

SPEAK Test Guidelines (Q&A)

What is the SPEAK Test?

The SPEAK test is the institutional version of the Test of Spoken English. It is a recorded oral examination that lasts approximately 20 minutes. The test is individually administered in the IEI office. The test taker views and listens to twelve questions, and his or her answers are recorded. Recordings are scored by a minimum of two trained raters.

Who is required to take the SPEAK Test?

All F1 students at the University of Memphis for whom English is not the first language must take the SPEAK test and obtain a score of 50+ in order to be appointed as an instructor of record for an undergraduate course or a Graduate Assistant whose department require them to take a SPEAK test because their duties require a high level of English proficiency.

What do the scores mean?

The lowest score is 20, and the highest score is 60. Scores are reported in 5-point increments. Assessments about responses are made considering the following categories:

Functional competence: the speaker's ability to select functions to reasonably address the task and to select the language needed to carry out the function (functions are the purposes of communication: giving directions, arguing, apologizing, etc.).

Sociolinguistic competence: the speaker's ability to demonstrate an awareness of the audience and situation by selecting language, register (level of formality), and tone that is appropriate.

Discourse competence: the speaker's ability to develop and organize information in a coherent manner, and to make effective use of cohesive devices (conjunctions, transition markers, order markers) to help the listener follow the organization of the response.

Linguistic competence: the effective selection of vocabulary (including proper word forms), control of grammatical structures, and accurate pronunciation, along with smooth delivery, in order to produce intelligible speech.

The following is a general description of the abilities at each 10-point score level:

- 60** The speaker understood the question and answered appropriately. The rater could receive and understand the answer with little effort (native-like efficacy, effective; not necessarily error-free).
- 50** The speaker understood the question and answered appropriately. The rater could receive and understand the answer with reasonable listening effort. The rater may have a question about the response (near-native efficacy, generally effective).
- 40** Communication breaks down or the speaker's answer was not appropriate to the question. The rater understood the basic idea of the answer but not all the details, or there were several gaps in receiving and it would take considerable effort, visual support, or questioning to feel that all the necessary information was exchanged (somewhat effective). One-on-one communication is probably the most effective, but communication with groups will be less effective.
- 30** The rater catches only words and an occasional idea. The speaker's frequent re-starts, hesitations, and inappropriate pacing or pausing make it extremely difficult to understand. It is not clear what the function of the response was (not very effective).
- 20** The individual did not give a response, or the individual's response was not intelligible. The rater had no idea what the function of the response was (not effective).

How often can I take the SPEAK Test?

You can take the SPEAK Test once during each testing period. Tests are offered in July, November, and April. The number of test versions available is limited, so the number of times you can re-test is also limited.

How can I apply for the SPEAK Test?

To schedule a testing time, contact Intensive English for Internationals (IEI) by E-mail: iei@memphis.edu

Is there a charge or a fee?

The Speak Test Fee is \$100. This fee may be paid by departments (transfer voucher) or students depending on individual departmental policies. The fee will be charged each time the student takes the exam.

When can I take the SPEAK Test?

To see the current schedule for testing, please go to the IEI Speak Test web page:
<https://www.memphis.edu/iei/speaktest/index.php>

Can I test on another date or time?

The dates are set according to the contract deadlines set by the Graduate School office. No tests will be administered other than on the posted dates.

When and how can I get my score?

The SPEAK Tests are graded and the scores are emailed to you and your department within two weeks. All scores will be submitted to the Graduate School office in time to meet the contract deadline.

How can I prepare for the SPEAK Test?

A very useful resource to practice for your Speak Test is the Arizona State University Website at the following link:

<https://www.public.asu.edu/~iangould/498/speak.html>

You can find multiple PDF versions of Practice Tests with their audio files as well as instructions on how to record your practice SPEAK Test. You can use this website to familiarize yourself with the format of the test and the type of questions.

It is important to speak clearly and to answer all of the questions as completely as possible since raters of your speech sample will evaluate your proficiency level based on what is recorded. Remember that the SPEAK Test is a test of your ability to speak English, so practice speaking English with native English speakers as often as possible.

