

French: Productive Language Skills (0171)

Test at a Glance

Test Name	French: Productive Language Skills			
Test Code	0171			
Time	1 hour (total test): two sections			
Pacing	Suggested time (for Writing Section): Question 7—10 minutes; Question 8—15 minutes; Question 9—10 minutes			
Number of Questions	9 questions: 6 spoken, 3 written			
Format	Questions require spoken and written responses in French.			
	Content Categories (Competencies Tested)	Approximate Number of Questions	Approximate Percentage of Examination	Time (in minutes)
	I. Presentational Speaking	6	60%	25 (approximate)
	II. Presentational Writing	3	40%	35

Advice to Test Takers

- Read “Advice on Taking the Productive Language Skills Tests.”
- Before taking the test, you should have acquired the skills described under “Competencies Tested.”
- In order to pace yourself better, bring a watch that shows minutes and seconds.

Presentational Speaking Section

- For each question in this section, you will speak into a tape recorder to record your responses in French. Therefore, before taking the test, you should practice making tape recordings in French.
- There is an Oral Paraphrase question in the Presentational Speaking section, based on a narration recorded by a native speaker of French at a normal rate of conversation. Therefore, before taking the test, you should practice by listening to recordings of native speakers and by trying to paraphrase what you have heard.

- At the beginning of the Presentational Speaking section, the test supervisor will play an introductory statement to check the volume. Be sure to notify the supervisor if the volume needs to be adjusted or if there is any other problem with the tape.
- After the introductory statement, you will have time to practice making a recording on the equipment supplied. Be sure that you feel comfortable with the tape recorder, that the recording volume has been set at an appropriate level, and that your recording is audible and clear. Notify the test supervisor if there is a problem.
- After each question, there will be a pause (of up to 2 minutes) for you to prepare your response. Use this time to plan your response and, if appropriate, to take notes. After the preparation time, you will have up to 2 minutes to record your response. Be prepared to complete your response within the time provided.
- Begin recording your response only after you hear the words “Answer Question (1, 2, etc.) now.” You will not receive credit for anything recorded during the preparation period or after the response time is up (when you hear the words “Stop speaking now”).
- Be sure to speak loud enough to make a clear, audible tape recording. Your score will be based only on what is recorded on the tape.
- You will be told how long you have for answering each question. Although you need not speak for the entire time period, give as complete a response as possible within the time allotted.
- You are not expected to know all the words you may feel you need. If you do not know specific vocabulary, try to express yourself as well as you can, using circumlocution if necessary.
- As you record your response, if you realize that you have made a mistake, correct it immediately, and it will not count against you.

Presentational Writing Section

- Pace your activities. The suggested time is 10 minutes for Question 7 (Picture Narration), 15 minutes for Question 8 (Writing a Letter or E-Mail), and 10 minutes for Question 9 (Writing Questions).
- Use only the lined pages provided for your response. Although you need not use all of the space on the lined pages provided, give as complete a response as possible.
- If you finish the test before the end of the testing period, use any extra time to check your responses to any of the writing questions.

Test Description

The French: Productive Language Skills test is designed to measure how well a prospective teacher of French for grades K–12 speaks and writes French. It is composed of two sections. The Presentational Speaking section of the test is approximately 25 minutes long, and it consists of six taped questions. Test takers record their responses in French on tape. The Presentational Writing section is 35 minutes long, and it consists of three questions. Test takers write their responses in French in the test book.

Evaluation is based on a test taker’s ability to be comprehensible to educated native speakers of French, to organize ideas effectively and logically, to use a level of language appropriate to the task and/or audience, and to communicate without major errors in grammar and vocabulary.

There are six speaking questions and three writing questions. The Presentational Speaking section accounts for 60 percent of the total score (with each question worth 10 percent); the Presentational Writing section accounts for 40 percent of the total score (with each question worth 13 $\frac{1}{3}$ percent).

This test may contain some questions that will not count toward your score.

