



# Communication Skills Test (CST) Information for Candidates

## Overview

The Communication Skills Test is an assessment designed to measure a person's ability to interact in a professional context using two or more languages (usually English and one or more other languages). It evaluates the ability to understand and retain information provided in a language, the ability to clearly communicate ideas through speech, and knowledge of occupation specific terminology. Versions of this test are available for a variety of professions, including customer service, finance, insurance and benefits administration, non-provider healthcare staff, medical providers (physicians and nurses), and specialty providers (psychologists, physical therapists, social workers, etc.). This test does not evaluate or certify your ability to interpret or translate.

Each language will be assessed separately in a series of interviews, consisting of three sections each (only two sections for LO-CST): Language comprehension, efficacy of oral communication (speech), and terminology. Candidates testing in two languages will have two interviews, first in English, and then in the target language, but at no point will they be interpreting or translating. Candidates testing in three or more languages will have additional interviews. Usually all of the interviews will take place on the same call, one immediately after the other.

Depending on the profession for which you are taking the test, the questions and readings in the comprehension and oral communication sections may be specifically contextualized to that field, common topics from everyday life, or a mixture of both specialized and general topics. The terminology section will always be applicable to the job field.

## How it works

Each section of the test will begin with a practice exercise or example. While the practice questions will not hurt your score if you get them wrong, correct answers may help your overall score, or shorten the test.

The first section of each language interview will be *comprehension*. In this section, you will hear a series of short readings. After each reading, you will hear a few questions

related to the content of the reading. Here is an example (you will not see text during test, only hear audio):

“Angela withdrew \$300 dollars from the bank this morning before she took her cat to the veterinarian for a routine checkup and vaccination. The vet bill was \$200, which she paid in cash, and she gave the rest of the money to her mother.”

“Now, some questions:”

“What two places did Angela visit?” (answers: Bank and veterinarian)

“Why did Angela take her cat to the vet?” (answer: checkup or vaccination)

“How much money did Angela give her mother?” (answer: \$100)

The second section of each interview will be *efficacy of oral communication*, or speech. In this section you will be presented with open-ended starter topics, and asked to talk for approximately 2 to 3 minutes about each topic, giving your thoughts and opinions. Keep in mind that the starter topics are just prompts to get you started, and there are no wrong answers. Your responses will be evaluated based on how clearly, coherently and fluidly you communicate, taking into account pronunciation, grammar and syntax, pace and vocabulary. Here is an example (audio only on test):

“Some school systems have proposed limiting the amount of homework that can be assigned to elementary school children, to ensure that they are not overwhelmed and have enough time for play each day. Give your opinion about how much homework you think is appropriate for elementary students. Do you think playtime is as important as homework? Please explain.”

Where applicable, the third section of each interview will cover *terminology*. In this section you will have two separate exercise types: *recognition* and *definitions*. First you will hear a series of brief definitions, and you will need to state the term that corresponds to each definition. Then, you will hear a series of vocabulary terms, and you will need to provide a clear and precise definition for each term given. (You may request spelling.)

You may find the following questions useful when trying to define terms:

- What is it? (thing/person/concept/etc.)
- What is it used for?
- What are its characteristics?
- What makes it different from other similar things/people/concepts?

Here are some examples (audio only on test):

Recognition: “A cloth tube, closed at one end that is worn on the foot. It may also cover part or all of the calf. You put it on before your shoes.” (Answer: sock or stocking)

Definition: “Refrigerator” (Answer: A large kitchen appliance in which your store food to keep it cool and avoid spoiling.)

## Taking the test

You will need to be alone and in a quiet area, and you will need a pen and 2-3 sheets of blank paper for note taking. You are not allowed to use any reference materials, such as dictionaries or computers. The test usually takes about 40 to 90 minutes, depending on your pace. It is administered in one of three ways:

Over the phone: For tests administered over the phone, we highly recommend using a landline telephone. Some sections of the test cannot be repeated, and cellular phone reception issues can impede your performance.

