

OPI, WPT, RPT, and LPT Overview

by Dr. Nieves Knapp – Department of Spanish and Portuguese – BYU knapp@byu.edu

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines were created by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in order to provide a means of assessing the proficiency of a foreign language speaker. Proficiency is defined as the ability to use language in real world situations in a spontaneous interaction and non-rehearsed context, and in a manner acceptable and appropriate to native speakers of the language. Proficiency demonstrates what a language user is able to do regardless of where, when, or how that language was acquired.” (<https://www.actfl.org/>)

The guidelines are broken up into different proficiency levels: novice, intermediate, advanced, superior, and distinguished. Additionally, each of these (except superior and distinguished) is further subdivided into low, mid and high. These proficiency levels are defined separately for ability to listen, speak, read and write.

Proficiency Tests: OPI – Oral Proficiency Interview, LPT – Reading Proficiency Test, RPT – Listening Proficiency Test, WPT – Writing Proficiency Test

For more information on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines <http://actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org/>

Phases of an OPI : Warm-up, level check, probes (to “probe” how much an interviewed can reach with the language – this phase might contain a role play), and wind-down.

Tips for preparation:

1. Go to the website <http://actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org/>
2. Study the process **in English** (learn the scale, performance descriptors, look at the samples)
3. Now do the same in the language of your test (**Spanish, Portuguese...**)
4. Pay special attention to your **target goal** and **above**. If your goal is Advanced Low, work for Advanced Mid or High.
5. Use the “Can do Statements” document, which enables test takers to evaluate what they must be able to do at each specific level. http://www.actfl.org/global_statements

Additional advice from Professor Chantal Thompson: <http://frenchitalian.byu.edu/opi>

Some favorite resources:

<http://kiosko.net> Newspapers from all over the world – Read and summarize. Make a list of new vocabulary and use it.

<http://radioambulante.org/> Podcasts in Spanish

<https://news.un.org/en/tags/un-radio> UN news – podcasts and transcriptions in several languages

In sum,

The best way to prepare for your proficiency tests is to

- increase your exposure to **authentic input** (reading, listening, viewing)
- **speak as much as you can**, with classmates, friends, native speakers, yourself (record yourself if necessary)
- practice having some of those **conversations over the phone**, since your official OPI will be a telephonic interview.
- **focus on the functions** you are targeting for **full control**, such as narration in the past, or supported opinion;
- force yourself to **elaborate** (give details, and even think out loud)