



English Proficiency Oral Performance Evaluation Guide Judicial Council of California Administrative Office of the Courts

The English oral fluency exam is based on a language proficiency rating scale of 1-5. To pass the English oral fluency examination, candidates must receive a score of 4 or higher on the three sections of the exam: photograph explanation, extemporaneous questions, and passage explanation.

Performance Description Level 5

Candidate's proficiency consistently exceeds minimum standards of competence as defined in Language Proficiency Rating Level 4.

- Performs well in language situations that may change unexpectedly or are unfamiliar
- Discourse is cohesive and coherent
- Grasps and clearly conveys meaning; is able to differentiate shades of meaning between words and process complete content of message in a cohesive discourse
- Demonstrates broad vocabulary and ability to convey abstract concepts
- Demonstrates extensive knowledge of specialized vocabulary
- Uses words appropriately (distinguishes among words of similar meaning and selects the most appropriate term for the context.) Distinguishes between denotative and connotative meanings
- Recognizes and appropriately uses a broad range of idioms, proverbs, collocations, and sayings
- Demonstrates full grammatical and structural control (absence of patterns of error)
- Demonstrates sociolinguistic competence and full control of register
- Demonstrates knowledge of cultural nuance and references
- Rate of delivery (fluency) is adequate (reasonable intervals between utterances)
- Accent does not interfere with the listener's comprehension
- Speaks clearly (enunciation, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and tone) and conveys meaning and nuance

**Performance
Description
Level 4**

Candidate's proficiency **meets minimum standards** of competence.

- Language proficiency is sufficient for situations that may change unexpectedly or are unfamiliar.
- Discourse is cohesive and coherent
- Grasps and clearly conveys meaning; is generally able to differentiate shades of meaning between words and process complete content of message
- Demonstrates broad vocabulary and ability to convey abstract concepts
- Demonstrates requisite level of specialized vocabulary
- Generally uses words appropriately (distinguishes among words of similar meaning and selects the most appropriate term for the context). Distinguishes between denotative and connotative meanings
- Demonstrates familiarity with idioms, proverbs, collocations, and sayings
- Demonstrates full structural control (absence of patterns of error). Occasional errors in complex and/or low frequency structures do not interfere with meaning
- Exhibits infrequent grammatical errors that do not interfere with meaning
- Generally uses language in a sociolinguistically appropriate manner (i.e., tailors the language to the situation at hand; reflects the speech patterns of a wide variety of sociocultural backgrounds); varies register appropriately
- Demonstrates knowledge of cultural nuance and references
- Rate of delivery (fluency) is adequate (reasonable intervals between utterances)
- Accent does not interfere with the listener's comprehension
- Demonstrates general ability to speak clearly (enunciation, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and tone) and to convey meaning and nuance appropriately

**Performance
Description
Level 3**

Candidate's proficiency **does not meet minimum standards** of competence as defined in Language Proficiency Rating Level 4 due to deficiencies in performance *which taken in aggregate* affect meaning.

These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Language proficiency is limited to the familiar
- Discourse lacks cohesiveness and coherence
- Demonstrates limited comprehension (grasps meaning in fragments but is unable to consistently process complete content of message in a cohesive discourse)
- Demonstrates knowledge of basic vocabulary (familiar); however, may be unable to convey abstract concepts
- Lacks requisite level of specialized vocabulary needed to competently perform the duties of an interpreter
- Demonstrates some knowledge of specialized vocabulary but ability to contextualize it is limited
- Misuses words (unable to distinguish among words of similar meaning and select the most appropriate term for the context.) Fails to distinguish between denotative and connotative meanings

- Occasionally distorts and/or invents words
- Occasionally misuses the wrong word for the context
- Demonstrates limited familiarity with idioms, proverbs, collocations, and sayings
- Demonstrates partial structural control (patterns of error in language structure interfere with meaning), requiring the listener to compensate for missing or erroneous structural elements
- Demonstrates patterns of grammatical errors
- Demonstrates a limited ability to use language in a sociolinguistically appropriate manner (i.e., deviates from the rules of social discourse; is unable to reflect the speech patterns of a wide variety of sociocultural backgrounds); exhibits lapses in ability to vary register appropriately
- Demonstrates limited knowledge of cultural nuance and references
- Rate of delivery (i.e. fluency) is sometimes inadequate (lengthy pauses, hurried speech) and may interfere with communication
- Accent sometimes interferes with the listener's comprehension
- Demonstrates basic ability to speak clearly (enunciation, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and tone), but fails to convey meaning and nuance

***Performance
Description
Level 2***

Candidate's proficiency is **below minimum standards** of competence as defined in Language Proficiency Rating Level 4, due to deficiencies in performance which, taken in aggregate, affect meaning.

These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Language proficiency is limited to basic communication (i.e. everyday and concrete topics)
- Fails to communicate beyond the paragraph level
- Demonstrates very limited comprehension; ability to process complete content of message is limited
- Demonstrates basic level of vocabulary
- May demonstrate superficial knowledge of specialized vocabulary but is unable to contextualize it
- Frequently misuses words (unable to distinguish among words of similar sound, form, or meaning)
- Frequently distorts and/or invents words
- Demonstrates minimal familiarity with idioms, proverbs, collocations, and sayings
- Demonstrates minimal structural control (frequent patterns of error in language structure interfere with meaning)
- Demonstrates patterns of significant grammatical error
- Demonstrates very limited ability to use language in a sociolinguistically appropriate manner (i.e. frequently deviates from the rules of social discourse; is unable to reflect the speech patterns of different sociocultural backgrounds); unable to vary register appropriately
- Rate of delivery (i.e. fluency) is often inadequate (lengthy pauses between utterances interfere with communication)

- Accent constantly interferes with the listener’s comprehension
- Frequently fails to demonstrate a basic ability to speak clearly (enunciation, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and tone) and to convey meaning and nuance

***Performance
Description
Level 1***

Candidate’s proficiency is significantly below minimum standards of competence as defined in Language Proficiency Rating Level 4, due to deficiencies in performance which, taken in aggregate, affect meaning.

These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Language proficiency is limited to basic communication with frequent and severe errors
- Fails to communicate beyond the word or sentence level
- Demonstrates almost no comprehension (i.e. unable to grasp meaning of words or sentences)
- Demonstrates rudimentary vocabulary
- Consistently misuses words (unable to distinguish among words of similar sound, form, or meaning)
- Consistently distorts and/or invents words
- Demonstrates little or no familiarity with idioms, proverbs, collocations, and sayings
- Demonstrates some awareness of some structures, but unable to use them correctly
- Demonstrates patterns of serious and persistent grammatical error
- Demonstrates an inability to use language in a sociolinguistically appropriate manner; demonstrates no awareness of the rules of social discourse of speech register
- Rate of delivery (i.e., fluency) is inadequate (lengthy intervals between utterances interfere with communication)
- Accent is so severe that it makes communication nearly impossible
- Consistently fails to demonstrate a basic ability to speak clearly (enunciation, pronunciation, stress, intonation, and tone) and to convey meaning and nuance