

**OVERVIEW  
OF THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT EXAM**



**ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**

**COURT INTERPRETER SERVICES**

Phone: (501) 682-9400

Email: [aoc.interpreter.services@arcourts.gov](mailto:aoc.interpreter.services@arcourts.gov)

Web: [www.courtinterpreterinfo.com](http://www.courtinterpreterinfo.com)

Copyright © 2011 by the National Center for State Courts. All rights reserved.



The National Center for State Courts is an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization in accordance with Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Except as permitted under the Copyright Act of 1976 and as otherwise expressly provided herein, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including the use of information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the copyright holder. Permission is hereby granted to Administrative Offices of State Courts, staff, and consultants to reproduce and distribute this publication for educational purposes if the copies credit the copyright holder.

For additional information, please contact: National Center for State Courts  
300 Newport Avenue  
Williamsburg, VA 23185

This document is also available on the website of the National Center's Language Access Division: <http://www.ncsc.org/Education-and-Careers/State-Interpreter-Certification.aspx>

Publication Date: July 2012

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What does the test look like? .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How will the exam be scheduled? - What do I need to know? .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Special Accommodations for Americans with Disabilities .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>How will the test be administered?.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What is the passing score?.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What can I do to prepare for the exam? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What if I do not pass the English Language Assessment exam? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>[Appendix 1] Request for ADA Accommodation.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>[Appendix 2] Sample Questions .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>[Appendix 3] Preparing for the English Language Assessment .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Questions? .....</b>	<b>16</b>

# Introduction

---

This document has been prepared to help persons interested in becoming certified court interpreters understand what the English Language Assessment Exam measures, how it is administered, and how to prepare for taking the exam. Each examinee should study this overview thoroughly in order to be fully prepared for the exam.

The examination is only one part of the process for becoming a certified or approved court interpreter. Passing this test does not mean a person has become a “certified court interpreter;” rather, it means the examinee has met one of the several requirements for certification.

The test measures examinees’ knowledge of four areas central to the work of a court interpreter at the level of a minimally qualified court interpreter:

1. English Language. To function as a professional court interpreter, one indispensable component is a high degree of proficiency in the English language. Accordingly, the written examination assumes a high degree of literacy in the English language and familiarity with a range of language constructions. It tests comprehension of written English vocabulary and idioms.
2. Court-Related Terms and Usage. The second area of knowledge essential to successful professional performance is familiarity with the terminology and procedures of the court system. Accordingly, the exam also measures recognition of common court-related situations and vocabulary, *especially in the area of criminal courts*.
3. Ethics and Professional Conduct. The third area of knowledge required of professional court interpreters encompassed in the exam is general knowledge of standards guiding the performance of duties. Accordingly, the examination includes questions aimed at measuring applicants’ knowledge of ethical behavior and professional conduct as established by the Arkansas Supreme Court in Administrative Order 11.

## **What does the test look like?**

---

The examination contains 135 multiple-choice questions. Each question has four choices, labeled A, B, C, and D. The candidate is instructed to select the *best* choice and mark that choice on the answer sheet.

The test has two parts:

Part I: General Language Proficiency, and

Part II: Court-Related Terms & Usage, and Ethics & Professional Conduct.

Within each part there are several sections, each of which contains a particular category of questions. There are specific instructions for how to proceed at the beginning of each section. A complete list of the sections, including one or more sample questions for each, is provided in Appendix A.

## **How will the exam be scheduled? - What do I need to know?**

---

The Office of Court Interpreter Services (OCIS) will notify you in writing by mail or e-mail once your registration for the exam has been received. The notice will include a reminder of when and where to report for the test and may include directions to the test site.

*Arrive early.* No one will be admitted late. There are no exceptions, and no one arriving late for any reason will be able to take the test at that test session.

You must present valid photo identification before entering the testing room.

There may be a registration area where you will report and sign in. In the testing room, there will be a test administration supervisor, and there may be another test proctor present to assist. You will not be permitted to keep anything at your desk aside from your photo ID and pencils. All other belongings must be placed in the back of the testing room in a designated area.

Use the restroom prior to entering the testing room. If you ask to leave the testing room after the test has begun, you will be instructed to leave all of your test materials with the test administration supervisor prior to leaving the room. You may be escorted to the restroom to ensure that you do not use a telephone or converse with other individuals while you are outside of the testing room. No more than one applicant will be allowed to leave the testing room at the same time. No adjustments to the time allotted for completion of the exam will be made for any time you are outside of the testing room.

