



Oral Testing: An Overview of the Methodology – Sample Test Questions

The test questions are designed to cause the candidate to use the full range of the target language in answering the questions. The questions are either personal or general in nature, and require the candidate to perform various linguistic tasks (expressing an opinion, making a recommendation, hypothesizing about a future event, etc.). A sample of the test questions is below.

One question from each pool is asked. Each question is selected randomly by computer from a different pool of numerous questions in the target language. The evaluator does not know the questions in advance of the test. A sufficiently large number of questions are in each pool so that the candidate could be asked a question on a wide variety of subjects. This eliminates the possibility that the candidate can anticipate the questions and prepare answers in advance.

The candidate simply answers each question. There is no right or wrong answer to a question – the evaluator is not checking for knowledge of the topic but rather that it is understood and the level of control over the language that the candidate uses. If requested, the evaluator will repeat the question or rephrase the question. The evaluator will also encourage the candidate to give long enough answers so that a representative sample of the candidate's speech is given. However, the evaluator otherwise has no control over the questions/requests for responses being asked.

When the test is complete, the candidate simply hangs up and is scored according to the subcategories of comprehension, communication, grammar and vocabulary, and an overall score is assigned. This score, along with comments by subcategory, is reported to the administrator the following business day.

Sample Questions:

Objective 1: Warm-up discussion

Tell me about yourself.

Objective 2: routine actions

Describe what you do at work every day.

Objective 3: Describing

Tell me about one of your friends.

Objective 4: stating a preference

What is your favorite day of the week and why?



Objective 5: Explaining a basic opinion

Do you like using e-mail? Why or why not?

Objective 6: Role Courtesy

What do you say to introduce yourself to someone new?

Objective 7: Simple requests

What do you say to ask for a glass of water in a restaurant?

Objective 8: Giving directions

Explain how to get to the nearest post office from where you live.

Objective 9: Narrating in the past

Tell me three things that happened on your last vacation.

Objective 10: Describing near future activities

Tell me about three things you will do next weekend.

Objective 11: Describing far future plans

Tell me about three things you will do in the next five years.

Objective 12: Asking questions

You need to make a reservation for a large group at a restaurant. Tell me three questions you would ask the restaurant host or hostess.

Objective 13: Describing a hypothetical situation

If you could visit any city in the world, where would you go and why?

Objective 14: Advanced past tense

In the last ten years, how has transportation changed?

Objective 15: Describing abstract future

How do you think automobiles will change in the next 25 years? Why?

Objective 16: Persuasion

Tell me about one of your favorite books and convince me to read it.

Objective 17: Language specific

Tell me about a time when you were in charge of a group of people.



Objective 18: answering an impersonal question

Identify a problem you've observed in your community and discuss whether people have made an effort to solve that problem.

Objective 19: explaining an abstract concept

I am from a rural area and have never been on a train or subway. Describe what it is like to use public transportation.

Objective 20: discussing a course of action

Tell me what one should do in the following situation: a person is laid off from his job in the technology field. What steps should he take immediately following the layoff?

Objective 21: Explaining situations to different social levels

You need to take two days off for a family emergency. I am your boss. Explain the situation to me.

Objective 22: defending one's opinion

Some people believe that humans have the right to change the global environment as they see fit. Others believe that humans should make as little impact as possible. What is your opinion and why?

Objective 23: dealing with a difficult situation

You have ordered an item via a website. When the package arrived, however, the item you received was not the one you ordered. Briefly explain the problem to a customer service representative and ask to have the proper item shipped to you.