form a hierarchy in which each level subsumes all lower levels. The Guidelines are not based on any particular theory, pedagogical method, or educational curriculum. They neither describe how an individual learns a language nor prescribe how an individual should learn a language, and they should not be used for such

2012 edition are the addition of the major level of Distinguished to the Speaking and Writing Guidelines, the division of the Advanced level into the three sublevels of High, Mid, and Low for the Listening and Reading Guidelines and the addition of general level **description** at the Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice levels for all skills.

Another new feature of the 2012 Guidelines is their publication online, supported with glossed terminology and annotated, multimedia samples of performance at each level for Speaking and Writing, and examples of oral and written texts and tasks associated with each level for Reading and Listening.

The direct application of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines is for the evaluation of **functional language ability**. The Guidelines are intended to be used for global assessment in academic and workplace settings. However, the Guidelines do have instructional implications. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines underlie the development of the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners (1998) and are used in conjunction with the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996, 1998, 2006) to describe how well students meet content standards. For the past 25 years, the ACTFL Guidelines have had an increasingly profound impact on foreign language teaching and learning in the United States.

Acknowledgements

ACTFL is deeply indebted to the many individuals who contributed to the previous editions of the Proficiency Guidelines.

In addition, ACTFL wishes to acknowledge the principal authors and editors of this 3rd Edition of the Proficiency Guidelines: Elvira Swender, Daniel J. Conrad, and Robert Vicars; and the invaluable contributions of the project consultants: Mahdi Alish, Karen Breiner-Sanders, Ray T. Clifford, Helen Hamlyn, David Hipple, Judith Liskin-Gasparro, Pardee Lowe, Jr., Cynthia Martin, Karl F. Otto, Jr., Benjamin Rifkin, Mildred Rivera-Martinez, and Erwin Tschirner.

Finally, ACTFL is most appreciative of the comments and feedback from the many members of the profession who contributed generously of their time and expertise in reviewing earlier drafts of this document.

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Speaking

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012—Speaking describe five major levels of **proficiency**: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The **description** of each major level is representative of a specific range of abilities. Together these levels form a hierarchy in which each level subsumes all lower levels. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are divided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels.

The Guidelines describe the tasks that speakers can handle at each level, as well as the content, context, accuracy, and **discourse** types associated with tasks at each level. They also present the limits that speakers encounter when attempting to function at the next higher major level.

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

The written descriptions of speaking **proficiency** are accompanied online by speech samples illustrating the features of each major level.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 reproduced in their entirety, with no alterations.

proficiency for representational purposes only, provided that they are

The ability to use a language to communicate meaningful information in a spontaneous interaction in a manner acceptable and appropriate to native speakers of the language.

Speaking » Distinguished

Speakers at the Distinguished level are able to use language skillfully, and with accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness. They are educated and articulate users of the language. They can reflect on a wide range of global issues and highly abstract concepts in a culturally appropriate manner. Distinguished-level speakers can use persuasive and hypothetical **discourse** for representational purposes, allowing

an unexpected complication. The language of Advanced-level speakers is abundant, the oral **paragraph** being the measure of Advanced-level length and **discourse**. Advanced-level speakers have sufficient control of basic structures and **generic vocabulary** to be understood by native speakers of the language, including those unaccustomed to non-native speech.

[Click Here for Sample](#)

Advanced High

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

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

Intonation

The rise and fall in pitch of the voice in speech.

Advanced Mid

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

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

Advanced Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as **circumlocution** or **rephrasing** are often employed for this purpose. The speech of

Tip: Use your ← → **arrow keys** to navigate through exemplars within this skill.

Tip: Press **esc** key to close example.

Speaking » Advanced

The following excerpts from an Oral Proficiency Interview are examples of speech at the Advanced Level.

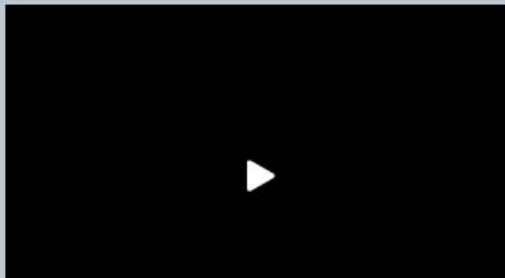
Report on a topic of current interest



Rationale for Rating

This excerpt shows the speaker's ability to communicate on a topic of current interest (the real estate market in her area). The speaker tends to use general or generic vocabulary and possesses strategies to compensate for lexical and syntactic limitations (...housing uh, jump, uh, jumping high, and there's...because there's no land to build more houses).

Report on a topic of current interest--follow up



Writing » Intermediate

Writers at the Intermediate level are characterized by the ability to meet practical writing needs, such as simple messages and letters.

Tip: Use your ← → **arrow keys** to navigate through exemplars within this skill.

Tip: Press **esc** key to close example.

