

Overview of the New Jersey Judiciary's Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI)

Language Services Section (LSS)
Administrative Office of the Courts
Trenton, New Jersey

Introduction

Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) are designed to elicit the full range of a candidate's ability to use English and a target language verbally, and to identify what the candidate can do with the languages. A court interpreter's use of the English and the target language with respect to pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar must meet minimum standards. **You must have taken the written exam and attended the Orientation Seminar before applying to take any OPI.**

1. The **English OPI** is designed to reliably and validly measure a person's ability to understand spoken conversational English at a conversational pace, and speak English sufficiently well such that the key actors in a courtroom (judges, attorneys, parties, etc.) understand the interpreter's spoken English without undue difficulty. **There is no charge for the English OPI.**
2. The **Target Language OPI** is designed to elicit the full range of the candidate's ability to use the target language and to identify what the candidate can do with the language for which no court interpreting oral performance exam exists.

Who Should Take the Test?

The following interpreters are required to take this test:

1. Candidates who are in the process of becoming approved court interpreters who work in languages for which there is an abbreviated court interpreting oral examination. At the present time, that includes the following languages: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Somali and Turkish. **These candidates only need to take the English OPI.**
2. Candidates who are in the process of becoming *registered* court interpreters (*i.e.*, interpreters in any language for which no court interpreting oral exam is available). This includes individuals who intend to work *both* in one or more languages for which there is a court interpreting exam *and* one or more languages for which there is not such an exam. This group consists of candidates who become eligible to take this test when they have reached an appropriate score on the written test and have completed the one-day Orientation Seminar. These candidates need to take the English OPI and the Target Language OPI.
3. Candidates who are already working as contract interpreters in a language for which there is no court interpreting oral exam and who wish to upgrade their classification level. Both

OPIs are part of the criteria that drive the classification of interpreters described above. Interpreters who have never taken the English or Target Language OPI but wish to upgrade their classification, must take the exams in order to justify a higher classification.

How Does One Register for the OPI?

Candidates who work in a language for which there is no oral performance exam, who completed the written exam and the Orientation Seminar or who wish to upgrade their classification should register to take the appropriate OPI exam (English and/or Target Language) by ***MAILING the attached form. There is no charge for the English OPI. The Target Language OPI payment of \$68 must be sent to the address shown on the form. All testing is done in the morning between 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. in Trenton only! Additionally, all communication is done through e-mail only.***

Once we receive a request to take an OPI, we will make the necessary arrangements and notify the candidate of the date and time of their exam ***via e-mail***. Specific directions for getting to AOC-Trenton will be provided upon request.

What Should Candidates Bring with Them to the Test?

Some form of identification, preferably a photo ID of some kind, is needed to enter the building. Candidates may bring their cell phone with them if they prefer to use that versus a landline phone.

What Will the Test Process Be?

On the day of a candidate's test appointment, the major steps of the exam will be as follows:

1. A test proctor will greet the candidate who will be waiting at a designated waiting area and escort them to a conference room where the test will be administered.
2. Once in the room, the test proctor will:
 - a. Verify the candidate's identification
 - b. Provide a brief overview of how the test will be administered; and
 - c. Give the candidate the opportunity to ask questions.
3. The candidate will call the phone number given, enter the PIN number given, and will be connected to a live evaluator who is a native speaker of the English or target language.
4. After verifying the candidate's identity, the evaluator will conduct the test, which consists of a series of questions that are designed to elicit the full range of the candidate's ability to use the English or target language verbally, and to identify what the candidate can do with the language.

5. The candidate simply answers the questions presented, which are general in nature. *There is no right or wrong answer* – the evaluator is checking for what the candidate can do with the language and not judging the content of what is said (except where it pertains to demonstrating comprehension of the topic).
6. Upon completion of the exam, the candidate will be asked some background questions including native language, year born, and gender. These questions are **optional** and candidates are free to answer them if they wish, or decline.

What Should Candidates Keep in Mind While Taking the Test?

The test scores the performance based on the subcategories of communication, comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary. Accordingly, candidates should speak in a steady and natural voice. Do not shout or yell.

How Long Is the Test?

The test itself takes about 20 minutes.

How Is the Test Graded?

The evaluator scores the performance on a scale of 1-12+, with 12+ being the highest.

How Are Candidates Notified of Their Scores?

As soon as LSS is notified by the evaluator of a candidate's score, a result letter will be sent via e-mail within two weeks of the candidate taking the OPI.

What Are the Scores Required for the Various Classification Levels?

The scores for each of the three levels of the Judiciary's classification system are as follows:

ENGLISH OPI

Conditional: 8-10

Journey: 11

Master: 12/12+

TARGET LANGUAGE OPI

Registered-Conditional: 11

Registered-Journey: 12

Registered-Master: 12/12+

Anyone who scores below the conditional/registered-conditional level has failed the exam. These individuals will not be eligible to register or work as contract interpreters.

Can Test Scores be Appealed?

No, all scores are final.

How Often Can a Candidate Take and Retake the Test?

A candidate may take the test no more frequently than once every 12 months. There is no limit to the number of times the test may be retaken.



New Jersey Judiciary

Application to Take Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)

Please type or print legibly and return to address below along with \$68 payment for each target language. All items are required.

Please check box below if you also need to take the English OPI free of charge.

First Name Middle Name Last Name

Mailing Address: Street City State Zip Code + 4

Daytime Phone E-mail address

Languages (other than English), you expect to interpret.

Check all that apply
I have read the Oral Proficiency Interview document in its entirety.
I also need to take the English OPI free of charge.

Affidavit: I hereby affirm that I will not copy, record, discuss, or in any way divulge any of the words or phrases of the test to anyone during the testing period or at any time thereafter and that I intend to work as a court interpreter in New Jersey.

Signature Date

Mail completed application, with accompanying fee of \$68 per target language made payable to Treasurer, State of New Jersey. The fee is payable by check, certified check or money order only. Checks must not be post-dated and will be deposited upon receipt. Absolutely NO CASH will be accepted.

Regular Mail (US Postal Service)
Language Services
Administrative Office of the Courts
PO Box 988
Trenton, NJ 08625-0988

Overnight/Express Mail
Language Services
Administrative Office of the Courts
Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex
25 Market Street
Trenton, NJ 08625-0988

Once we receive your application and payment, we will e-mail you to set up the date and time of the OPI.

ADA Accommodations: If you will require an accommodation when taking the test, please indicate your accommodation request here:
[Accessibility icon]