

UChicago Proficiency Assessment Task Formats

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Speaking

- An authentic, highly-structured one-on-one conversation lasting 15-30 minutes.
- The language specialist's goal is to elicit the test taker's best possible sample of functional speaking ability, rather than only accuracy and grammar.
- This assessment will include a role play where the test taker and the language specialist act out a scenario that the test taker could encounter in a region where the language is spoken.
- Test takers are NOT allowed to seek assistance from any printed or online materials.

Writing

- Two to three tasks prompting you to write a response in the target language. These are scenario-based tasks that simulate real-life writing purposes and genres.
- You will not be provided with a certain minimum or maximum number of words or paragraphs expected; instead, you should focus on what would be required or expected to complete that task in the real world.
Example prompt: You are studying abroad at X University in X country. You would like to apply for a part-time job as a research assistant. Write a cover letter for this position that includes:
 - i. Description of who you are, why you're a good fit;
 - ii. narration of relevant experiences;
 - iii. how this position will benefit your future goals.

Reading and Listening

- For the Reading and Listening sections you will be presented with a real life text or input and asked write about what you heard or read. **These responses will be written in English** to limit interference between your comprehension ability and your writing ability.
- There are four main types of proficiency-oriented comprehension tasks that you might encounter in these tests. For each of the following, you will be given a scenario and then prompted to respond:
 - i. **Recall protocol:** "Listen to/read the following text, then write everything you could understand and remember."
 - ii. **Summary table:** "Listen to/read the following text, then fill in the table below."
 - iii. **Short-response questions:** "Listen to/read the following text, then answer the following questions."
 - iv. **Summary protocol:** "Listen to/read the following text, then summarize the key points and supporting details."
- See the following pages for more detailed instructions and samples for each task format.

Recall protocol

In the recall protocol task, test takers are presented with a short real-life input that is easy to follow and recall. For example, this can be an airport announcement, voice message, or brief introduction of a course syllabus in the listening section or a restaurant menu, brochure, email, or social media post in the reading section. Test takers will listen to or read the input twice and write down, in English, everything they understand and can remember.

Sample Recall Protocol Task in Reading:

You are living in _____ as part of a study abroad program and are interested in internship jobs with local companies. You notice an interesting job posting on the university website listing potential intern responsibilities.

Read the following job posting; you may take notes as needed. Then with reference to your notes, write down everything you have understood and can remember. Your response must be in English.

Please remember that:

- You should NOT attempt to translate what you read word for word.
- Only include information that is explicitly stated in the text.
- You will NOT have access to the text while you are writing your response.

Note: In the “Recall Protocol” task, there are two questions test takers typically ask about: **How to remember everything in the input/text** and **how much to write in response?**

1. Remember that the recall tasks have short and easy-to-remember inputs; the goal is NOT to test your memory. These tasks simulate real-life situations where you will be naturally recalling information with ease. Also, note-taking is allowed as you listen to or read the input (except in rare cases where note-taking is explicitly not permitted in real life).
2. The “recall task” is open-ended in the sense that in real-life no one tells us what to pay attention to in a listening or reading text, or how much to recall in response. It is the context, situation, and the purpose that define what we need to pay attention to.

This task does NOT require you to transcribe or translate everything you hear or read word-for-word. The focus is rather on comprehending all of the content information needed in that situation. For instance, if you are presented with an airport announcement, it is not important to translate “Your attention please,” but the content of the announcement (e.g., flight number, gate number, departure time, and any other relevant information) IS important. When in doubt, it is better to include as much as possible.

Summary Table

Test takers are presented with a short real-life input that is easy to follow and recall, similar to the recall task. However, the difference is that test takers are asked to recall the information in a very structured way, similar to how one might understand the message in real life. In other words, instead of recalling everything you hear or read, you will be directed to recall certain pieces of information in a given table format.

Sample Summary Table Task in Listening:

While living abroad in _____, your roommate called and left you a voice message. Listen to your roommate’s voice message and fill in the table below:

Purpose of the call		Time for the event	
Place of the event		Plans after the event	

Short-response Questions

Short-response questions are open-ended questions or prompts that aim to elicit test takers’ ability to comprehend specific factual information presented in the listening or reading inputs (in contrast to a *global* comprehension of the input). These questions require more in-depth comprehension of the content and the ability to establish relationships between key ideas, points, claims, or arguments presented in the input.

Possible question types:

Describe the time, date, and location of the event that _____.

What is this message asking you to do after _____?

Compare **X** and **Y**, according to what you heard or read.

What does the author suggest regarding **X**?

What are the effects of the **X**, according to the author (**lines X-X**)

Outline the relationship between **X** and **Y** as discussed by the author in lines **X-X**.

Note:

As you can see, not all of these questions are “Wh- questions,” or formulated as a question at all. Some of these questions or prompts ask test takers to identify and restate specific factual information while others require a more in-depth understanding of the text, typical of more advanced comprehension.

Summary Protocol

In the Summary Protocol task, test takers are presented with real-life, multi-paragraph listening or reading inputs. These inputs have extended, connected organization, such as a news report or a course introduction for listening and a newspaper article, job post, or introductory academic passage for reading.

This task aims to measure test takers' comprehension of the key points and important details in the input and summarize them in their own words. Therefore, test takers must be able to identify both key claims or main ideas and supporting details or evidence, while omitting information that is not important to the overall purpose of the text.

Sample Summary Protocol Task in Listening:

You have just arrived in _____ for a study abroad program at _____ University. Listen to the introduction by the Senior Director for the Office of International Students, providing some key information for incoming international students. Make notes for yourself on key points and important details as you listen.

Then, with reference to your notes, summarize the key points and important details in your own words.

Please remember that:

- This task is graded on your ability to express the key elements in the text as accurately as possible.
- You should focus on including the most important information presented in the text, and as much of the supporting evidence as you can remember.
- You **should NOT** include any additional information or opinions not contained in the text.
- You **should NOT** translate (reading text) or transcribe (listening inputs) word-for-word.

Note 1: In the Summary Protocol task, keep in mind that:

- Comprehension of **both the key/main points and important details** in the input is critical.
- **Key/Main points and supporting evidence** should be reproduced in the response; **unimportant details** should be left out.

Note 2: You will NOT have access to the reading or listening input while you are writing your response; therefore, **when you read or listen to the text**, make sure to focus on taking notes on the most important information presented in the text, and as much of the supporting evidence as possible.

Note 3: The focus in grading your response is placed on the extent to which you can express the key elements in the text as accurately as possible **in your own words**. That is, as long as you can summarize the key information presented in the text accurately (without changing or adding to the meaning), you do NOT need to use an exact translation of the original text. You are expected to **summarize** and are not required to **translate** or even **paraphrase** the entire text.