Court Interpreter Oral Examination:
Test Administration Standards

Abbreviated Test
ATTENTION PROGRAM MANAGER AND TEST ADMINISTRATOR SUPERVISORS

The instructions provided in this manual should be followed very closely. All test proctors who administer National Center for State Court (NCSC) interpreter examinations must be thoroughly trained prior to administration of examinations. The program manager/test administrator supervisor is responsible for providing training opportunities and for ensuring that test administration does not deviate from the instructions contained herein. If the test administration deviates from these instructions, the test may be invalidated, especially if such administration procedure affects the validity and reliability of the test or the test experience.
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Purpose of This Manual

These standards apply to test administration when an Abbreviated Examination is administered. The state court interpreter program manager must:

- require the candidate to participate in one of the available standardized English proficiency testing programs listed below, and
- administer the simultaneous interpreting examination as described in this manual.

It is recommended that the English Proficiency Examination be administered first, followed by the simultaneous interpreting test.

[Section 1] English Proficiency Examination

The Versant English Test (VET) is available from Pearson at a cost of $39.95 (subject to change) at https://www.ordinate.com/ecom/products. The instructions for the administration of the VET are not repeated in this manual, since comprehensive instructions are included every time a state court interpreter program purchases a VET. The instructions include information about how to retrieve the score achieved by the examinee from an online site within hours of administering the proficiency exam.

Other English proficiency exams can be considered functionally equivalent to the Versant English Test and are listed below. If a state court interpreter program manager wishes to administer an alternate English proficiency examination which is included in the listing below, the manager must contact the vendor and make the arrangements for administration of that examination. The manager should provide a results form, together with the raters’ results form from the scoring of the simultaneous interpreting examination so that the information can be captured in the NCSC's court interpreter testing database.

Any state court interpreter program manager who wishes to use an alternate exam not included in the listing below should contact the NCSC's Language Access Services Section (LASS) to determine whether it is an equivalent exam and what the exam’s cut score would be. If the LASS staff cannot establish an appropriate cut score and advises the state that the test cannot yet be added to the list, the state may take steps to conduct independent research using accepted psychometric test equivalency analyses and submit the results of that research to the LASS. LASS staff will then evaluate the research and reach a determination. If they determine that an appropriate cut score has been substantiated, then that test and the corresponding cut score will be added to the list of acceptable examinations. Otherwise the test cannot be used as part of the abbreviated model.
AVAILABLE STANDARDIZED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY EXAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of English Proficiency Test</th>
<th>Proficiency Level Required</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iBT Speaking Score</td>
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<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
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<tr>
<td>(IELTS) Spoken Total Score</td>
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<tr>
<td>IELTS Spoken Total Band</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Once the candidate has participated in an English proficiency test and completed the simultaneous interpreting test, he/she has completed the Abbreviated Examination.

[Section 2]

Definitions

At each testing site, there will be individuals performing the following roles:

*Test administration supervisor.* This individual is responsible for oversight of the entire test administration process as outlined in these standards, including any required troubleshooting. Generally this will be LASS staff or the state court or agency where the test is being administered. It is the responsibility of the test administration supervisor to ensure that test security standards are maintained and that the tests are administered in accordance with the standards identified in this manual.

*Test registration clerk.* The test registration clerk is the person to whom examinees report when they appear for the test. The clerk secures identification, registers the examinee, provides them with necessary pre-test information, and maintains security in the waiting area.

*Test proctor.* The test proctor is the person who will greet the candidates after they have registered and escort them to the testing room. The proctor has been trained to administer the test in the same fashion to all candidates. The proctor will also escort the examinees to the exit when they have finished taking the test.
The continued security of all test materials and instruments is of extreme importance. The cost of developing oral proficiency examinations is high. If test materials or instruments are compromised, it forces the NCSC to “retire” that test and develop a replacement test. Items for which the highest level of security is required include:

- Test scripts
- Prerecorded test stimuli
- Test scoring dictionaries
- Recorded examinee performances

Every program manager and trained test administrator should be made aware of the security concerns as they relate to NCSC examinations.

When examinees arrive for an examination, they should not be allowed to take briefcases, gym bags, coats, and other personal belongings, including electronic devices and cell phones, into the testing room. All examinees should be advised prior to the testing date not to bring any personal belongings with them. The test environment should include registration personnel who can offer to hold any personal belongings for the examinee until the conclusion of the exam. If the examinee insists upon taking a personal item into the testing room (the best example of this is a lady’s purse), place the item as far away from the test recordings and microphones as possible. If a cabinet or drawer is available, place the item in the cabinet or drawer and close it. The administration supervisor does have the option to reschedule an examinee’s test for another date if that becomes necessary; however, good advance planning and advice to examinees prior to the test date will usually avoid situations like this one.

