

# The Guide to a formal aviation language proficiency demonstration

## Formal vs. informal demonstrations

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) does not require a formal assessment of candidates who demonstrate expert level proficiency (e.g., speakers whose first language is English) and is satisfied with an informal demonstration of proficiency.

Canadian citizens who have graduated from a Canadian English or French speaking high school will qualify for the informal demonstration in the language that is, or will be if currently enrolled, indicated on their high school diploma, provided the Chief Flight Instructor (CFI) of a Flight Training Unit (FTU) or the freelance instructor, as appropriate to the situation, is satisfied that the person can demonstrate the competencies of Expert Level 6 as listed in standard 421.06(4) of the CARs.

## The formal aviation language proficiency demonstration

The Formal Aviation Language Proficiency Demonstration is an English-language or French-language proficiency demonstration designed for candidates to a Canadian pilot licence or Air Traffic Controller licence.

## Who can schedule a formal demonstration?

Only the Verifier who is the person that forwards to the Language Assessor the *Privacy Notice Statement* (see Appendix A) and the *Identification Confirmation Form* (see Appendix B) can request a formal demonstration.

Verifiers are employees of Canadian flight training units or air operators that have been assigned that function by the Chief Flight Instructor or the Chief Pilot.

## How will I take the demonstration?

The Verifier will ask you to complete a *Privacy Notice Statement* and the *Identification Confirmation Form*.

The Verifier will schedule a time to conduct the demonstration with the Language Assessor.

The Language Assessor is a qualified person that conducts the formal demonstration and assesses listening comprehension and speaking abilities. The demonstration is conducted over the phone or computer and is recorded. The demonstration should not be conducted in a face-to-face manner. The Language Assessor will ask plain language developmental questions to assess the six speaking and listening skills: pronunciation, structure, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and interaction.

SKYPE and other means of communication that have a camera function cannot be used to confirm your identity but can be used to conduct and record the language proficiency demonstration so long as the camera function is turned off by the Language Assessor to remove your ability to see the Language Assessor.

Prior to starting the formal demonstration, the Language Assessor will mention the following points:

- He/she will ensure that you give authorization to record the language proficiency demonstration (if authorization is not given, the demonstration will not proceed);
- He/she will advise you that the language proficiency demonstration is an informal discussion, there are no right or wrong answers;

- He/she will advise you that proficiency is confirmed by the ability to provide context and details in answers to questions;
- He/she will advise you that a feedback letter will be issued by e-mail by Transport Canada within 30 days of the demonstration; and
- He/she will advise you that you will receive an electronic copy of the feedback letter at the e-mail address provided in the *Identification Confirmation Form* within 30 days following the day of the demonstration.

### **How long will the demonstration take?**

The formal demonstration should last the time it takes the Language Assessor to accurately assess the six language skills, normally no more than 10 minutes.

### **What will I need to take the demonstration?**

You may need a pen and paper. You can use these to make notes, if necessary.

### **When will the score be available?**

The Language Assessor will forward the feedback letter to Transport Canada, for review, within 3 days of the completion of the demonstration. Transport Canada will return the feedback letter to the Language Assessor within 30 days of reception with confirmation of the level awarded. The Language Assessor will then send you an electronic copy of the feedback letter and send one copy to the flight training unit, or air operator.

Your score will be at one of three levels:

Expert, Operational, Below-operational

### **When can I retake a demonstration?**

Unless otherwise authorized by Transport Canada, you will have to wait a period of 90 days prior to retake a demonstration, if you have been assessed BELOW OPERATIONAL, and a period of 48 months, if you have been assessed OPERATIONAL.

### **Sample Questions**

Below are examples of ICAO Standardized Phraseology questions and Plain language questions that could be used to assess proficiency. Plain language questions could be asked to candidates that do not already have aviation experience or knowledge and a mix of plain language and ICAO Standardized Phraseology questions could be asked to candidates that are already holding an aviation document. These are only examples and Language Assessors are encouraged to prepare enough of their own developmental questions in advance to ensure variety from demonstration to demonstration.

#### ICAO Standardized Phraseology

- You are experiencing engine problems and you have to contact the tower for priority landing. Play the role of the pilot.
- You are practicing a touch and go in a control zone. Play the role of the pilot. (*At some point in the narrative, the Language Assessor could play the role of a pilot in another aircraft.*)
- You are entering a controlled zone for landing. Play the role of the pilot. (*At some point in the narrative, the Language Assessor could play the role of a pilot in another aircraft.*)

- You are holding short of runway 36 for a departure towards a destination 100 NM south of the airport, on a VFR flight plan. Play the role of the pilot. *(At some point in the narrative, the Language Assessor could play the role of a pilot in another pilot aircraft.)*
- You are practicing touch and go on runway 18 in a controlled zone and, while downwind, you notice a large animal on the runway. Play the role of the pilot.

