ITA Screening Directions

(updated March 2025)

This 30-minute screening is designed to determine whether your level of English oral proficiency is sufficient to work as a TA or AI at The University of Texas. It measures your ability to communicate in English in an instructional setting and includes a variety of situations to demonstrate how well you speak English when presenting information in your academic area to undergraduates.

You will meet online with a proctor, who will guide you through the assessment. Be ready to verify your identity by showing your UT ID, passport, or another official document with your photo and your name in English.

# **ITA Screening Tasks**

## Task 1: A Brief Conversation

(Speaking Time: 5-7 minutes of conversation with your proctor)

When the proctor begins recording, you will be asked to say your name, EID, and department. Be prepared to discuss topics such as your daily life, your studies, your opinions on topics, and/or your future plans.

## Task 2: Explanation of a Basic Concept from your Field

(Speaking Time: 5-minute explanation, followed by 2-3 minutes answering questions about the concept)

* In advance, prepare an explanation of a basic concept from your field. This should be a concept that students in a first-year undergraduate course would learn (NOT your graduate research topic). You should approach this task as if you were explaining it to a small group of first-year undergraduates.
* Prepare **ONE visual** (1 slide only!) that you will screenshare to support your explanation. You may use an outline or notes, but **DO NOT READ** your explanation; this can negatively affect your score. Look up at your computer camera as much as possible.
* After explaining a concept, you will be asked 2-3 questions about it.

Note: If you retake the ITA Screening, you must present a different topic from your previous assessment.

## Task 3: Explanation of a Visual (graph, pie charts, infographic)

(Prep Time: 2 minutes; Speaking Time 2-3 minutes. You may take notes.)

We will screenshare a graph or chart on a general topic (such as technology or education). We often use infographics from websites such as [Statista](https://www.statista.com/chartoftheday/).

* Provide a general overview of the basic elements in the visual.
* Identify a few specific trends or points that you find interesting (no need to describe every data point in minute detail).
* Offer an interpretation of the data. You can also comment on how this data relates to you and/or what is not included or is not clear to you.
  + The raters will be listening to your English and are not so concerned about the content of any conclusions you may draw.

## Task 4: Syllabus Role Play

(Prep Time: 2 minutes; Speaking Time 2-3 minutes. You may take notes.)

You will be given a very basic one-page outline of a syllabus for a class. Pretend that you are introducing yourself and the course on the first day of class.

* Briefly introduce yourself.
* Give contact and other useful information (from the syllabus).
* Preview what will be covered in the class/lab.
* Explain any course/university rules.

After you finish the syllabus role play, the screening is finished. Students will receive their results by email within five business days.

# ITA Screening Scores & Results

Students are rated on the following skills: Fluency, Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Communicative Competence on a 1-9 proficiency scale (1-3 Beginner; 4-6 Intermediate; 7-9 Advanced). See the full ITA Screening Score Descriptors at the end of this document*.* The screening is scored by two English Language Center professionals and the two raters' scores are averaged for a total score.

## Results

* **Did Not Pass** (Score Below 6.0) - Students who receive a Did Not Pass result are ineligible to work as a TA/AI with student contact for the upcoming semester. [ESL 388S Oral Communication](https://global.utexas.edu/english-language-center/programs/ut-students/graduate) is the recommended course to continue improving speaking skills.
* **Conditional Pass** (Score 6.0 to 6.99) - Students who receive a Conditional Pass are eligible to work as a TA/AI with student contact with required ESL courses for a maximum of two semesters.
  + **Score 6.5-6.99**: Students with a 6.5-6.99 Conditional Pass result must enroll in and attend [ESL 389T Communication and Teaching Culture](https://global.utexas.edu/english-language-center/programs/ut-students/graduate) (3 credit hours) to be conditionally certified to TA/AI with student contact for the semester.
    - **Rescreening and Certification**: Students enrolled in ESL 389T in the 6.5-6.99 score range do not need to rescreen and will be fully certified as long as they receive credit for ESL 389T. If students do not earn credit for ESL 389T at the end of the given semester, they will lose their conditionally certified status and must rescreen and earn a passing score to be certified.
  + **Score 6.0-6.49**: Students with a 6.0-6.49 Conditional Pass result must enroll in and attend [ESL 388T Basic Speaking Skills](https://global.utexas.edu/english-language-center/programs/ut-students/graduate) (3 credit hours) to be conditionally certified to TA/AI with student contact for the semester.
    - **Rescreening and Certification:** Students enrolled in ESL 388T must rescreen at the completion of ESL 388T. If they earn a passing score, there are no further ESL course requirements, and they are fully TA/AI certified. If they earn a score of 6.5-6.99, they must enroll in ESL 389T to maintain their conditionally certified status for one additional semester. If students score in the 6.0-6.49 range again, hey are no longer conditionally certified and will have to rescreen in later semesters to earn a score in the 6.5-6.99 range to enroll in 389T.
* **Pass** (Score 7.0 to 7.5) - Students who receive a Pass result are fully certified to TA/AI but may have recommended ESL coursework.
  + **Score 7.0 to 7.5**: Students who receive a Pass result in this score range are encouraged to take [ESL 389S Advanced Oral Communication](https://global.utexas.edu/english-language-center/programs/ut-students/graduate) to continue to improve their low-advanced English skills.
  + **Score 7.5+:** Students who receive a Pass result in this score range have no recommended ESL coursework.

## Re-Screening Policies

Students may take the screening only once per semester and are limited to three attempts per year, with a maximum of five total screenings.

After the initial screening, the student is charged for all additional screening fees unless their department authorizes subsequent payment.

