

Punjabi Test for World Language Credits

Avtar Singh, PhD

1.1 Introduction

This article is to provide general information to students and parents about the World Language test. In Washington state, amongst many languages, Punjabi can be used to earn credits for satisfying the foreign language requirements for high school graduation and university admission. The credits are earned by passing the World language assessment test, from ALTA Language Services, arranged and conducted in high schools. Here we discuss general questions such as how the test is conducted, what the test consists of, how to register for the test, how the test is graded, and what level of Punjabi language knowledge is required to pass the test.

1.2 The World Language Credit Program

High School students in the state of Washington can use their Punjabi language proficiency to earn foreign language credits. If you can listen, understand, and answer questions in Punjabi; and read, understand, and write on a familiar topic in Punjabi, you are on your way to earn the school credits. The number of credits earned depends on the skill level you can demonstrate in the assessment test. The test is given by ALTA, a company for language assessment, in coordination with school districts. You can earn up to 4 credits. If you are proficient like a native speaker, you may also qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy on your high school diploma.

These credits can be used to satisfy the High School foreign language graduation requirement and may also be used to meet a foreign language requirement for college admission. In Washington, the [High School graduation requirement](#) is 24 credits. To earn 1 high school

credit, you take the class for one year. To graduate with a High School diploma, at least 2 credits must be in an approved World Language, such as Punjabi. Typically, for a 4-year college entrance, the minimum requirement is 2 credits, however, more competitive colleges may require 3 or more credits in the World language.

1.3 Signing up for the Test

A student desirous of earning credits needs to register to take the test. Registration is done through schools and the test is also conducted in schools. There is a cost to sign up for the test. A student needs to check with his/ her school counselor about the details.

1.4 About the Test

There are two parts of the test, the first part tests the writing ability of a student. The second part tests the spoken language understanding and the ability to answer in the language. Both parts are separately graded and then combined to assess a student's language proficiency.

1.4.1 Written Test

A student taking the test is asked to write on topics of general interest. The test is primarily for assessing the writing capability in Punjabi, not so much the topic contents. There is no time limit to complete the test. The written test is evaluated by ALTA for student's writing capability. Student's writing skill is assessed as one of the 12 [Writing Skills Performance Levels](#).

1.4.2 Phone Interview

At an arranged time, a test examiner talks to the student over the phone. The examiner asks the student a series of general questions in Punjabi. The objective is to evaluate student's language proficiency in listening, understanding, and speaking. The phone test lasts for about half an hour. The phone conversation starts with simple questions and proceeds to a more complex format. The phone interview is used by ALTA to place the student in one of the 12 [Speaking and Listening Performance Levels](#).

1.5 Language Proficiency Levels

ALTA's written test and phone interview performance are used to assess student's language proficiency as Novice, Intermediate, or Advanced. These and other proficiency levels have been developed by American Council for Teaching a Foreign Language (ACTFL). To understand various levels of language proficiency in Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading, ACTFL provides examples. Here we use a few of these examples to understand the writing proficiency levels.

We present three examples of English writing along with their evaluation. The first example, in Figure 1.1, shows writing at the novice level. The second example, in Figure 1.2, shows writing at the intermediate level. The third example, in Figure 1.3, shows writing at an advanced level. These examples are taken from the samples presented in [ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012](#). Even though these examples are for assessing the English (as a second language) writing proficiency, the same criterion applies to writing in Punjabi.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Pleez by 4 me–
candy
bannanas
minerals watres
printer papper
sop
toothpaste
baterys

RATIONALE FOR RATING

This example of Novice-Level writing is a list of basic words dealing with a most common aspect of a student's daily life – shopping for essentials. The spelling may render part of this list difficult to comprehend even for readers who are accustomed to dealing with non-native writers (sop for soap).