#### Plain Language Questions (non-aviation related)

- Explain why you decided to get a pilot licence.
- Explain why you came to Canada to get your aviation language proficiency assessment.
- You have just witnessed a car accident. The driver is conscious but seems to be hurt. Describe the situation and your actions.
- You have walked for miles off trail in a national park and you feel that you are lost. Explain your actions.
- Ask the candidate to explain the plot of a movie and/or a book he/she has enjoyed.

#### Plain Language Questions (aviation related)

- Explain what you have enjoyed the most so far in your training/career.
- Explain how you prepare yourself mentally and physically for a flight.
- Explain why someone would want to work for the airline/flight school where you are employed.
- Explain the differences in effects and recovery between wing stalls and tail wing stalls.

## APPENDIX A - PRIVACY NOTICE STATEMENT

Transport Canada (TC) is committed to protecting the privacy rights of individuals and safeguarding the personal information under its control. "Personal information" is defined as any information, in any form, about an identifiable individual; refer to section 3 of the [Privacy Act](#) for further details regarding personal information.

Personal information collected by TC is protected from disclosure to unauthorized persons and/or agencies subject to the provisions of the *Privacy Act*. Individuals have the right to the protection of and access to their personal information and to request corrections where the individual believes there is an error or omission. Individuals may contact the Department's Access to Information and Privacy Protection Division to request corrections.

The Aviation Language Proficiency Program (ALPP) has been developed in order to provide means by which to assess the language proficiency of candidates applying for a Canadian aviation document. Recording of formal language proficiency demonstrations is required to ensure standardization of the program.

The information requested is required by the Department for the purpose of confirming the language proficiency level awarded and will be used to ensure standardization of the program.

The information is collected Personal information is collected pursuant to section 4.9 of the *Aeronautics Act* and Part IV of the *Canadian Aviation Regulations - Personnel Licensing and Training - Subpart 1 - Flight Crew Permits, Licenses and Ratings*.

Provision of the information requested in this document is voluntary and you may, without prejudice, decline to respond. Should you decide to complete the formal language proficiency demonstration, it is important to know that the submission of your information constitutes consent to the collection and use of your personal information.

Completion of the formal language proficiency demonstration constitutes your consent to the collection, use, and disclosure of the information provided herein, subject to certain exemptions and exceptions as per the *Privacy Act*.

This information is required by Transport Canada. If you do not authorize the recording of the formal language proficiency demonstration Transport Canada will be unable to process your request for a Canadian aviation document.

Your personal information will be shared with Transport Canada for the purpose of standardization. Your personal information will not be used for any secondary purpose without first obtaining your explicit consent. The personal information collected will be destroyed at the age of one hundred or when the individual dies.

Personal information will be protected under the provisions of the *Privacy Act* and is described in TC's Personal Information Bank TC PPU 005 which is detailed in TC Info Source Chapter at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/>.

Individuals have the right to file a complaint with the [Privacy Commissioner of Canada](#) regarding the institution's handling of their personal information.

By providing your personal information, you acknowledge that you have read and understood this statement and consent to the Department's collection, use and disclosure of your personal information

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**Name and Signature of Candidate**

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**Date [YY/MM/DD**

**APPENDIX B - IDENTIFICATION CONFIRMATION FORM**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of candidate in print), confirm that the information provided on this form is accurate, that I have read the *Privacy Notice Statement* for the Request to Record Aviation Language Proficiency Demonstrations and that I consent to the recording of this aviation language proficiency demonstration for the purpose of assessing my level of aviation language proficiency.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Candidate** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone number**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**E-mail address** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date of most recent language proficiency demonstration**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of Verifier in print), certify, after proper verification, that the candidate for the Aviation language proficiency demonstration is \_\_\_\_\_ (applicant name), file number \_\_\_\_\_.

Name of FTU/Air Operator requesting demonstration: \_\_\_\_\_

Documents used to confirm identity:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Verifier** \_\_\_\_\_  
**File number of verifier**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Verifier's e-mail address and phone number** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date [YY/MM/DD]**

Proposed date and time for language proficiency demonstration: \_\_\_\_\_

Means of contact: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C - RATING SCALE EXPLANATION

This rating scale is competency (skill) based on the ability to speak and listen. It includes six speaking and listening skills: Pronunciation, Structure, Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension and Interaction identified in section 421.06(4) of the *Canadian Aviation Regulations* (CARs). The following is a brief “plain language” explanation of each competency for each of the score points attended to on the Abbreviated version of the Aviation Language Proficiency Demonstration Rating Scale.