If the administrator must leave the testing room empty (during a break or over the lunch hour), the room should be kept locked. Be aware of how many other individuals in the area have a key to the room and be sure they understand the importance of allowing no one to enter the testing room except for pre-approved personnel. If the administrator is uncomfortable with easy access to the testing room or does not have control over access to the room, he/she should take test scripts and stimuli with him/her.

The administration supervisor should account for all test materials at the end of each day of testing and remove them from the testing room(s). If administrators are staying in a hotel, the test materials should be kept in the administration supervisor’s room in a secure location.

Whenever test scripts, test stimuli, scoring dictionaries, and test results report forms are being shipped from one location to another, the shipment should always be via a traceable method (USPS, FedEx, UPS, etc.). Notice should be provided to the recipient that the materials have been shipped and the expected delivery date. Shipments should be timed so as not to be in a warehouse or mailroom over a weekend.
When test materials are received in the program manager’s office from LASS staff, the Inventory Control Sheet should be checked to insure receipt of all the necessary items and the date of receipt entered on the Inventory Control Sheet. While in possession of test documentation and pre-recorded test stimuli, the program manager must store items in a locked, secure location in the office. The items should not be kept in a briefcase or other easily transported container and should not be left in a vehicle.

All test materials must be returned to the National Center for State Courts at the conclusion of the test session. The Inventory Control Sheet should be completed and returned with the test materials and instruments. It is recommended that program managers not keep even non-confidential materials in their offices, especially since manuals, overview documents, and other test-related materials undergo edits, updates, and changes periodically through the year. Materials kept by the program manager may be outdated or unreviewed.

[Section 4] Equipment & Supplies

Materials and supplies required on test day that will be provided by the LASS staff include:

- Two pre-recordings of the simultaneous examinations for each test room in each language being tested.
- Unmarked test scripts for the proctor.
- Candidate Information Sheet and General Questions and Answers (see Appendices 1 and 2). These should be distributed to candidates on the day of testing.
- Agreement and oath for candidates (See Appendix 3). Each candidate must sign an oath form on the day of testing.
- Test proctor incident reports to record any happenings that are unusual (see Appendix 4).

Materials and supplies required on test day that are provided by the state court interpreter program include:

- A recorder for each testing room plus a backup recorder. External microphones for the recorders are best. If external microphones are not used, be sure that the built-in microphones are sensitive enough to make a good quality recording and that the recorder is placed directly in front of the candidate.
- Playing device with a headset for each testing room plus at least one back-up machine.
- Blank tape cassettes (If the state is using cassette recorders). It is recommended that a separate tape be used for each candidate. While this means "wasting" one side of the tape, this approach makes it less likely that any candidate's tapes can be damaged, not recorded properly, misplaced, or mislabeled. Ninety-minute tapes are sufficient.¹

¹ In recent years, members are beginning to use digital and other, newer recording technology. That is completely acceptable, but members must ensure a clear recording of the examinees’ performances that can be readily
• CD cleaning cloth, if CDs are being used to play the pre-recorded test stimuli.
• Labels for test recordings and other test materials, pre-printed with candidate ID numbers.
• Water pitcher and cups.
• Note pad and pen or pencils.
• Box of tissues, if possible.
• Manila file folders or envelopes for storing candidates’ notes. (Or, destroy candidates’ notes when the candidate is finished and leaves the test room.)
• Stop watch or other timing device.

At the conclusion of the administration, the proctor will ensure that the candidate has the opportunity to hear himself/herself on the recording and confirm that it is a recording of his/her performance. Experience has shown that unless candidates affirmatively confirm the recording is actually of his/her performance, some will later challenge the scores on the test, asserting that the recording the raters listened to must have been someone else’s.

If a cassette tape recorder is being used to record the performance, proctors should (when prompted to do so by the administration script) rewind the recording far enough for the candidate to hear his/her own voice during the last section of the test and then ask the candidate to initial the label that is on the cassette tape.