Writing » Intermediate

Audit E-mail

My name is Pascal. I am a member of the accounting department. I work here since 6 years. I am in charge of audit of your company. Nice to meet you. This e-mail is the first contact of us. I want to know each other. Please let me know when you can attend a meeting. How about 12 Feb or 14 Feb? And Where do you hope to take place? Please ascertain the agenda of meeting. Regard. Pascal

Rationale for Rating

This piece of Intermediate-Level writing is a simple e-mail message requesting a meeting and thus a basic exchange of information. It includes examples of straightforward questions (How about 12 Feb or 14 Feb? And Where do you hope to take place?). The topic is predictable and closely related to writer's job (setting up a company audit). The writer produces loosely connected text composed primarily of discrete sentences (This e-mail is the first contact of us. I want to know each other.). The text requires some effort on the part of the reader who will need to be accustomed to the writing of non-natives (Please ascertain the agenda of meeting.).

communications, compositions, and requests for information in loosely connected texts about personal preferences, daily routines, common events, and other personal topics. Their writing is framed in present time but may contain references to other **time frames**. The writing style closely resembles oral **discourse**. Writers at the Intermediate Mid sublevel show evidence of control of basic sentence structure and verb forms. This writing is best defined as a collection of **discrete sentences** and/or questions loosely strung together. There is little evidence of deliberate organization. Intermediate Mid writers can be understood readily by natives used to the writing of non-natives. When Intermediate Mid writers attempt Advanced-level writing tasks, the quality and/or quantity of their writing declines and the message may be unclear.

aural **cognates**, and **formulaic** expressions that are highly contextualized and highly predictable, such as those found in introductions and basic courtesies.

Novice-level listeners understand words and phrases from simple questions, statements, and high-frequency commands. They typically require repetition, **rephrasing** and/or a slowed rate

recognize speech that they can anticipate. In this way, these listeners tend to recognize rather than truly comprehend. Their listening is largely dependent on factors other than the message itself.

[Click Here for Sample](#)

Tip: Use your ← → **arrow keys** to navigate through exemplars within this skill.

Tip: Press **esc** key to close example.

Listening » Novice

This is an example of a listening text at the ACTFL Novice Level.

Lottery Drawing



Rationale for Rating

Listeners need only comprehend **formulaic** language that consists of two lists of number—one ordinal and one cardinal. Listeners need to process a message that is compartmentalized and has limited cohesion. The specific context of the message (a lottery drawing) allows listeners to anticipate speech that they can then recognize.



Tip: Use your ← → **arrow keys** to navigate through exemplars within this skill.

Tip: Press **esc** key to close example.

Reading » Distinguished

The following excerpt is an example of a text at the ACTFL Distinguished Level. The text comes from a January 8, 2006 article in the *New York Times* by Liesl Schillinger writing about the theater critic John Simon.

John Simon

"NEVER argue with a fool," the saying goes. "People might not know the difference." But is it any smarter to argue with a hypereducated critic? Probably not. And yet, how else to respond to the 2,000-odd pages of the collected waspish writings of John Simon, who lost his longtime perch at New York magazine last May, at the age of 80 (he now reviews for Bloomberg.com) after writing an uncharacteristically positive, gushing review of the musical "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang"?

It's an irony Simon should appreciate: not to have been hoist by his own caford – as anyone might have expected of a man widely resented for his verbal pistol-whippings of actors, playwrights, directors, plays and even theater audiences – but by a sudden access of Pollyannish sunniness. It's also an irony he anticipated. In an indulgent review of a production of "Mack & Mabel" in the 1970's, he noted warily that for an earlier rave of "Sugar," a musical inspired by the Billy Wilder film "Some Like It Hot," "I got more brickbats for liking the show than I usually get for despising one." Nonetheless, there can be no question that, in toto, the brickbats hurled at Simon for his bushels of raspberries far outnumber the ones he has gotten for his handfuls of plums.

Gathering hundreds of previously published reviews between two covers, on the expectation that someone will want to reread them, is a vexed project. And Simon, a polymath's polymath, has increased the risk by daring to fill not two but six covers – in three volumes of his opinions on theater, film and music.

[...] Simon's reviews, while shrewd and wide-ranging, are less rich in diversion than in animadversion; nor are they meant for quick consumption. They provide a 360-degree view of one aesthete's take on much of what he has watched or listened to over the last three decades, and while they deserve a place on critics' shelves, they'll never end up in a beach bag at the Hamptons. Not that in his worst nightmares Simon would ever wish them such a fate.

There can be no doubt of Simon's erudition or his exacting nature. The director Jack O'Brien writes in the introduction to "John Simon on Theater" that Simon was always "outstripping everyone else in both knowledge, history, reference, and that one element without which any critic can be dismissed as merely a 'reviewer': he had standards."

Certainly, it's hard not to feel a little awe for a man whose self-confidence is so limitless that he can toss off a sentence like "I have always considered Aeschylus and Sophocles great dramatic poets, but Euripides the first poetic dramatist able to command a modern stage." Nor is Simon somebody who can be accused of talking down to his readership: he likes to complain about "pleonasm," "tergiversation" and "hypotaxis," and has a penchant for coining neologisms like "cacopolitan" (describing the set of "Sweeney Todd" in its Broadway debut), "portophilia" (excessive door-slamming) and "limacine" (to twit the actor Raul Julia, whose "Hispanic accent" he frequently deplored, fueling the common impression in the theater world that Simon's critical needle swung past bias toward hate).

Rationale for Rating

The readers of this text need to be able to understand a text containing obscure, precise vocabulary and phrases (sudden access of Pollyannish sunniness, polymath's

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