### Pronunciation

It is important to remember that not all native speakers will receive a level 6 on the pronunciation score, nor would all non-native speakers who speak with an accent be prohibited from receiving a level 6. That is, native English speakers may receive a score lower than level 6 if their regional dialect is not readily understood by those outside of that particular region. Conversely, speakers whose speech patterns clearly identify them as “non-native” speakers (having an accent) may demonstrate Expert Level 6 proficiency, as long as they are almost always *easy* to understand by proficient listeners.

Level	Description	Explanation
<b>Expert 6</b>	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation infrequently are influenced by the first language or regional variation, but almost never interfere with ease of understanding.	The candidate may be a native speaker of English or may be a very proficient non-native English speaker with an easily understood accent and/or dialect. The accent or any pronunciation “mistakes” almost never interfere with the ease with which they are understood. The speaker is <i>always clear and understandable</i> .
<b>Operational 4</b>	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation, to the extent that they sometimes interfere with ease of understanding.	The speaker has a marked accent. Occasionally, <i>the listener may have to pay close attention to understand</i> the speaker, or may have to clarify something from time to time.  This is the minimum level of proficiency determined to be “safe” for air traffic control communications.
<b>Below Operational L4</b>	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation, to the extent that they frequently interfere with ease of understanding.	Pronunciation is so poor that comprehension over the radio would be impossible.

## Structure

Structure refers to the grammar and sentence patterns used by the candidates. Structural (grammatical) errors can be divided into two types: those that interfere with meaning and those that do not.

Level	Description	Explanation
<b>Expert</b> <b>6</b>	Both basic and complex grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently well controlled.	Speakers at this level might make <i>grammatical errors, but they do not affect the ability to communicate easily.</i> For example, the speaker might consistently leave off the “plural –s”, as in “I’ve been flying for five year.”
<b>Operational</b> <b>4</b>	Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are used creatively and are usually well controlled. Errors may occur, particularly in unusual or unexpected circumstances, but rarely interfere with meaning.	At this level, speakers have good command of basic grammar. <i>They demonstrate errors, but they rarely interfere with the ability to communicate.</i>
<b>Below Operational</b> <b>L4</b>	Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns associated with predictable situations are not always well controlled. Errors frequently interfere with meaning.	A weak command of basic grammatical structures and errors that lead to misunderstandings.

## Vocabulary

This skill measures the words the candidates understand as well as the words the candidates use and how well they use them.

Level	Description	Explanation
<b>Expert</b> <b>6</b>	Vocabulary range and accuracy are sufficient to communicate effectively on a wide variety of familiar and unfamiliar topics. Vocabulary is idiomatic, nuanced, and sensitive to register	The candidate at this level uses appropriate words to communicate both in aviation contexts and in “real life” situations. That is, s/he uses both aviation-specific terminology and “regular language” accurately. This candidate might even use idioms or everyday phrases to communicate.
<b>Operational</b> <b>4</b>	Vocabulary range and accuracy are usually sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete, and work-related topics. Can often paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary in unusual or unexpected circumstances.	The candidate at this level will usually be able to manage communication on work-related topics, but may sometimes need clarification. At this level, the speaker might be able to re-phrase or choose another word to make the message understood. For example, if the candidate does not know the word “damaged”, s/he might say, “The plane is not injured.” Although the word is not used correctly, the listener knows what the candidate means.
<b>Below Operational</b> <b>L4</b>	Vocabulary range and accuracy are limited and the word choice often inappropriate. Often unable to paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary.	Gaps in vocabulary knowledge or a choice of wrong or non-existing words are used. This affects the fluency in a negative manner and leads to misunderstandings.



## Fluency

For the purposes of this demonstration, “fluency” refers to the naturalness of speech production, and the degree to which understanding is affected by unusual hesitancy or choppiness.

