

Proficiency Levels Needed in the Work World

Proficiency Level	Functions	Corresponding Jobs/Professions Who	Who has this level of proficiency?
Superior	<i>Discuss topics extensively, support opinions and hypothesize. Deal with a linguistically unfamiliar situation</i>	Interpreter, Accountant Executive, Lawyer, Judge, Financial Advisor	Educated native speakers; students from abroad after a number of years working in a professional environment
Advanced High Advanced Mid Advanced Low	<i>Narrate and describe in past, present and future and deal effectively with an unanticipated complication</i>	University professor of foreign languages ----- Doctor, Sales representative, Social worker ----- Customer service representatives, Police officers, school teachers	Students with masters degrees or doctorates ----- Native speakers who learned Spanish in the home environment ----- Graduates with Spanish degrees who have lived in Spanish-speaking countries
Intermediate High Intermediate Mid Intermediate Low	<i>Create with language, initiate, maintain and bring to a close simple conversations by asking and responding to simple questions</i>	Aviation personnel, telephone operator, receptionist ----- Tour guide, cashier -----	Graduates with Spanish degrees who have not lived in Spanish-speaking countries ----- After 6 years of middle/high school, AP ----- After 4 years of high school
Novice High Novice Mid Novice Low	<i>Communicate minimally with formulaic and rote utterances, lists and phrases</i>	----- -----	----- After 2 years of high school ----- -----

From the paper *La Enseñanza de Español y Otras Lenguas Extranjeras en los Estados Unidos: Cantidad y Calidad (The Teaching of Spanish and Other Foreign Languages in the United States: Quantity and Quality)* presented at the II Congreso de la Lengua Española in Valladolid, Spain, October 18, 2001 by Dr. Elvira Swender of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

NOTES:

1. The levels indicated are minimal proficiency levels for specific job descriptions and have been established by subject matter experts from a variety of agencies, organizations and companies for whom ACTFL provides oral proficiency testing following an analysis of the linguistic tasks and the responsibilities of the positions.
2. The references to how long it takes to reach certain levels of proficiency were written specifically for the study of Spanish, a Category I language. Other Category I languages include Afrikaans, Danish, Dutch, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Swahili and Swedish. For Category II, III and IV languages, one can expect that it will take longer to reach the same levels of proficiency.