Competencies Tested

Presentational Speaking Section

The Presentational Speaking section starts with two unscored warm-up questions; then the test taker responds to the six test questions:

- Role-playing: Test takers respond to a complicated situation printed in English in the test book.
- Picture Description: Test takers give a detailed description of a picture printed in the test book.
- Giving Instructions or Picture Narration: One of the following question types will be included in the test: Test takers give instructions for a step-by-step process, based on a series of pictures printed in the test book.

OR

Test takers tell a story based on a series of pictures printed in the test book.

- Stating and Defending an Opinion: Test takers state and defend an opinion on a given topic printed in English in the test book.
- Oral Paraphrase: Test takers paraphrase a French text that they hear on the test tape.
- Brief Talk: Test takers respond to a situation printed in the test book, using a level of language appropriate to the task and the audience.

Presentational Writing Section

The test taker responds to three questions:

- Picture Narration: Test takers write a short composition based on a series of pictures printed in the test book.
- Writing a Letter or E-Mail: Test takers write a short formal letter or e-mail about a situation printed in the test book.
- Writing Questions: Test takers write four questions to elicit short and long answers.

Sample Test Questions

Below is the Scoring Guide used by the evaluators who rate the test takers' responses to the Presentational Speaking Section. On the following page, there is a sample speaking question, followed by a transcript of sample responses with the corresponding scores. When you read these sample responses, keep in mind that they may not be as carefully presented as if they had been developed at home, with the time and resources for preparing and practicing orally. Evaluators take these circumstances into account when scoring the test takers' responses.

SCORING GUIDE

Presentational Speaking Section

4

- Is completely and easily comprehensible, even to an unsympathetic listener¹
- Gives a complete and entirely accurate/relevant response, with appropriate elaboration, to all (or almost all) parts of the question
- May make sporadic errors, but they rarely or never interfere with communication
 - has strong grammatical control (no errors in basic, high-frequency structures; few errors in complex/low-frequency structures; no marked error patterns)
 - employs a broad, precise vocabulary adequate for almost all topics, with word choice that is generally idiomatic and varied and rarely awkward
 - has overall fluency: speech is occasionally or rarely hesitant, with frequent use of complex sentences and “connectors” when appropriate or required
 - may have a slightly nonnative pronunciation, with few or no phonological errors and no error patterns, but is always comprehensible

3

- Is generally comprehensible, even to an unsympathetic listener, but occasionally requires the listener's effort and interpretation of the intended meaning
- Gives a mostly accurate/relevant response to most parts of the question
- Is likely to make errors and/or error patterns, but they only occasionally interfere with communication
 - has moderate grammatical control (few errors in basic, high-frequency structures; some errors and/or error patterns in complex/low-frequency structures)
 - employs vocabulary adequate for most general topics, with word choice that is often idiomatic but occasionally awkward
 - has considerable fluency: speech is sometimes hesitant, with some use of complex sentences and “connectors” when appropriate or required
 - may have a markedly nonnative pronunciation with some phonological errors and/or error patterns, but is nearly or always comprehensible

¹“Unsympathetic listener” refers to a native speaker of the language who is NOT accustomed to dealing with nonnative learners of the language. An “unsympathetic listener” does not make any special effort to understand the examinee.

2

- Is somewhat comprehensible to a sympathetic listener,² but often requires the listener's effort and interpretation of the intended meaning
- Gives a somewhat accurate/relevant response to some parts of the question
- Produces errors and/or error patterns that may often interfere with communication
 - has limited grammatical control (many errors and/or error patterns in basic, high-frequency structures; no control of complex/low-frequency structures)
 - employs a limited vocabulary, with word choice that is often unidiomatic and awkward
 - has limited fluency, with halting speech and mostly short, simple sentences; suggests inability to use complex sentences and “connectors” when appropriate or required
 - has a markedly nonnative pronunciation, with many phonological errors and/or error patterns, and is sometimes incomprehensible

1

- Is generally incomprehensible, even to a sympathetic listener, despite the listener's constant effort to interpret the intended meaning
- Gives an incomplete and/or mostly inaccurate and/or irrelevant response
- Produces errors and/or error patterns that very often interfere with communication
 - has very little grammatical control (many serious errors and/or error patterns in virtually all structures)
 - employs very little vocabulary, with some “formulaic speech” (memorized phrases, fixed expressions) used inappropriately
 - has virtually no fluency: speech is fragmentary and halting, interrupted often by long pauses and repetitions, and consists only of isolated words, memorized phrases, and fixed expressions
 - has a markedly nonnative pronunciation, with many serious phonological errors and/or error patterns, and is very often incomprehensible