## **Special Accommodations for Americans with Disabilities**

---

If you have a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you must request special accommodation *in advance*. In order to do that, you should complete the attached Request for Special Accommodation and submit it to the OCIS Director as far in advance of the test date as possible. You must describe your disability and describe the type or kind of accommodation you are requesting. In addition, you must submit a statement from an appropriate professional documenting the diagnosis or evaluation of your disability.

**See Appendix 1**

### **How will the test be administered?**

---

The test will be given in classroom style to a number of applicants at the same time in the same room. A test administration supervisor, who is responsible for oversight of the entire test administration process, will decide what staff members are present to assist with proctoring the examination.

Security of the exam materials is obviously essential. Examinees may not take notes or copy any portion of the exam. If an examinee is disruptive, engages in clear or flagrant cheating, or attempts to copy questions or retain or record test materials, the examinee may be expelled from the testing room and advised that his or her examination will not be scored. Documentation of the expulsion and the reasons for it will be maintained by the Arkansas AOC OCIS. If the applicant is from out of state, the applicant will be reported to that state's AOC Interpreter program.

Once all examinees are seated for the exam, the test administrator will hand out materials packets and two pencils to each person. He or she will read scripted instructions to the examinees in order to ensure that all applicants receive the same instructions each time the examination is given. Then the examinees will be directed to read and execute an Agreement and Oath Forms. Next, examinees will prepare their answer sheets by entering their name and test ID number (last four digits of social security number), the test date, and the test site. Examinees must listen to the instructions carefully and must not begin the examination until the test administration supervisor says, "You may begin."

Applicants are allowed two hours and fifteen minutes to complete the examination. Fifteen minutes before the end of the test, the test administrator will make the following announcement out loud: "You have fifteen minutes remaining."

At the beginning of each section there are instructions on how to answer the questions in that section. As examinees work their way through the test, they should carefully read the instructions for each section to be sure they understand how to answer that section's questions. The types of instructions you will find will be to select the answer that:

- Is closest in meaning;
- Most appropriately completes a sentence;
- Best answers a question or provides the best solution to a situation;
- Has the correct sequence of events; or
- Is opposite in meaning.

See **Appendix 2** for sample questions from the various sections of the exam.

## **What is the passing score?**

---

In order to pass the exam, examinees must achieve a combined score of 80% on Parts I and II, answering at least 108 of the 135 items on these three sections correctly. OCIS will notify you of the results by mail or e-mail. *Reminder: Passing this exam does not mean a person has become a "certified court interpreter;" rather, it means the examinee has met one of the several requirements for certification.*

## **What can I do to prepare for the exam?**

---

A list of possible activities and resources has been compiled to help you identify actions you can take to help prepare for the exam. Some of the resources may help you decide whether you are ready to participate in a test of this nature. The list is attached and marked as Appendix 3.

## **What if I do not pass the English Language Assessment exam?**

---

This written, multiple choice examination is constructed to measure entry-level knowledge of

- English general vocabulary
- common words and phrases likely to be heard in court
- the typical progression of cases through the court system, and
- provisions of a code of professional responsibility that a minimally competent person entering the court interpreting field would need.

If you do not pass the exam, it is suggested that you resist the temptation to simply register to retake the exam. Experience shows that retaking an examination of this kind

within a short time period will not substantially change the results. Instead, you are encouraged to review the section of this Overview entitled “What can I do to prepare for the test?”, and engage in some reading and preparatory study before retaking the examination.

Applicants are permitted to test only once in a 12 month period.





**ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**  
**COURT INTERPRETER SERVICES**

**[Appendix 1]**  
**Request for ADA Accommodation**

---

Complete this form only if you are requesting individual testing arrangements because you have a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

APPLICANT NAME:
-----------------

Have you been diagnosed with a disability that is recognized by the ADA: Yes___ No___
--

Describe the type of disability:
_____
_____
_____

I request an accommodation, which is described on the *Documentation of Accommodation*, attached hereto.

Signature
-----------

Date
------

Attach the Documentation of Accommodation form and submit to:

Administrative Office of the Courts  
Attn: Court Interpreter Services  
625 Marshall Street / Justice Building  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201





**ARKANSAS SUPREME COURT**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS**  
**COURT INTERPRETER SERVICES**

**DOCUMENTATION OF ACCOMMODATION**

---

This section must be completed by an appropriate professional (doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or education professional) to certify that your disabling condition requires the requested exam accommodation.

If you have existing documentation of having the same or similar accommodation provided to you in another test situation, you may submit such documentation instead of having this portion of the form completed.