If a digital recorder is being used to record the performance, program managers should plan in advance how to gain the candidate’s affirmation that the recording is of his/her performance. After the proctor presses “stop” on the digital recorder at the conclusion of the examination, he/she simply then presses “play” to hear a playback of the recording, from the beginning. The proctor should let the recording play until the candidate hears him/herself state the ID number for the record. At that point, the candidate should be asked to initial something, confirming the recording is of his/her performance. For example, if program managers prepare separate envelopes for each test candidate, the candidate might be asked to initial a label on the outside of the envelope. If the program manager prepares a list of candidates in the order that they will be recorded on the digital recorder (so that the list matches the folder numbers on the recorder), the candidate might be asked to initial next to his/her name on the list.

[Section 5] Testing Rooms

It is important that the testing room(s) provide an environment suitable to the administration of a professional examination for interpreters. Testing rooms should meet the following criteria:

heard and understood by raters. Members must also ensure that, if raters need any specific type of equipment or technology to play back the recorded performance, the raters are either in possession of such equipment or technology or that it is provided to them by the member. See page 12 of this manual for more information about digital recordings.
The testing room should be large enough to contain a table and seating for two/three people. Thought should be given to acoustics, odors, external sounds, and privacy.

The following furniture should be available and fit comfortably, with walking room around the furniture:

- a table large enough to seat the examinee and proctor across from each other, and large enough to accommodate a playing device, a recorder, a box of tissues, pads and pencils/pens, a glass of water, and any external microphones that may be used.
- a comfortable chair for the examinee and for the proctor.
- additional chairs should be moved away from the table, especially on the examinee’s side of the table.

A grounded, three-prong electrical outlet should be available near the table to plug in the recorder and the playing device. Battery-operated equipment is not recommended. However, if any battery-operated equipment is used, be sure that new batteries are inserted before the start of each testing day. If extension cords are used, be aware of safety issues and position the cords accordingly.

Lighting in the room should be adequate for reading of materials by the proctor and taking notes. Watch for flickering fluorescent bulbs; they are annoying and strain the eyes. Confirm that the lighting is not installed as motion-detector lighting.

Curtains or blinds at the windows should be drawn to avoid distraction during the test. If that is impossible, seat the examinee with his/her back to the window. If artwork or decorative items are present in the room that may be distracting to the examinee, remove them or place them in an area that is out of sight or arrange the room so that the examinee is not facing those items when seated.

The temperature in the room should be comfortable and hot or cold air should not blow directly on the examinee or the proctor. (Material provided to the examinee prior to the test date should have included a “tip” for the examinee to bring a sweater in case the air conditioning makes the room too cold.)

The testing room should be quiet and free from external distractions. After the English proficiency exam has been administered, telephones should be turned to the “off” position or they should be unplugged. The proctor must turn off any cell phones or other devices prior to administering any examinations. Signs should be posted on the doors, indicating “Quiet please – testing in progress – do not disturb.” Avoid areas that have talking, laughing, or shouting people outside the test room doors and check to be sure that no public announcement systems feed directly into the testing room except for emergency announcements (such as in the case of a fire or other life-threatening situation). Avoid testing in buildings that are located adjacent to railroad tracks, airports and flight paths, or construction sites.
**WARNING**

Each administrator supervisor should review and edit this script with test proctors to make it fit with the language and the test procedures being followed and equipment being used.

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**Prior to the date of testing**

Well in advance of the testing date, proctors should listen to the prerecorded simultaneous stimuli, including backup recordings, all the way through.

Practice administering the test using the equipment that will be used during actual administration. This requires each proctor to be knowledgeable about the equipment being used well in advance of testing.

Review all materials to ascertain if any candidate is to be provided with special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If special accommodations are being provided, be certain that proctors understand the accommodation and are prepared to administer the examination accordingly.

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**On the date of testing**

These preparations must be completed at least 30 minutes before the first scheduled test of the day and before each candidate takes the oral test.

1. Fill water pitcher, make sure cups are available. (After the candidate enters the testing room, pour water in one cup and place it near the candidate.)

2. Make sure note pad and pencils/pens are on the table in front of where the candidate will sit.

3. Check the equipment to make sure it is plugged in. Plug the headphones into the playing device. Put on the headphones and perform a sound quality check. Unplug the headphones and perform a volume check on the playing device.

4. Perform a sound check on the recorder to make certain the recording level is properly set. If an external microphone is to be used, be sure that it is connected to the recorder and is turned on and tested. Also make sure that the microphone is positioned to ensure that the candidate’s voice will best be recorded -- for internal microphones, this may mean positioning the recorder between the proctor and the candidate.

