What are the major differences between the 1999 version of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines – Speaking and the ACTFL Guidelines 2012 – Speaking?
One difference is the addition of a major level above the Superior level. This level is called Distinguished. A second difference is the addition of a general description of each of the major levels followed by the sublevel descriptions for that level.

Does this mean that ACTFL will now be testing speaking to the Distinguished level?
No. At this time, ACTFL OPI testing will continue to assess and rate Novice through Superior levels only.

How does the addition of a level above Superior impact the ACTFL Rating Scale?
The addition of the Distinguished level does not effect the ACTFL Rating Scale. The ACTFL Rating Scale continues to be a Novice through Superior scale.

Does the addition of the Distinguished level change OPI testing and rating procedures?
No. The OPI structure and elicitation protocols remain the same. The rating procedures for the OPI remain the same.

How is the Distinguished level different from the Superior level?
Speakers at the Distinguished level can reflect on a wide range of global issues and highly abstract concepts in a culturally appropriate manner. Distinguished-level speakers can use persuasive and hypothetical discourse for representational purposes, allowing them to advocate a point of view that is not necessarily their own. They can tailor language to a variety of audiences by adapting their speech and register in ways that are culturally authentic.

Speakers at the Superior level are able to discuss contained issues from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They present their opinions on a number of issues of interest to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured arguments to support these opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities.

Does this mean that the Distinguished level is the same as a very strong Superior?
No. A strong performance at Superior will continue to be rated Superior.

Have there been substantive changes to the descriptions of any of the levels?
No. There have been no substantive changes to the expectations at any level. The only changes have been for the purposes of clarity and consistency. This is particularly true for the descriptions of Intermediate High and Advanced Low.
How do the descriptions in the 2012 Guidelines help to differentiate at the IH/AL border? The descriptions for AL and IH are now written relative to each other. For example:

- **Advanced Low** speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in the major time frames of past, present and future in paragraph-length discourse with some control of aspect.

- **Intermediate High** speakers can narrate and describe in all major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length, but not all the time.

Another example:

- **Advanced Low** speech is typically marked by a certain grammatical roughness (e.g., inconsistent control of verb endings), but the overall performance of the Advanced-level tasks is sustained, albeit minimally.

- Typically, when **Intermediate High** speakers attempt to perform Advanced-level tasks, their speech exhibits one or more features of breakdown, such as the failure to carry out fully the narration or description in the appropriate major time frame, an inability to maintain paragraph-length discourse, or a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary.

How will the Speaking Guidelines be disseminated to ACTFL OPI Tester, Raters and Tester trainees?

A pdf document containing the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Speaking will be emailed to all ACTFL OPI Testers, Raters, and Tester trainees and will be posted to your ACTFL Tester page at [www.languagetesting.com/tester](http://www.languagetesting.com/tester). In addition, the document can be downloaded at any time from the ACTFL website at [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org). Select Publications/ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines/ ACTFL Guidelines 2012.

When should I begin to use the ACTFL Guidelines 2012 – Speaking for rating tests?

There have been no changes to the assessment criteria; the use of the new guidelines is intended to help testers/raters interpret the criteria better. You should immediately review the 2012 Guidelines. You may begin to use them as soon as you are familiar with them. Effective January 2, 2012, all ACTFL OPI ratings will be based on the 2012 Guidelines.

Whom should I contact if I have questions about the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Speaking?

For questions regarding the use of the new Guidelines, contact opicert@actfl.org.

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