



AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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MEMO

To: OPIc Test -Takers
From: Dr. Elvira Swender, ACTFL Director of Professional Programs
Re: Use of recited, memorized responses to OPIc prompts
Date: March 23, 2015

The OPIc is a test of spoken language proficiency. **Proficiency** is defined as the ability to use spoken language for **real world purposes** in order to engage in a **spontaneous communicative exchange**. Using recited responses during an OPIc does not provide sufficient evidence of language proficiency for a rater to assign an ACTFL proficiency rating. Recited responses are defined as entire passages that have been **scripted, memorized and then reproduced** during the OPIc.

The OPIc is rated by human raters who are trained to listen for patterns of strengths and patterns of weakness. The language you produce throughout the test is rated holistically according to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Speaking*. Raters expect to hear personalized responses that address both the topic and the question asked. Raters do not expect perfection at any level. They recognize that as one is learning a language, spontaneous responses may contain imperfections and irregularities.

OPIc raters are also trained to recognize language that is pre-scripted and recited from memory during the test. **The use of scripted responses that are recited from memory will negatively impact your rating.**

What does it mean to be rated Novice High for recited memorized responses?

Consistent use of memorized material is a function of the **Novice** level. If you wish to receive a rating above Novice, you must demonstrate the ability to **communicate on a range of topics in your own words**. You must **create with the language in order to participate in genuine communicative conversations**. If you consistently recite responses that have been memorized ahead of time, the highest rating you are likely to receive is Novice High. This indicates that your speech sample contains much language that has been memorized and recalled.

Below are indicators that raters will recognize as recited, memorized responses. A speaker may:

- Recite responses that are in wide circulation. Raters hear the same response repeated by hundreds of test-takers. This signals the rater that you are reciting responses that are not your own, and therefore may not be able to engage in actual interpersonal conversations. Recent examples include stories about the following:
 - Twisted ankle
 - Spilled coffee on white pants
 - Changing wallpaper that had mold on it, the project takes a half a day
 - Interest in music, you usually like ballads, but sometimes you like to listen to upbeat music when working out or driving
 - Coming upon a concert on the beach with Psy and others who all did their signature numbers
 - Running into someone while on the phone, who later becomes your boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse
 - Living in a house with a garden as a child, but now you have to be considerate of your neighbors because you live in an apartment
 - Getting locked in the bathroom, at home or on vacation
 - Having the computer freeze while working on an important paper that is due in one hour
 - Spending time at home on your last vacation, first with family, then meeting old friends from school, one of them is getting married; you also did some soul searching and thought about your career and future
 - Placing an online order that didn't arrive
 - Recycling as a community event; getting candy as a child from the person collecting recycling
 - Borrowing a friend's wireless mouse that broke
- Repeat the exact same answer or substantial parts of it in response to more than one prompt.
- Provide a response that is not related to the question.
- Provide a response that is related to a different OPIc prompt that may or may not even occur in that particular test.
- Perform a Role Play situation that was not asked for, or pretend to be in a Role Play situation when the question does not call for it.

Reminder to OPIc Test-Takers

You want to show your spoken language ability at its best. In order to do so, express your own meaning using spontaneous language when responding to OPIc prompts. Address the topic and question that is asked. Remember that reciting scripted responses will result in a Novice-level rating.