What is the exam procedure, and how long does it take?

Length of Test: The actual test is about 20 minutes long and consists of 12 questions. Check-in and closing instructions take about another 10 minutes. You should arrive at the exam location (International Center Building, Room 205) about 5-10 minutes before your scheduled exam time. You should plan on about 30 minutes total for this test.

Photo ID Required: At check-in, you must present your photo ID. Your UM student ID is preferred, but your passport or driver's license is also acceptable.

No Other Materials Needed: You do not need to bring any other materials to the test.

Test Environment: You will be tested individually in a quiet room. You will be listening to and reading from a computer. All of your responses will be recorded on the computer. You will not be allowed to stop or pause the progress of the test before the test ends. Cell phones and other electronic devices are not allowed in the testing area.

What happens if I arrive late?

You may be allowed to test at a later time if there is another testing session available. This is not guaranteed. It is possible that you will have to reschedule for another test day if spaces are available.

What happens if I cannot show up for a test?

You will need to reschedule your testing time. If it is possible, contact the IEI office to let them know that you will be unable to test at your scheduled time. Usually, the testing times fill up quickly; you may not be able to reschedule.

What score is required to pass the Speak Test?

You must obtain a score of **50 or higher** to qualify to serve as an instructor of record for an undergraduate course.

A score of 50 or higher is also needed for graduate assistants whose department asks them to take a SPEAK test because their duties require a high/advanced level of English proficiency.

Students scoring below 50 are allowed to retake the Speak Test once. If the student fails to achieve the minimum score, they must enroll in the IEI SPEAK Test Preparation Course and successfully complete it before being allowed to take the test again.

Can I take another English proficiency test in place of the Speak Test?

The following test scores may be used instead of the Speak Test Score:

TOEFL iBT - Speaking Section Score: 26+

Log in to the ETS website and request that your TOEFL iBT scores be sent to the University of Memphis, institution code R-1459. Ask your department to contact the Graduate School office to look up your scores.

IELTS - Speaking Section Score: 8.0+

Email a copy of your IELTS Test Report Form to the Graduate School with a note indicating that the score is for your Teaching Assistantship requirements. Ask your department to contact the Graduate School office to authenticate your scores.

PTE Academic - Speaking Section Score: 67+

Log in to the PTE Academic website and request that your PTE Academic scores be sent to the University of Memphis. Ask your department to contact the Graduate School office to look up your scores.

Duolingo English - Overall Score (Temporary): 120+

Log in to the Duolingo English Test website and request for your scores to be sent to The University of Memphis. Ask your department to contact the Graduate School office to look up your scores.

Students who have an undergraduate or a graduate (MSc) degree from a US institution in a related field of study are exempt from taking the SPEAK test.

Evidence of a SPEAK Test from a previous institution meeting our minimum scores (50) is acceptable, provided the scores are not older than two years.

What if I have already taken the SPEAK Test at another institution and I scored 50+?

You will need to contact that institution and request an official letter from that university showing your qualifying SPEAK score. The score must not be more than two years old. You will not be required to retake the test.

What if I have taken the TSE at another institution and I scored 50+?

Contact ETS to send us, the graduate school, and your department an official copy of the score. The score must not be more than two years old.

Need help pass the SPEAK Test?

IEI SPEAK Test Preparation Course: Designed for UM international graduate students seeking teaching assistantships. To register for this course, please contact IEI at iei@memphis.edu.

Course Description: This 8-week, non-credit online course prepares UM international graduate students to take the SPEAK Test. The focus will be on the strategies and approaches necessary for the successful production of the various functions of English that the test evaluates. Coursework will be submitted online, via the course website. Successful completion of the course before the SPEAK Test administration date is required for the coursework to qualify as remediation for students needing to re-take the SPEAK test. Class size is limited to ten (10).

Dates: Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters 2023. This remediation course will be offered if there is enough enrollment. Please be aware that the class will be cancelled if there have not been enough students to register by 12:00 pm on the Friday before the first class. You will be informed, and your tuition fee will be refunded if this happen

Format: Asynchronous (Online) **Cost:** \$160