5. If a cassette tape is being used to record the examinee’s performance, make sure a properly labeled blank tape has been inserted and is ready to record the test.
1. Page the candidate in the waiting area, for example:

   We are ready for Mr./Ms.____________________.

2. Introduce yourself by saying, for example:

   My name is _________________. I am the test proctor and will escort you to the testing area. If you are ready, will you come with me please?

3. Escort the candidate into the testing room. Have the candidate place any personal belongings in a predetermined place as far as possible from where the test will take place. NOTE: The point here is to make sure that no secret tape recordings can be made. Be alert to the possibility that the person may have a recording device in his or her pocket. For example, a special request by a candidate to keep a jacket or coat is a signal to politely say “Yes, that will be ok, so long as we can check the pockets.”

4. Take the candidate to the testing area, indicate where the candidate should sit and ask the candidate to make her- or himself comfortable.

5. Do the following things:

   • If you are using a cassette tape recorder that has a tape counter, check to see that the tape counter is set to 000 (some tape recorders begin to make a “clicking” sound once the counter reaches the maximum 999).
   
   • Immediately turn on the recorder so that everything said in the room is recorded.
   
   • Check the sound-level indicators or lighted display on the machine (if any) as you are reading to verify that the machine is recording.
   
   • Ascertain that the “voice activation” feature, if any, is OFF.

6. The proctor should read verbatim all of the “bolded” text which follows:

Welcome to the oral examination for [NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE] interpreters. I assume you’re as ready as you can be, so let’s begin! The test is being recorded, so please state your ID number for the record.

We have made water available to you. You may have more whenever you’d like. We have also provided you with a pad and pencils and pens to take notes if you like. Please feel free to use them at any time during the test.
The instructions I am reading to you are from a written script that is read word-for-word to each candidate. This ensures that every test candidate has the examination administered in the same way as every other candidate.

Please remember that your interpretation should be complete, accurate, and faithful to the language level, style, tone, and intent of the speaker. When you interpret, you must not edit, summarize, delete or add anything. If you give us synonyms of words or two versions of phrases, only the last thing you say will be counted.

Use appropriate grammar, vocabulary, and idioms. Do not mumble your words; if the raters cannot understand what is being said, it will be counted against you. You may use words generally accepted in countries of the [NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE] -speaking world, as long as the usage can be found in a standard reference resource.

Do you have any questions about these instructions?

I will now administer the simultaneous interpreting test. As you know, in simultaneous interpreting, you will interpret only from English into [NON-ENGLISH LANGUAGE].

The test has been pre-recorded and you will listen to it through headphones while interpreting aloud so that your interpretation is recorded on the [digital/tape] recorder. Once the test begins, we are not permitted to stop the test. If you ask to have the test stopped, I will encourage you to continue. If you repeat your request to stop the test, I will stop the player and the remainder of the examination will be counted as incorrect.

    Point to the volume control and say:

Here is the volume control. Once the recording begins, please adjust the volume as necessary. You may do so at any time or as many times as you wish.

There is about one minute of introduction and instructions at the beginning of the recording to allow you to adjust the headphones and volume.

Are you ready?  (Wait for an answer)

    Hand candidate the headphones and plug them into the media device.  Wait for the candidate to adjust the headphones comfortably.

    Play the recording.

    After the simultaneous recording is over, stop the player, but leaving the recorder on. If he/she hasn’t already done so, invite the candidate to remove the headphones lay them on the table.
That’s it! The test results should be ready by [DATE]. [STATE THE NAME OF THE APPROPRIATE PERSON] will mail a results report to you.

Please leave any notes you have taken on the table in front of you.

If you have any feedback about your test experience, we welcome your comments. Please send them to [NAME AND ADDRESS].

Stop the recorder.

1. If you are using a **cassette tape recorder**, rewind and play back a portion of the tape to be sure you have an audible recording. Be sure to rewind far enough to determine that the candidate’s voice is audible. If not, ask the candidate to wait until the administration supervisor can be sent for.

2. Remove the recording from the machine, have the candidate initial the tape label to verify that the ID number is correct; and put the tape in the labeled envelope.

3. If you are using a **digital recorder**, press the “play” button. It will begin to play the last folder recorded, from the beginning. Play back the recording until you hear the candidate state his/her ID number. Have the candidate initial in the appropriate place (determined by the program manager prior to testing).

4. Have the candidate retrieve her or his belongings, ensure that the candidate left his/her notes on the table, and escort the candidate to the outside exit door.