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| **ITA Screening Score Descriptors** | | | | |
|  | **Score below 6**  ***Did Not Pass*** | **Score 6-6.99**  ***Conditional Pass*** | **Score 7-7.49**  ***Pass*** | **Score 7.5 and above**  ***Pass+*** |
| **Fluency**  **30%** | 1. Speech is slow and requires effort on the part of the speaker and/or listener.  2. Speaker is not able to speak at length; thought groups may be short and/or “choppy” sounding.  3. Hesitations, fillers, restarts, word searches and/or self-corrections are prevalent and very distracting. | 1. Speech may be slow at times and requires some effort on the part of the speaker and/or listener, especially on unprepared tasks or unfamiliar topics,  2. May be able to speak at length with long continuous thought groups at times; however, intermittent fragmented thought groups often interrupt the flow of communication.  3.Frequent and unpredictable hesitations, fillers, restarts, word searches and/or self-corrections are prominent and distracting. | 1. Speech rate is natural and requires very little effort on the part of the speaker and/or listener (\*some students may even need to slow down!)  2. Speaks at length most of the time (“long runs”); isolated occurrences of fragmented thought groups may occur; however, they are not distracting and rarely impede the flow of communication.  3. Sporadic/Minor hesitations, fillers, restarts, word searches and/or self-corrections are not prominent and rarely distracting. | 1. Speech rate is fluid and effortless; approximates that of a native speaker.  2.Offers extended responses with ease.  3. Hesitations, fillers, restarts, word searches and/or self-corrections are rare. |
| **Grammar**  **20%** | 1. May use complex structures, but overall range is limited.  2. Sentences usually contain errors, and these errors may cause some comprehension problems. 3. Lacks control of major verb tenses (past, present, future). | 1. Uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility. 2. May make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems. 3. Inconsistent control or systematic errors with verb tenses. | 1. Uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility in communicating ideas, information and/or opinions. 2. Frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist. 3. Appropriate, accurate control of a range of verb tenses. | 1. Uses a wide range of complex structures, flexibly in communicating ideas, information and/or opinions. 2. Produces mainly error-free sentences with only very occasional minor/non-systematic errors. 3. Appropriate, accurate control of a range of verb tenses. |
| **Vocabulary**  **20%** | 1. CONTROL: Lack of control of vocabulary and/or expressions with frequent errors in word choice and/or word form. 2. RANGE: Comprehends and produces high frequency words, highly practiced expressions, and formulaic phrases within familiar themes or topics, but cannot discuss topics at length. Lack of awareness for culturally appropriate vocabulary and expressions. 3. FLEXIBILITY: Uses vocabulary resource to discuss familiar and some unfamiliar topics but with limited flexibility. | 1. CONTROL: Semi-consistent control of vocabulary and/or expressions with some errors in word choice and/or word form. 2. RANGE: Comprehends and produces both high frequency and personalized vocabulary within familiar themes or topics and has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss some topics at length and make meaning clear with some effort. Lack of use of culturally appropriate vocabulary and expressions. 3. FLEXIBILTY: Uses vocabulary resources to discuss familiar and unfamiliar topics but with some limited flexibility. | 1. CONTROL: Consistent control of vocabulary and/or expressions with infrequent errors in word choice and/or word form. 2. RANGE: Comprehends and produces both high frequency and personalized vocabulary on a variety of topics and has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss most topics at length and make meaning clear. Uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary with some inappropriate choices. Recognizes and uses some culturally appropriate vocabulary and expressions. 3. FLEXIBILITY: Uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of familiar and unfamiliar topics. | 1. CONTROL: Strong control of vocabulary and/or expressions with almost no errors in word choice and/or word form. 2. RANGE: Comprehends and produces a broad range of vocabulary and has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss any topic at length and make meaning clear. Recognizes and uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully, with occasional inaccuracies. Recognizes and uses culturally appropriate vocabulary and expressions.  3. FLEXIBILTY: Uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning. |
| **Pronunciation**  **15%** | 1. Lack of accuracy in sounds, word stress, rhythm, and/or intonation patterns.  2. Listener effort is consistently required. | 1. Generally accurate use of sounds, word stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns but has some noticeable errors 2. Requires extra listener effort at times. | 1. Mostly accurate sounds, word stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns, but may have minor errors that do not affect overall comprehensibility. 2. Rarely requires extra listener effort | 1. Nearly always accurate sounds, word stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns. May have occasional minor errors that do not affect overall comprehensibility. 2. Almost never requires extra listener effort |
| **Communicative Competence**  **15%** | 1. Conversation difficult. Incomplete utterances with lack of detail. Needs prompting from proctor.  2. Lack of eye contact, gestures, and/or facial expressions/flat affect.  3. Inappropriate responses due to comprehension issues 4. Lack of discourse markers. | 1. Conversation strained at times. Some incomplete utterances some utterances of appropriate detail. Needs some prompting. 2. Some Eye Contact and appropriate facial expressions but needs work 3. A few inappropriate responses due to comprehension issues 4. Discourse markers help flow | 1. Conversation flowed for the most part. Mostly complete utterances of appropriate detail, only minimal prompting from proctor 2. Eye Contact and facial expressions mostly appropriate for successful conversation 3. Very few to no inappropriate responses due to comprehension issues 4. Good use of discourse markers | 1. Conversation very easy. Complete utterances of detail that enhances conversation. Little to no prompting necessary 2. Eye contact and facial expressions add to and enhance conversation 3. Always appropriate responses due to clear comprehension 4. Excellent use of discourse markers 5. Demonstrates cultural awareness. |