



Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) for Judicial Employees: FAQs

What is an OPI? An OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) is a performance exam that measures how well you speak a language by assessing your proficiency level in that language against a set of pre-established criteria.

How is the OPI administered? It is administered by an automated system over the phone. The exam is given entirely in the target language.

What can I expect before the exam? Before you take the OPI, you will be given a phone number and an access code to use on exam day.

What should I do on exam day? You'll need a room; somewhere where you can shut the door to minimize distractions. You will dial the phone number then enter the access code when prompted.

What happens during the exam? The OPI is structured in a conversational format where an automated system will ask you a variety of questions ranging in topic from personal interests to your opinions on global matters. The 23 questions should gradually increase in complexity as the interview continues. Take the time to really listen to the interview questions and provide descriptive answers using several sentences. The exam takes about 30 – 40 minutes to complete.

Will I be tested on interpretation skills or legal terminology? No. An OPI is strictly a measure of your general language proficiency and ability.

What should I bring to the OPI? You are not required to bring anything to your OPI.

How can I prepare for an OPI? Improving your level of fluency in a language takes time, and it is unlikely that you would be able to improve your proficiency in a language in a short amount of time. However, to prepare for the OPI, it may be helpful to practice speaking about a range of topics in the target language.

How are OPIs rated? All OPIs are scored by raters who have received extensive training on the scoring level criteria and who are fluent, native-like speakers of the language. Raters use a pre-established set of criteria consisting of different descriptions of levels of proficiency. To score at the highest level, a candidate is required to demonstrate a full range of grammar and vocabulary. Scoring is based on a scale from 1 to 12+, where at 1, the speaker has no ability in the language, to 12+, where a speaker is well-educated, with superior native fluency.

How can I improve my OPI score if I did not pass the first time? Since the OPI is an exam testing your language proficiency, improving your score will be challenging. Take time to speak

as much as you can in the target language, while practicing your ability to provide full descriptions with rich narration.

Do dialectal differences or my accent influence the score I receive? Raters are trained to accept variations in dialect, so long as word usage is standard, meaning vocabulary that would be found in a dictionary.

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