5. Return to the test room, record any unusual happenings on the Test Proctors Incident Report. (For example, if outside noises were loud enough to distract the candidate, or if there is any mishap with operating the equipment during the test, write the circumstances on the report form and turn it in to the test administrator supervisor.)

6. Repeat **Room Preparation Instructions**.

7. Collect the candidate’s notes and put them in the folder for later destruction or destroy them immediately.

8. Greet the next candidate.
IF DIGITAL RECORDERS ARE BEING USED, BE CERTAIN THAT THE FOLDER NUMBER ON THE RECORDER IS MATCHED ACCURATELY TO THE CANDIDATE’S IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.

IF CASSETTE TAPES ARE BEING USED, ALL EXAMINATION TAPES SHOULD BE COMPLETELY REWOUND AS A COURTESY TO THE RATERS.

THE “SAFETY TAB” LOCATED IN THE UPPER LEFT CORNER OF THE CASSETTE SHOULD BE POPPED OUT (USING A PENCIL OR OTHER SMALL, POINTED ITEM) TO GUARD AGAINST RECORDING OVER AN EXAMINATION.
Guidelines for Transitioning to Digital Recording of Oral Examination Performances

The following guidelines were developed in 2010 for those who have or who are planning to transition to digital recording.

State court interpreter exam administrators have traditionally recorded oral examination performances using tape recorders and cassette tapes. This method is proving to be more and more inefficient as cassette tapes are difficult to find and expensive, and tape recorders are bulky and becoming outdated. State court interpreter program managers are encouraged to transition from tape recorders and cassette tapes to digital recorders as soon as possible. This transition will not only reduce costs to the NCSC and state court administration offices, but it will also improve the sound quality of candidates’ recordings, enhance the security of exam materials, and lead to easier evaluation of examination performances. While some states have already made this recording transition, these guidelines were developed to assist in transitioning from tape recorders and cassette tapes to digital recording.

Guideline 1. Planning for Digital Recording

State court interpreter program managers will need to adjust their processes for creating, naming, copying, storing, and transferring recorded candidate performances. In addition, the administration script (included in the administration manual) will need to be replaced. Careful consideration should be given to the selection of digital recorders and the identification and documentation of the steps necessary to use them. Consideration must also be given to:

- Naming conventions for test recording files;
- File backup and short-term storage;
- File transfer to raters and/or LASS staff; and
- Proctor training.

The following is meant to help states through the transition process.

Guideline 2. Digital Recorder Selection

Top priority for selecting a digital recorder is sound quality. The quality of the recording must be good enough for raters to clearly hear exam performances without echoes, hissing, or other white noise interference. However, other features and functions should meet individual needs.

Digital recorders, whether table-top models or hand-held models, should create .mp3 files, have easy-to-use record, stop, pause, and playback features and buttons, an easy-to-read display, ample memory (for example, 20 hours of recording time), removable memory and/or computer I/O connection (USB port) for easy file transfer, and a microphone and headphone input. Digital recorders may include a voice activation feature but if so, the feature should be
turned off since activation can lag slightly, resulting in incomplete recordings. In addition, proctors are expected to record the entire administration experience, including periods of silence. Other criteria for consideration depend program priorities; for example, price, ease of use, size of function buttons, size of LCD screen, weight, etc.

Models currently in use by various states include:

- Marantz PMD-661 (table-top model)
- Olympus VN-6200PC 1GB Digital Voice Recorder (hand-held model)
- Olympus WS-500M Silver 2GB Digital Voice Recorder (hand-held model)
- Sony ICDBX800 2GB (hand-held model)
- Sony IC Recorder ICD-MX20 (hand-held model)

In many cases, separate microphones are not needed for digital recording. This will depend however on the model used, the size of the examination room, and the proximity of the candidate to the digital recorder.

Guideline 3. Proctor Instructions

Proctors must:

1. record proper identification of the test candidate,
2. be alert to sound quality, and
3. monitor available memory on the recorder.

At the beginning of the recording, the proctor should ask the candidate to state identifying information, such as test language, test date, and the candidate’s NCSC ID number. This will allow test files to be efficiently renamed (see Guideline 5) before transfer to LASS staff and/or raters. To ensure sound quality, the proctor should also remind candidates to speak into the digital recorder or external microphone. Lastly, proctors should monitor the recorder to ensure sufficient available memory and power if not plugged in.