Online via Video Proctoring (OVP): If you or your facility has requested Online Video Proctoring, please see the following explanation with [Frequently Asked Questions about Online Video Proctoring](#).

On-site: Some employers or training organizations may require you to take the test on site, or in another proctored setting. You will be provided with the address for the testing facility during the scheduling process. Be sure to allow for extra time to find the location and get settled.

You will find additional answers to frequently asked questions about the Communication Skills Test (CST) below.

## Frequently asked questions

*(continued on next page)*

*Why do I need to test in my native language?*

We recommend testing all languages used on the job, including the native language (even if it is English) for three main reasons: First, to provide a reference score for comparison. Second, to avoid cultural bias. (If candidates for a bilingual position are only tested in one of the two languages, then native speakers of that language would tend to score higher, and receive hiring preference, regardless of their skill level in the other language.) Third, your employer may need to show documentation of your skill level in all languages used on the job for HR and/or regulatory purposes.

*I am a (nurse/banker/physical therapist, etc.). Why are some of the questions from non-related general topics?*

In real world situations you will encounter topics other than those strictly related to your field that are nonetheless necessary to complete your job. The comprehension and oral communication sections of the test evaluate your overall communication ability in the language.

*When are results ready? Do I receive a copy? Who else sees my results?*

Results are usually sent out within five working business days (or one week, unless there are holidays). You may receive results sooner. If you ordered through the website and paid for the test yourself, you will receive a copy, and we will also send a copy to any other parties you requested on the order form. (If you did not list any other recipients, only you will receive a copy). If your employer/school ordered and paid for the test, only they will receive a copy, which they may or may not be able to share with you, according to their own internal policy. Self-paying candidates who chose the option to enroll in the “ON-FILE” program will have their results added to a database that LanguageStat and our partner organizations may refer to when seeking talent.

## Frequently Asked Questions (continued from previous page)

*Which national/regional accents are considered standard in English?*

LanguageStat acknowledges several standard regional/national dialects and accents in English including: Australian, British (including Scottish\*), Canadian, Caribbean\*, Indian\*, Irish, New Zealander, US American (Including regional accents: Southern, Northeastern, Mid-western, and Southwestern/Native American) and South African\*. (\*No points will be deducted for clear and easy to understand speech in these dialects/accents. However, if speech is deemed to impede understanding for listeners from other countries or regions, score may be lowered and/or include notes mentioning impact on communication as applicable, depending on the degree of severity.)

*Does passing this test make me an interpreter?*

No. This test shows you have demonstrated the ability to understand and orally communicate in a language, and that you know profession-specific terminology. It does not evaluate your ability to retain and accurately convert information between languages. LanguageStat offers interpreter assessments that use different exercise types to evaluate those skills.

*I have been speaking this language at work for years. Why do I need to take this test?*

Your employer may wish to confirm or recertify your skill level for hiring, quality, safety or regulatory reasons.

*How are results provided? What is the passing score?*

Candidates receive an A-F ranking in each section, and an overall A-F ranking in each language, corresponding to a standard US grading scale. LanguageStat does not provide a passing/failing score for this test, although we generally recommend a score of 80% or higher (B grade or higher). Each organization will set their own criteria according to their needs, and some may focus on specific test sections when making hiring or enrollment decisions.

*How soon can I retest? How many times may I retest?*

Please check with the organization (employer or school) that requested the test to see what, if any, retest guidelines they have in place. LanguageStat recommends at least 6 months before retesting in most circumstances, but does not enforce that recommendation.

*Can I retest in just one language/section? Can I add an additional language?*

Yes, you can retest in one language or add a third (or fourth) language. In certain circumstances partial retesting by section may also be available. Please contact [testing@languagestat.com](mailto:testing@languagestat.com) for single language additions/retests or to discuss section -specific retests. Our testing team will review your results and recommend a partial retest if indicated.