I HAVE KNOWN \_\_\_\_\_ SINCE \_\_\_\_\_  
(APPLICANT NAME) (DATE)

AS A \_\_\_\_\_, I HAVE DIAGNOSED OR EVALUATED  
(PATIENT, OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP)  
 THE APPLICANT MYSELF AND I AM NOT RELYING UPON FACTS RELATED TO ME

BY THE APPLICANT. MY DIAGNOSIS IS \_\_\_\_\_

---

(DESCRIBE THE MEDICAL OR OTHER CONDITION)

THE APPLICANT HAS DISCUSSED WITH ME THE NATURE OF THE TEST TO BE ADMINISTERED. IT IS MY PROFESSIONAL OPINION THAT BECAUSE OF THIS APPLICANT'S DISABILITY, HE/SHE SHOULD BE ACCOMMODATED BY PROVIDING THE FOLLOWING: (CHECK ONLY THOSE THAT APPLY)

Large print type	Extra time (how much?)
Separate testing area	An examination reader
Other oral administration (describe)	Other accommodation (describe)

Signature and title of professional _____	
Printed name and title _____	
Date _____	Telephone Number _____



## [Appendix 2] Sample Questions

---

### Part I: General Language Proficiency

**Sentence Completion.** Items 1 through 9 consist of unfinished sentences. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that best completes the sentence.

Example: A person who feels persecuted in his/her home country may apply for political

- A. appellation
- B. appraisal
- C. asylum
- D. ascendance

(C is the best answer)

**Synonyms in Context.** Items 10 through 17 consist of sentences that contain an underlined word or phrase. The examinee is instructed to choose from a list of four words or phrases the one that is closest in meaning to the underlined word or phrase.

Example: It was done pursuant to the proceedings of the court.

- A. in accordance with
- B. in addition to
- C. in conjunction with
- D. in spite of

(A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

**Synonyms.** Items 18 through 38 consist of words or phrases. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that has the same meaning or closest to the same meaning as the word or phrase provided.

Example 1: Scaffold

- A. platform
- B. table
- C. prop
- D. curtain

(A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Example 2: Hubris

- A. exaggerated pride
  - B. steadfast loyalty
  - C. extreme shyness
  - D. committed fidelity
- (A is the answer that is closest in meaning)

**Antonyms.** Items 39 through 50 consist of words or phrases. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that is opposite in meaning to the word or phrase provided.

Example: Excessive

- A. stingy
  - B. large
  - C. robust
  - D. restricted
- (D is the correct answer, opposite in meaning)

**Idioms.** Items 51 through 75 consist of sentences that contain an underlined idiomatic expression. The examinee is instructed to select from the list of four words or phrases the one that is closest in meaning to the underlined idiom.

Example 1: Do you need to make a pit stop before we get there?

- A. get some money
  - B. go to the bathroom
  - C. empty the trash
  - D. make a phone call
- (B is the answer that is closest in meaning)

Example 2: His career as an attorney is all washed up.

- A. off to a late start
  - B. off to a good start
  - C. completely over
  - D. very profitable
- (C is the answer that is closest in meaning)

## **Part II: Court-Related Terms & Usage**

(\*The legal terms found in items 76 through 125 are taken largely from criminal court cases.)

**Sentence Completion.** Items 76 through 111 consist of unfinished sentences that are likely to be heard in the court environment. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four words or phrases the one that most appropriately completes the sentence.

Example 1: A case decided without prejudice means that

- A. there is no right to a new trial
  - B. there is an automatic appeal of the case
  - C. there is a right to a new trial
  - D. there are no racial overtones in the case
- (C is the answer that most appropriately completes the sentence)

Example 2: A defendant is required to give up certain constitutional rights

- A. after being found guilty at trial
  - B. before entering a plea of guilty
  - C. only if represented by a public defender
  - D. only after probation is granted
- (B is the answer that most appropriately completes the sentence)

**Court-Related Questions.** Items 112 through 121 consist of questions on court-related topics. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that is the best answer.

Example: Which of the following would be a concurrent sentence?

- A. two years for burglary, two years for robbery: two years in jail
  - B. two years for theft, two years for assault: four years in jail
  - C. four years for rape, three years for a second rape: seven years in jail
  - D. four years for rape, two years for assault: two years in jail
- (A is the best answer)

**Sequence.** Items 122 through 125 consist of questions about the proper sequence of events in court-related situations. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that correctly describes the order in which the events should occur.

Example: Which of the following is a correct sequence of event?