Guideline 4. Test Identification and File Name Convention

The digital recorder will automatically create a numeric file name for each test recording. To ensure each test recording file is linked to the correct candidate, files should be renamed immediately after testing using a predetermined naming convention that includes test language, test date, and candidate NCSC ID number.

Example: Spanish_20090625_12561.mp3

Guideline 5. Backup/Renaming/Short-term Storage of Test Files

Test recording files should be backed up, renamed, and properly stored for short-term purposes immediately after testing.
Backup: Test recording files should be copied from the digital recorder onto a dedicated computer hard drive or other secure drive for short-term backup purposes only.

Renaming: Backup test recording files should be renamed, according to the naming convention described in Guideline 4, to ensure proper identification. The beginning of each recording should be listened to in order to confirm test language, test date, and accurate candidate identification. Files can then be burned onto CD’s or placed onto a secure web site for access by LASS staff and/or raters.

IMPORTANT: Extreme caution must be exercised when renaming files. Optimally, files should be backed up and renamed immediately after each test to ensure the file is correctly renamed. However, if back up and renaming occurs, for example, at the end of the testing day, then each file must be listened to in order to confirm the identity of the candidate and accurately rename the file.

Short-term Storage: Backup test recording files should be retained only while tests are being rated. Once test rating and processing is complete, backup files must be deleted. Test recording files in the digital recorder memory, typically SD cards, should be secured to protect confidentiality of test materials and must be deleted once the backup and renaming process is complete.

Guideline 6. Long-term Storage of Test files

States may not retain test recordings or other test materials without formal approval by the NCSC. Digital test recording files may be stored for limited short-term backup purposes as described in Guideline 5 and CD or computer hard drive files must be deleted after rating is completed.
Oral proficiency examinations should be administered in the same way to each and every examinee as far as possible. Any variation in administration technique can affect the reliability and fairness of the test itself. For these reasons, training and close supervision of test proctors is very important and regular refresher training is valuable.

That being said, proctors might experience equipment problems, make unintentional errors, or face other challenges not addressed in the pre-scripted administration instructions. This section reviews some situations that may occur and offers some solutions. Proctors should be trained to overcome unanticipated occurrences.

The test proctor should reflect a calm and professional demeanor and not become flustered or disoriented when an unexpected situation occurs. The testing process itself is stressful and the examinee should not be exposed to stress or dismay exhibited by the proctor.

Test proctors must follow the pre-scripted administration instructions carefully and exactly. Do not engage the candidate in conversation and do not attempt to answer questions about the examination. If the candidate asks questions and the answer is contained in the instructions, simply reread the appropriate portion of the instruction. If the candidate asks questions completely outside of the content of the instructions, the administrator should clearly state that he/she cannot answer the questions.

In general, there are three personality types that proctors can be prepared for:

**A hostile or defensive examinee.** This examinee might attack the test, the ability of the examiners, the interpreting program, or the entire court system. It is important that the test proctor avoid an argumentative or defensive posture. A suggested response might be: “At the conclusion of the examination, you will be given the name and contact information of the person you may contact with questions, comments, or complaints about your test experience.”

**An extremely nervous examinee.** Some examinees are so nervous they exhibit physical reactions, such as extreme perspiration, voice cracking, hyperventilation, or trembling. Some individuals experience a true test phobia. Proctors need to remember that stress can be contagious and be alert to maintain a calm and unruffled demeanor. Courtesy and a sincere smile are in order before the test begins. The proctor can move slowly and deliberately through the pre-scripted instructions and offer to allow the examinee to sip water, take deep breaths, or if necessary, allow the candidate to stand and stretch for a moment or so before beginning the test. The candidate owns the problem, and the proctor should not adopt it as his/her own; on the other hand, a gentle and sympathetic attitude might help the candidate complete the examination.

**The solicitous and the unprepared examinee.** Proctors who administer many examinations will encounter over-solicitous examinees that may think that treating the
A proctor in an especially nice way will gain them some advantage in the testing process. Proctors will also encounter the unprepared examinee, who has obviously not read the material provided to him/her, nor practiced for the examination. In both of these cases, the proctor must simply treat these examinees as others are treated. The proctor’s attitude should remain stable and consistent from candidate to candidate – never become overly friendly with a candidate and never display disgust, exasperation, or defensiveness.

Occasionally, a candidate will be so nervous or unprepared to take the examination that he/she will ask that the test be discontinued. The proctor should say, “Are you certain you wish to discontinue your examination?” If the candidate confirms, the proctor should stop the test at that point and finish reading the administration instructions.

