

ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Writing Proficiency Test?

The ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) is a test that measures how well you write in a language by comparing your performance with the criteria described in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Writing* (Revised 2001).

It is delivered either in test booklet form or via the internet. The candidate responds to all prompts in the target language. The prompts are written in English to avoid providing the candidate with relevant vocabulary to answer the prompt.

How can I best prepare to take the WPT?

It is helpful to read the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in order to be familiar with the functions, discourse length and accuracy features of the level that you need to achieve.

Write as much as you can in the target language, practicing the functions that you will need to demonstrate during the test (i.e., recounting experiences, giving full descriptions, stating and supporting opinions, etc.).

How long is the WPT?

The WPT is a timed test. The test taker is given 90 minutes (booklet) or 80 minutes (internet) to complete the four major test prompts.

For each prompt there is a recommendation for the length of the response (in paragraphs) and the amount of time the test taker should dedicate to each response in order to leave enough time to finish all the prompts.

How is the WPT structured?

The WPT contains four separate prompts for writing. Each prompt consists of 3 or more tasks that must be addressed in your response.

The complexity of the tasks increases with each prompt. Some tasks may stretch your abilities, and push you to your limits in the language.

What is contained in each prompt?

Each prompt presents an overall writing task, as well as its context and content. Specific writing tasks are outlined in bullet form after the summary.

Each prompt is specifically structured to elicit the writing tasks for each level of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Writing (Revised 2001).

Prompt 1 – Focus on Intermediate tasks

Prompts 2 and 3 – Focus on Advanced and some Superior tasks

Prompt 4 – Focus on Superior tasks

Do I have to address each bullet in my response to every prompt?

The writing requests in the bullets must be included in the final composition. Skipping a bullet may affect your rating.

What are the best strategies for success on the WPT?

When taking the WPT, read the prompts carefully and address all the specific writing tasks outlined in each prompt.

If you want to demonstrate a Superior or Advanced High writing proficiency rating you may want to start with the more complex prompts and work backwards, i.e. Prompt 4, 3, 2 and then 1.

If you need to demonstrate an Advanced Low level of writing proficiency make sure to fully answer prompts 2 and 3 in as much detail as possible before attempting prompt 4.

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At Wright State University, you need to demonstrate at least an “Advanced-Low” level of writing proficiency.

Compare the difference between INTERMEDIATE-HIGH and ADVANCED-LOW.

INTERMEDIATE -HIGH

Writers at the Intermediate-High level are able to meet all practical writing needs such as taking notes on familiar topics, writing uncomplicated letters, simple summaries, and compositions related to work, school experiences, and topics of current and general interest. Intermediate-High writers connect sentences into paragraphs using a limited number of cohesive devices that tend to be repeated, and with some breakdown in one or more features of the Advanced level. They can write simple descriptions and narrations of paragraph length on everyday events and situations in different time frames, although with some inaccuracies and inconsistencies. For example, they may be unsuccessful in their use of paraphrase and elaboration and/or inconsistent in the use of appropriate major time markers, resulting in a loss in clarity. In those languages that use verbal markers to indicate tense and aspect, forms are not consistently accurate. The vocabulary, grammar, and style of Intermediate-High writers essentially correspond to those of the spoken language. The writing of an Intermediate-High writer, even with numerous and perhaps significant errors, is generally comprehensible to natives not used to the writing of non-natives, but gaps in comprehension may occur.

ADVANCED-LOW

Writers at the Advanced-Low level are able to meet basic work and/or academic writing needs, produce routine social correspondence, write about familiar topics by means of narratives and descriptions of a factual nature, and write simple summaries. Advanced-Low writers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in major time frames with some control of aspect. Advanced-Low writers are able to combine and link sentences into texts of paragraph length and structure. Their writings, while adequate to satisfy the criteria of the Advanced level, may not be substantive. Writers at the Advanced-Low level demonstrate an ability to incorporate a limited number of cohesive devices but may resort to much redundancy and awkward repetition. Subordination in the expression of ideas is present and structurally coherent, but generally relies on native patterns of oral discourse or the writing style of the writer's first language. Advanced-Low writers demonstrate

sustained control of simple target-language sentence structures and partial control of more complex structures. When attempting to perform functions at the Superior level, their writing will deteriorate significantly. Writing at the Advanced-Low level is understood by natives not used to the writing of non-natives although some additional effort may be required in the reading of the text due to spelling, punctuation (internal), and grammar and/or vocabulary errors.

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