- A. Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation, Jury Instructions, Jury Verdict
  - B. Jury Sworn, Jury Verdict, Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation
  - C. Jury Deliberation, Jury Sworn, Jury Instructions, Jury Verdict
  - D. Jury Sworn, Jury Charge, Jury Deliberation, Jury Verdict
- (D is the correct sequence of events)

## **Ethics and Professional Conduct**

**Professional Conduct Questions.** Items 126 and 127 consist of questions about the appropriate course of professional conduct an interpreter should take. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four choices the one that is the best answer.

Example: Which of the following is most important for you to do when you are interpreting at the witness stand?

- A. keep your eyes on the jury
- B. keep your dictionary and note pad at hand
- C. keep eye contact with the witness at all times
- D. keep the judge informed of contradictory testimony

(B is the best answer)

**Scenarios.** Items 128 through 135 consist of brief scenarios describing situations an interpreter might encounter while interpreting in the courts that would pose ethical or professional problems. The examinee is instructed to select from a list of four alternatives the best solution or course of action.

Example: An expert witness is giving testimony regarding blood alcohol content while you are interpreting for the defendant. The testimony is very complex, and even though you can interpret it at the same level, you sense that the defendant does not understand such technical language. What is the best thing for you to do in this situation?

- A. advise the judge that the defendant does not understand
- B. interpret at the same level as the witness
- C. ask the judge for permission to explain for the witness
- D. summarize the testimony for the defendant in language he can understand

(B is the best solution)



## [Appendix 3] Preparing for the English Language Assessment

---

### English Proficiency

For Part I, General Language Proficiency, one needs to have a very broad command of the English language. That is not something that is quickly or easily acquired. However, some of the following activities might be helpful in expanding one's knowledge of the English language and preparing for the test:

1. Take upper-level English courses at a college or university.
2. Study preparation material developed for similar exams, or even take the exams:
  - a. TOEFL
  - b. Cambridge ESOL
3. Read widely such items as books and professional journals in many fields, American literature, and editorials and articles in major newspapers.
4. Brush up on English vocabulary and lexical concepts (go back to the basics and review antonyms, synonyms, and idioms).
5. Consult other resources, such as:
  - a. The ESL Idiom Page, (Dennis Oliver), available online at: [www.eslcafe.com/idioms](http://www.eslcafe.com/idioms).
  - b. SAT and GRE workbooks.
  - c. Vocabulary-building books found in the reference section of libraries and bookstores.

### Court-Related Terms & Usage

With respect to Part II, Court-Related Terms & Usage, the following activities would be helpful in expanding or acquiring the substantive knowledge pertinent to these fields:

1. Read news items related to legal matters, law enforcement, and the courts in major newspapers, consulting a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words.
2. Visit courthouses and observe court proceedings in civil, criminal, and family matters.
3. Take college/university courses in criminal justice and court administration.
4. Read any standard introductory textbook on the criminal justice system.
5. Read publications about the administration of justice such as the following documents issued by the American Bar Association ([www.abanet.org/abastore](http://www.abanet.org/abastore)), which are available for \$2.50 each:
  - a. Law & the Courts, Volume I, *The Role of the Courts*, 2000.
  - b. Law & the Courts, Volume II, *Court Procedures*, 1998.
  - c. Law & the Courts, Volume III, *Juries*, 2001.

6. Study legal terms from the following sources:
  - a. Black's Law Dictionary
  - b. Glossary of Commonly Used Court & Justice System Terminology (available on the National Center for State Courts website <http://www.ncsc.org>)

### **Ethics & Professional Conduct**

With respect to Part II, Ethics & Professional Conduct, the following activities would be helpful:

1. Become familiar with Administrative Order 11, Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters in the Judiciary in Arkansas.
2. Join and participate actively in a professional association such as the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators ([www.najit.org](http://www.najit.org)) or the American Translators Association ([www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)), studying their respective codes of ethics.
3. Read at least one of the classic texts in the field:
  - a. Berk-Seligson, Susan (1990). *The Bilingual Courtroom: Court Interpreters in the Judicial Process*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
  - b. De Jongh, E.M. (1992). *An Introduction to Court Interpreting: Theory and Practice*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
  - c. Edwards, Alicia B. (1995). *The Practice of Court Interpreting*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
  - d. Gonzalez, R.D., Vasquez, V.F., and Mikkelson, H. (1991). *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
  - e. Mikkelson, H. (2000). *Introduction to Court Interpreting*. Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing.

## Questions?

---

Contact the Office of Court Interpreter Services (OCIS) at:

Email: [aoc.interpreter.services@arcourts.gov](mailto:aoc.interpreter.services@arcourts.gov)

Ph: (501) 682-9400

[www.courtinterpreterinfo.com](http://www.courtinterpreterinfo.com)