The proctor should have listened all the way through the prerecorded CD prior to the start of the testing day. However, a candidate may experience a “bad” recording, such as skipping, distortion, or other malfunction. If, during the simultaneous portion, the examinee states the problem the proctor should make an announcement for the recording and listen to the CD through the headphones. If the problem is confirmed, the proctor should remove the CD from the CD player and replace it with the backup CD. (Again, it is important that the proctor listen to all CDs prior to the start of the testing day.) Announce for the recording that the test will now continue and continue with the administration. It may be necessary for the proctor to allow the candidate to begin the simultaneous section from the beginning.

Sometimes, regardless of precautions, a proctor must deal with an unexpected external condition. Unexpected noises outside the testing room, someone knocking on the test-room door despite the Do Not Disturb signs, a train passing by, a fire alarm sounding, etc. The proctor should use good judgment and avoid overreacting to these kinds of distractions. For guidance only, some examples might include:

- If someone knocks, the proctor might be able to quietly get up and move to the door without interrupting the candidate’s simultaneous rendition. However, no conversation should take place at the door.

- Noises from outside the testing room (such as neighboring office workers laughing or joking) should be considered in light of the level of interference. If the noises are loud enough to be picked up on the recording, they may present a problem that must be dealt with.

These are the types of occurrences that should be anticipated prior to the testing sessions (see Testing Rooms section of this administration manual); therefore, occurrences should be infrequent. However, should they happen, proctors should be sensitive to the effect the malfunction or unusual occurrence is having on the candidate and take care to place the candidate at ease, even if that means starting a section of the exam over again from the beginning or allowing the candidate to take a short break before continuing.
Occasionally, a candidate is so nervous or unprepared to take the examination that he/she fails to begin interpreting. The candidate may simply sit and listen to the CD recordings and not begin interpreting. The proctor should sit quietly and allow the test to continue to completion. End the session with the scripted instructions. If the examinee realizes that something is wrong and asks what to do, the proctor may say “you should be interpreting,” or something similar. **The proctor should not prompt a candidate to begin interpreting.**

There are situations when it is appropriate to stop a test and offer to retest the candidate at a later date or time, or postpone the test until later in the day if a different version of the test is available. These might include

- complete malfunction of equipment (tape recorder, CD player, or headset);
- the assertion from a candidate that he or she cannot continue because of a physical condition (this may indicate that the candidate must formally request ADA accommodation and cannot participate in the examination on that day), or
- any challenge that renders the proctor incapable of administering that examination *in the same way* that all other candidates received the examination. Deviation from the approved method of administration, except when an ADA accommodation has been approved, may jeopardize the validity of the administration.

In the scripted instructions, which are read to the candidate by the proctor, it says “Once the test begins, we are not permitted to stop either of the machines.” But, on the recording, there is about one minute of instructions, giving the candidate time to adjust the volume, get the headphones positioned comfortably, etc. A trained proctor knows from practice and experience that if a candidate positions the headphones, begins listening to the prerecorded introduction to the simultaneous, and within one minute claims that there is something wrong with the recording or equipment the test can be interrupted to deal with the problem. If more than a minute has expired, the proctor knows that the introductions are complete and that the test has begun – it is from that time forward that the test should be stopped.

The important point here is that the proctor should not make independent decisions on a case-by-case basis. Procedure should be clearly defined in advance and the proctors trained accordingly, prior to administering any examinations.

In the final analysis, all experienced test proctors will agree that any number of challenges can arise during the course of administration of an oral examination. Structured training of test proctors is essential and should include actual demonstrations of examination administration and practice in the handling of unusual or unexpected situations.
Welcome to the [STATE NAME] Court Interpreter Certification Test. By appearing here today you demonstrate your commitment to professionalism in the field of court interpreting. We congratulate you.

This information sheet has been prepared to explain the procedure that will be followed today. Please read it carefully, because after your name is called for the test, there will not be time to repeat all of this information before the test begins.

Procedure:

1. You have completed your registration, and now need only to wait until your name is called by the test proctor. The test proctor will take you to the testing area and get you started.

2. Do not talk to the test proctor or ask questions about the examination. The proctor is not allowed to discuss the contents of the test nor to answer questions or make comments outside of the written instruction script provided to him/her. The proctor’s role today is simply to see that the test is smoothly administered in an identical fashion for all candidates.