Figure 1.1: Novice Level writing Example. Source: ACTFL

EMAIL REQUESTING A MEETING

My name is Pascal. I am a member of the accounting department. I work here since 6 years. I am in charge of audit of your company. Nice to meet you. This e-mail is the first contact of us. I want to know each other. Please let me know when you can attend a meeting. How about 12 Feb or 14 Feb? And Where do you hope to take place? Please ascertain the agenda of meeting. Regard. Pascal

RATIONALE FOR RATING

This piece of Intermediate-Level writing is a simple e-mail message requesting a meeting and thus a basic exchange of information. It includes examples of straightforward questions (How about 12 Feb or 14 Feb? And Where do you hope to take place?). The topic is predictable and closely related to writer's job of setting up a company audit. The writer produces loosely connected text composed primarily of discrete sentences (This e-mail is the first contact of us. I want to know each other.). The text requires some effort on the part of the reader who will need to be accustomed to the writing of non-natives (Please ascertain the agenda of meeting.).

Figure 1.2: Intermediate Level writing Example. Source: ACTFL

ALEJANDRO SANZ

Yesterday, Tuesday, November 15th, 2005, the fans of the Spanish singer Alejandro Sanz, were able to see and hear his idol in person at the Radio City Music Hall in New York City. The tickets were sold out a month ago, and the performance of Alejandro Sanz was superior. As usual, Alejandro sang his most popular songs such as “El Alma al Aire” (“The Soul in the Air”), “Mi Soledad y Yo” (“My Loneliness and I”), “Heroe” (“Heroe”), and more.

The concert started on time at 8pm and finished at 11pm. Three excellent hours of an outstanding performance, Sanz, gave to his fans from all over the world. The adrenaline of the fans was high with the romantic voice of the singer. Also, there were some lucky ones who were able to hold hands with their idol, and show their affection by giving to their favorite singer some gifts, such as flowers, teddy bears, chocolate boxes, etc.

Furthermore, the price of the tickets were from \$85.00 to \$300.00, and all the tickets were sold out a month ago. There is not doubt the Alejandro Sanz has won his fans’ heart. Personally, I believe that Alejandro Sanz is an excellent singer and his sense of humor, his personality, his passion for believing in the true love, makes him a unique singer.

RATIONALE FOR RATING

This piece of Advanced-Level Writing reports on a topic of personal and general interest: a concert that was held the day before. The writer presents a complete narration/description in past time and includes elaboration to provide clarity (Also, there were some lucky ones who were able to hold hands with their idol and show their affection by giving to their favorite singer some gifts, such as flowers, teddy bears, chocolate boxes, etc.). The writing is connected and cohesive in three logical paragraphs and shows a good control of basic structures and vocabulary. This Advanced-Level writer expresses a meaning that is comprehensible to those unaccustomed to non-native writing despite lexical, grammatical, and stylistic errors (Three excellent hours of outstanding performance, Sanz, gave to his fans from all over the world.).

Figure 1.3: Advanced Level writing Example. Source: ACTFL

From the three examples, we can conclude that writing proficiency includes writing aspects such as spelling, grammar, use of punctuation marks, sentence connectivity, vocabulary, clarity, style, and elaboration.

1.6 High School World Language Credits

The two ALTA performance ratings for writing and speaking skills, from the writing test and the phone interview, are used to assign an ACTFL proficiency level. The proficiency level is then used to assign credits by student's school district. The relationship between the ALTA skill ratings, ACTFL proficiency levels, and high school credits is shown in Table 1.4. The source for this table is a file named guidelines (XLSX) in the 'Results for ALTA Language Testing' at the Washington state k12 school website: <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/resources-subject-area/world-languages/competency-testing-process-districts>

The lowest of the two ALTA ratings, writing and speaking, is considered to represent the language proficiency level of a student. A novice proficiency level may earn 0 to 2 credits, depending upon if the novice level is low, mid, or high. To earn 4 high school credits, one's language proficiency should be at least at the high intermediate level. Another way to determine credits is to use the table of Figure 1.4 to directly convert the ALTA skill levels to school credits. For instance, from the table we can see that an ALTA level of 4 will earn 2 credits and a level of 6 or above will earn 4 credits.

ACTFL Proficiency Level	ALTA Rating	Possible Credits
Novice Low	1, 2	0
Novice Mid	3	1
Novice High	4	2
Intermediate Low, Mid	5	3
Intermediate High	6	4
Advanced Low, Mid	7	4
Advanced High	8	4
Superior	9, 10	4
Distinguished	11, 12	4
Native	12+	4

Figure 1.4: ALTA Rating, ACTFL Proficiency Level, and Credits.
Source: ACTFL