0

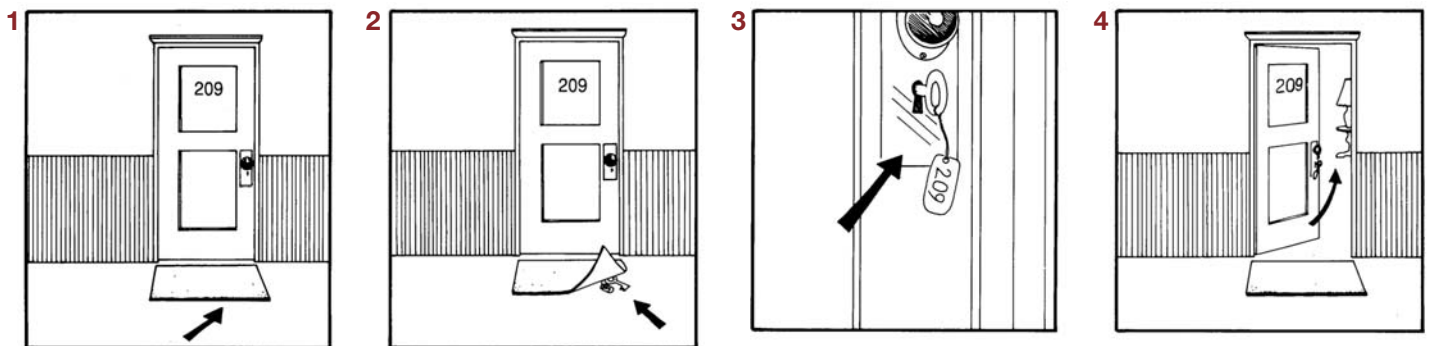
- Is completely incomprehensible, even to a sympathetic listener, despite the listener's constant effort to interpret the intended meaning
- Gives an entirely inaccurate/irrelevant response or fails to respond at all
- Produces errors and/or error patterns that always interfere with communication
 - has no grammatical control (many serious errors and/or error patterns in all structures)
 - employs no vocabulary, not even “formulaic speech” (memorized phrases and fixed expressions)
 - has no fluency
 - has a markedly nonnative pronunciation and is always incomprehensible

²“Sympathetic listener” refers to a native speaker of the language who is accustomed to dealing with nonnative learners of the language. A “sympathetic listener” tends to make a conscious effort to understand the examinee, interpreting his/her speech for its intended meaning.

Sample Test Question: Presentational Speaking Section

In this question, you are asked to give instructions to a young French-speaking friend who will be staying at your apartment. Explain how to enter your apartment in case your friend arrives while you are out. Based only on what you see in the pictures in your test book, give clear, step-by-step instructions, in French. In your instructions, include the information presented in all of the pictures, but do not assume that the people listening can see the pictures.

Before you are asked to speak, you will have one minute to study the pictures and think about your instructions. You will have two minutes to speak. Start your instructions with the words “*D’abord, va à l’appartement numéro 209. . .*”



Sample Responses

These responses have been transcribed from the taped responses of test takers. Ellipses (. . .) are used to indicate pauses in the test takers’ responses. Mispronunciations are written as they were produced.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 3:

D’abord, va à l’appartement numéro deux cent neuf. Il y a un tapis devant la porte, et sous le tapis, ahhh, ehhh, est la clef. Ahhh, mette la clef . . . dans la porte, tourne, et ouvre la porte. Entre dans l’appartement.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 1:

D’abord, va à l’appartement mmm . . . two oh nine [in English]. Secondement, le clef est sous le mat [in English]. Troisième, and [in English], sous le clef est le . . .

Finalemnt, ouvrez la porte, et voilà . . .