3. This is the Abbreviated Examination. This test includes simultaneous interpreting. As you know, for the simultaneous portion of the exam, that means you will be listening to English language speech and simultaneously interpreting it into the target language.

4. During the simultaneous exercise, your interpretation must be accurate and complete. When you interpret, you must not edit, summarize, delete, or add. If you use synonyms of words or two versions of phrases, only the last thing you say will be counted.

   Your interpretation should be faithful to the language level, style, tone, and intent of the speaker. Use appropriate grammar, vocabulary and idioms. Feel free to use the regional expressions with which you are familiar.

   As you are interpreting, you should behave as though you were actually in a courtroom with a judge, lawyers, and a jury, except that you need to speak loudly enough to make sure we get a good recording.

**Personal belongings**  You are not allowed to have any personal belongings with you when you take the test. These will be stored at a distance from you in the test room or in some other safe location away from the immediate testing area. Notepads and pens will be provided for you. Any notes you take will remain in the testing room after you leave.
Rate of speech: The prerecorded simultaneous portion of the test is recorded at approximately 120 words per minute. This is a comfortable pace, slower than most ordinary courtroom speech.

Stopping the test/repeats: The test may not be stopped once it has begun. The test begins after one minute of prerecorded instructions. If you don't know a word or phrase, it is to your advantage to do the best you can and continue on with the script.

Dictionaries or personal notes: These are not allowed during the test. After the test begins, you would not have time to refer to them and still keep up.

How is the test scored? Each exam will be assessed by the number of correct scoring units earned. Scoring units are particular words and phrases that are selected to represent various features of language that interpreters encounter in their work, and that they must render accurately and completely, without altering any of the meaning or style of speech.

Trained raters score the test, and in order for a scoring unit to be counted incorrect, it must be determined that the interpretation is unacceptable or the interpretation was omitted. The raters are professional interpreters who have extensive interpreting experience and training, or are linguistics experts that have been identified and trained. They will not know who you are.

Does the test take into account that there are different expressions (in both the non-English and English language) used in different parts of the country and in different non-English-speaking countries and regions? YES. The test is designed to be free of regionalisms in both the non-English and English language and has been reviewed carefully and pilot tested. Any acceptable regionalism may be used in your interpretation as long as it accurately conveys the meaning of the source language and remains faithful to the original style or register of speech.

When will I know the results? Your test results will be reported to you in approximately [NUMBER OF DAYS/WEEKS].

Who will know my test scores? Only you and the [STATE NAME] Interpreter Manager will have access to your test scores after they are compiled by the National Center for State Courts. Detailed individual scores will be released, upon request, to any state interpreter manager. You may request that your test results be released to an entity or entities of your choice – you will be asked to sign a release form and a fee may be charged for the service.
COURT INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION TEST

Agreement and Oath for Test Candidates

I certify and affirm that I will not copy, record, discuss, nor in any way divulge the contents of the [STATE NAME] interpreting proficiency test, either during the testing period or at any other time thereafter.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Print Name __________________________

NCSC ID# ____________________________
TEST PROCTOR’S INCIDENT REPORT

State Name ______________________       Date of Testing ______________________

Test Language and Version ___________       Proctor’s Name ______________________
(please print)

Candidate ID ______________________       Test Part ____________________________

Please specify problem(s), (e.g. with test script, with test recording, with test administration)

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Do not use this form for routine test administrations. This form is for reporting any unusual occurrence or deviation from the standards.
CLEANING & CARING FOR CDS

Lint or debris on the recorded surface of the CD can cause skipping. It is very important to wipe the CD with a special cloth (e.g. Kensington Surface Guardian Lint-Free Wipes). The CD’s and the inner surface of the CD player should be cleaned often during test administration.

It is also very important to avoid scratching the recorded surface of the CD’s. They should be handled by the edges and never placed on a rough surface. Care should also be taken when placing the CD’s on the spindle of the player to avoid scratching the recorded surface, which is close to the hole in the CD. When not in use, they should be kept in the plastic sleeve.

CLEANING AND CARING FOR TAPE RECORDERS

There are four components of the recorder that must be serviced every 10 hours of operation to maintain optimal sound fidelity of the recording and playback. They are the erase head, record/playback head, capstan, and pinch roller.

To clean these components moisten a cotton swab with alcohol or head cleaner (do not saturate the swab with fluid) and wipe the parts pictured below.

Use a dry cotton swab to remove any excess fluid before using the tape player.