Level	Description	Explanation
<b>Expert</b> <b>6</b>	Able to speak at length with a natural, effortless flow. Varies speech flow for stylistic effect, e.g. to emphasize a point. Uses appropriate discourse markers and connectors.	The candidate at this level almost always speaks smoothly with a natural rhythm and flow.
<b>Operational</b> <b>4</b>	Produces stretches of language at an appropriate tempo. There may be occasional loss of fluency on transition from rehearsed or formulaic speech to spontaneous interaction, but this does not prevent effective communication. Can make limited use of discourse markers or connectors. Fillers are not distracting.	The candidate at this level might lose fluency at times, but this does not affect the ability to communicate.
<b>Below Operational</b> <b>L4</b>	Produces stretches of language, but phrasing and pausing are often inappropriate. Hesitations or slowness in language processing may prevent effective communication. Fillers are sometimes distracting.	At this level the speech flow is so slow that communication lacks concision and efficiency. There are frequent long silent pauses that interrupt the speech flow.

## Comprehension

Comprehension refers to the degree to which the candidate understands the communication.

Level	Description	Explanation
<b>Expert</b> <b>6</b>	Comprehension is consistently accurate in nearly all contexts and includes comprehension of linguistic and cultural subtleties.	The candidate at this level demonstrates a consistently high level of understanding, and may ask for clarification if necessary.
<b>Operational</b> <b>4</b>	Comprehension is mostly accurate on common, concrete, and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. When the speaker is confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events, comprehension may be slower or require clarification strategies.	At this level, comprehension is not expected to be perfectly accurate in all instances. However, the candidate has the strategies to allow him or her to ultimately understand the communication. Failure to understand a clearly communicated communication, even after seeking clarification, should result in a lower score.
<b>Below Operational</b> <b>L4</b>	Comprehension is often accurate on common, concrete and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. May fail to understand a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events	Comprehension is limited to routine communications in optimum conditions. It is not proficient enough to understand the full range of radiotelephony communications, including unexpected events substandard speech or inferior radio reception.

## Interactions

Raters should be aware that inappropriate silence may indicate a failure to understand.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Expert 6</b>	Interacts with ease in nearly all situations. Is sensitive to verbal and non-verbal cues and responds to them appropriately.	The candidate at this level interacts easily, naturally, and appropriately in almost all situations.
<b>Operational 4</b>	Responses are usually immediate, appropriate, and informative. Initiates and maintains exchanges even when dealing with an unexpected turn of events. Deals adequately with apparent misunderstandings by checking, confirming, or clarifying.	The candidate at this level might interact spontaneously and with ease in some situations. Furthermore, s/he is able to communicate the fact that s/he does not understand part of a communication. That is, s/he can ask for confirmation or clarify a situation or communication when necessary.
<b>Below Operational L4</b>	Can initiate and maintain exchanges with reasonable ease on familiar topics and in predictable situations. Generally inadequate when dealing with an unexpected turn of events.	Interaction is such that communication lacks concision and efficiency. Misunderstandings and non-understandings are frequent which may lead to possible communication breakdowns.

## APPENDIX D - HOW TO USE THE RATING SCALE TO MARK THE AVIATION LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY DEMONSTRATION

The aviation language proficiency demonstration assesses six competencies according to a rating scale that consists of three possible marks: BELOW OPERATIONAL (L4), OPERATIONAL (4) or EXPERT (6). The Language Assessor must assign a mark for each competency in the competency grid of the feedback letter.

### How to assess the competencies

A mark of 6 means an EXPERT level for the competency, a mark of 4 means an OPERATIONAL level and a mark of L4 means a BELOW OPERATIONAL level.

### How to assign a holistic level

The Language Assessor will apply the following rules to assign a holistic level:

**EXPERT holistic level:** No competencies can be assessed below Level 6 EXPERT.

**OPERATIONAL holistic level:** No competencies can be assessed below Level 4 OPERATIONAL.

**BELOW OPERATIONAL holistic level:** Candidates will be assessed BELOW OPERATIONAL any time a competency is assessed as L4. A BELOW OPERATIONAL holistic level is considered a failure of the language proficiency demonstration.

Example 1: EXPERT holistic level is awarded.

Pronunciation	Structure	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Interactions
6	6	6	6	6	6

Example 2: BELOW OPERATIONAL holistic level is awarded.

Pronunciation	Structure	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Interactions
6	6	6	<b>L4</b>	6	6

Example 3: OPERATIONAL holistic level is awarded.

Pronunciation	Structure	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Interactions
<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	6	<b>4</b>	6	6

Example 4: BELOW OPERATIONAL holistic level is awarded

Pronunciation	Structure	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Interactions
<b>L4</b>	4	6	4	6	4

Example 5: BELOW OPERATIONAL holistic level is awarded

Pronunciation	Structure	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Interactions
4	4	4	<b>L4</b>	4	4