Devant la porte . . . le . . . le clef est eh hh, eh hh, élevez le chose avant de la porte et vous . . . trouverez le clef . . . c’est fou de placer le clef . . . est un peu . . . à une place . . . ça est criminel pour le trouver . . . Le premier part n’est pas assez long.

SCORING GUIDE

Presentational Writing Section

- 4**
- Is completely and easily comprehensible, even to an unsympathetic reader¹
 - Gives a complete and entirely accurate/relevant response, with appropriate elaboration, to all (or almost all) parts of the question
 - May make sporadic errors, but they rarely or never interfere with communication
 - has strong grammatical control (no errors in basic, high-frequency structures; few errors in complex/low-frequency structures; no marked error patterns)
 - employs a broad, precise vocabulary adequate for almost all topics, with word choice that is generally idiomatic and varied and rarely awkward
 - has very few or no errors in mechanics, which rarely or never interfere with meaning
 - is completely coherent and well organized, with frequent use of complex sentences and “connectors” when appropriate or required
 - uses language that is appropriate for the intended task and/or audience
- 3**
- Is generally comprehensible, even to an unsympathetic reader, but occasionally requires the reader’s effort and interpretation of the intended meaning
 - Gives a mostly accurate/relevant response to most parts of the question
 - Is likely to produce errors and/or error patterns, but they only occasionally interfere with communication
 - has moderate grammatical control (few errors in basic, high-frequency structures; some errors and/or error patterns in complex/low-frequency structures)
- 2**
- Is somewhat comprehensible to a sympathetic reader,² but often requires the reader’s effort and interpretation of the intended meaning
 - Gives a somewhat accurate/relevant response to some parts of the question
 - Produces errors and/or error patterns that may often interfere with communication
 - has limited grammatical control (many errors and/or error patterns in basic, high-frequency structures; no control of complex/low-frequency structures)
 - employs a limited vocabulary, with word choice that is often unidiomatic and awkward
 - makes several errors in mechanics (spelling, punctuation, etc.), which may often interfere with meaning
 - is partly or often incoherent, with little evidence of organization; suggests inability to use complex sentences and “connectors” when appropriate or required
 - is likely to use language that is inappropriate for the intended task and/or audience
- 1**
- employs a vocabulary adequate for most general topics, with word choice that is often idiomatic but occasionally awkward
 - makes some errors in mechanics (spelling, punctuation, etc.), but they only occasionally interfere with meaning
 - is generally coherent and organized, with some complex sentences and “connectors” when appropriate or required
 - is likely to use language that is appropriate for the intended task and/or audience

¹“Unsympathetic reader” refers to a native speaker of the language who is NOT accustomed to dealing with nonnative learners of the language. An “unsympathetic reader” does not make any special effort to understand the examinee.

²“Sympathetic reader” refers to a native speaker of the language who is accustomed to dealing with nonnative learners of the language. A “sympathetic reader” tends to make a conscious effort to understand the examinee, interpreting his/her writing for its intended meaning.

1

- Is generally incomprehensible, even to a sympathetic reader, despite the reader's constant effort to interpret the intended meaning
- Gives an incomplete, mostly inaccurate/irrelevant response
- Produces errors and/or error patterns that very often interfere with communication
 - has very little grammatical control (many serious errors and/or error patterns in virtually all structures)
 - employs very little vocabulary, with some “formulaic language” (memorized phrases, fixed expressions) used inappropriately
 - makes many serious errors in mechanics (spelling, punctuation, etc.) in virtually all structures, which very often interfere with meaning
 - is mostly incoherent, with very little or no evidence of organization
 - uses language that is inappropriate for the intended task and/or audience

0

- Is completely incomprehensible, even to a sympathetic reader, despite the reader's constant effort to interpret the intended meaning
- Gives an entirely inaccurate/irrelevant response or fails to respond at all
- Produces errors and/or error patterns that always interfere with communication
 - has no grammatical control (many serious errors and/or error patterns in all structures)
 - employs no vocabulary, not even “formulaic language” (memorized phrases and fixed expressions)
 - makes many serious errors in mechanics (spelling, punctuation, etc.) in all structures, which always interfere with meaning
 - is completely incoherent



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