

ACTFL Telephone OPIc Test Taker Guide

The Telephone Oral Proficiency Interview by Computer (Telephone OPIc) is a valid and reliable means of assessing how well a person speaks a language. This handbook is a guide to help you prepare for your test session. Test results will be communicated to you by the hiring organization.

The Telephone OPIc Test

The goal of the Telephone OPIc test is to gather a sample of your speech that shows the full range of your functional speaking ability.

Test Taking Tips:

- Respond to questions spontaneously just as you would in a real conversation
- **Provide as much information/detail as possible in your responses.**
- No need to rehearse or memorize material
 - The raters have been trained to recognize rehearsed/memorized material, which may negatively impact your rating, whereas creating authentic answers to the questions will provide better at-level responses.
- Avoid the use of slang or responding in any language other than the target language of the test
 - **Respond in the dialect of your language skill** (i.e., Spanish from Mexico). If you hear words from a different dialect, the context of the question will be mutually intelligible. Respond in your dialect. Test results are not affected by the dialect in use
- Listen carefully to the prompts and respond accordingly. If your answer is incomplete or does not respond fully to the request, **you will not have another opportunity to answer.**
 - Respond to the questions in the target language of the test (If taking a Spanish test, respond in Spanish.
 - Do not translate the question prompts
- **Short answers can work against you** because they do not show the breadth and depth of your speaking ability. **Provide as many details as you can.**

If you are asked to tell a story about an experience that took place in the past, make sure you tell the story in detail using appropriate time frames and structures. If you are asked to speak about a future plan, you should also make sure you use the appropriate forms and structures for that time frame too. Sustained control of the major time frames is required for the Advanced level. While a lack of control of aspect (i.e., present perfect vs. past perfect) does not prevent you from sustaining functional ability at the Advanced level, lack of control over the time frames may result in breakdown to a lower level of proficiency.

- Do not focus on verb formations (or any other grammar point) exclusively. The Advanced level requires control over the use of connectors, time indicators, and other language elements that may contribute to the development of the narration in paragraph-length discourse.

If testing at the Superior level of language proficiency: some questions about Public Health and Public Health policies, international relations/politics are used to set up probes at the Superior level, where test takers need to be able discuss ideas at the abstract level. At the Superior level, test takers must speak about a “linguistically unfamiliar situation”, meaning that at this level, the test does select a topic that was not chosen by the test taker to get at a topic outside of those with which they are linguistically familiar.

- If you are asked to state and support your opinion, make sure you support your point of view with well-organized arguments. Try to maintain the abstract treatment of the topic: a description of facts about what happened is an Advanced-level explanation, whereas a consideration of the issues involved in the problem demonstrates Superior level skill.
- If you are asked to speculate about some possible conditions and/or outcomes, make sure you use the appropriate hypothetical structures for that language. Maintain the hypothetical treatment throughout your response. Consider the topic from an abstract perspective.

Tips for Optimal Performance on the Telephone OPic

- **Do not drive or move around during testing as the call could drop and spotty cell service will impact the test.**
- Make sure that the area where you are taking the Telephone OPic is quiet.
- If using a cell phone, enable WIFI-calling or have a strong signal for the full length of the test (approximately 30 minutes).
- During the interview, you are not permitted to review documents or dictionaries, or ask for help. Rely exclusively on what you can do in the language on your own. If the rater detects that you are receiving assistance, the test will not receive a rating.

Personal preparation

The best advice for doing well on the OPic is PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! The OPic is an assessment of what you can do with your language at the time of the test. Your final rating describes your general functional ability, that is, the level at which you show full control over the functions, and your current communicative skills. Only language development over time will impact your rating. Last-minute language learning, grammar review or vocabulary practice will most likely not improve your final results. Knowing more about the language will not affect your rating unless it reflects on what you can do. Practice communicating naturally in the language, focusing on the message rather than just the language forms. As with any test, you should prepare by being well-rested and alert, maintaining a positive attitude throughout the test. During the OPic, enjoy the conversation and speak as much as you can.

Need Help?

Contact Language Testing International via:

- Email: Support@LanguageTesting.com
- Telephone: 1-914-963-7110 (option 1)
Monday – Friday 8 am to 7 pm U.S. Eastern Time Zone
- Identify yourself: provide your name, contact information, the test type, and the issue or support needed