



American Language Course Placement Test HANDBOOK

**Defense Language Institute
English Language Center**

Joint Base San Antonio, Lackland, TX



PREFACE

This April 2016 edition of the American Language Course Placement Test Handbook (ALCPT Handbook) contains current information about the test and its uses, as well as suggested guidelines for test security, administration, scoring, and interpretation of results. It supersedes the previously published ALCPT Handbook, October 2015 edition.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
DLIELC CONTACTS.....	i
CHAPTER 1 TEST DESCRIPTION	1
A. PURPOSE.....	1
B. TEST CONTENT AND FORMAT	1
C. TEST FORMS AND KITS	2
CHAPTER 2 TEST SECURITY	3
A. APPOINTMENT OF TEST CONTROL OFFICER	3
B. PHYSICAL CONTROL OF TEST MATERIALS	3
C. PREVENTION OF TEST COMPROMISE.....	3
D. PROCEDURES FOR LOST OR COMPROMISED ALCPTS.....	4
CHAPTER 3 TEST ADMINISTRATION.....	6
A. TESTING FACILITIES	6
B. ADMINISTRATIVE SECURITY.....	6
C. TEST ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES	7
D. CONTINUITY BOOK.....	10
CHAPTER 4 TEST SCORING.....	11
A. DOUBLE MARKS	11
B. USING THE SCORING KEY	11
C. SCORING SECURITY.....	11
CHAPTER 5 TEST SCORES AND PROGRAMING	13
A. PLACEMENT	13
B. PROGRAM SIZE CONSIDERATIONS	13
C. PROGRESS CHECKS.....	14
D. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALCPT AND ECL SCORES.....	14
CHAPTER 6 OBTAINING THE ALCPT	15
STEP 1. DLIELC/TESTING – APPROVAL	15
STEP 2. DLIELC/INF – PURCHASE.....	15
APPENDICES	16

CHAPTER 1

TEST DESCRIPTION

A. PURPOSE

The American Language Course Placement Test (ALCPT) is developed by the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) for foreign military and US government-sponsored English Language Training Programs (ELTP) around the world. It measures English language proficiency through the modes of listening and reading.

ALCPTs must be used for the following purposes **only**:

1. place students in an American Language Course (ALC) program;
2. evaluate student progress at the end of an ALC level
3. screen candidates for readiness to take the English Comprehension Level (ECL) test¹
4. evaluate the English language abilities of local personnel working for, or being considered for positions on overseas US military installations as required by US military service regulations.

ALCPTs are not used for ECL practice, promotion or bonus systems, etc. ALCPTs should never be placed in databases, on the internet or otherwise be made available for students to study. ALCPTs are sold to specific language training institutions and must be used only at the location to which it was sold. Any transfer of ALCPT material to another institution must have the prior approval of DLIELC. Because the ALCPT is a U. S. government language test created for authorized purposes only, its sale must be approved by the DLIELC English Evaluation Flight (Testing).

B. TEST CONTENT AND FORMAT

The ALCPT assesses English proficiency through items that evaluate comprehension of grammar and vocabulary through the modes of listening, and reading. All ALCPT forms are equivalent in terms of difficulty.

¹ The ECL test is the primary instrument used for assessing the English language proficiency of international military students (IMS) scheduled to attend Security Cooperation Education and Training Programs and of international participants in certain US- sponsored exercises. The ECL is a strictly controlled instrument. Using the ALCPT to determine a candidate's readiness reduces exposure to the ECL and helps minimize the possibility of test compromise.

The ALCPT is a 100-item, 4-option, multiple-choice test. The test is divided into 2 parts, listening and reading. In Part I, 66 items are based on listening passages. Test-takers listen to audio recordings of English questions, statements, and dialogs, and then select the correct answer from the test booklet. In Part II, Reading, there are 34 items. Test-takers read English questions, statements, and paragraphs, and then select the correct answer.

Answers are marked on separate answer sheets. Test-takers do not mark the test booklet, which allows reuse of the booklets and facilitates scoring. The length of time allowed for taking Part I is determined by the audio recording (25-30 minutes). Part II lasts 30 minutes. The entire test takes approximately 75 minutes, including time for reading the directions and distributing and collecting test materials.

C. TEST FORMS AND KITS

At any one time there are approximately 25 forms of the ALCPT available for purchase, with new forms developed periodically. Purchased forms may be used by a testing location indefinitely, even when they are no longer available in the catalog. If these exams have been kept secure and have been used solely for testing purposes, they should yield reliable test scores. *CAUTION: If a testing location chooses to retire an ALCPT form, the form must be destroyed and NOT be made available for students to study.*

ALCPT forms may be purchased in individual kits. Each kit contains the items listed in the adjacent table.

ALCPT purchases are limited to a maximum of 10 forms per order. However, more than one kit of the same form may be authorized, depending on the needs of the testing location.

KIT CONTENTS	
Item	Quantity
1. Test Booklets	25
2. Audio recording (Compact Disc)	1
3. Scoring keys	2
4. ALCPT Handbook, with:	1
• ALC Placement Guidelines table	1
• Memorandum for the Record sample	1
• ALCPT Inventory Record sample	1
• ALCPT Administration Security Log sample	1
• ALCPT Test-Taker Roster sample	1
• ALCPT Approval Request form	1

CHAPTER 2 TEST SECURITY

A. APPOINTMENT OF TEST CONTROL OFFICER

A Test Control Officer (TCO) and Alternate Test Control Officer(s) (ATCO), if appropriate, should be appointed at each facility. Only these authorized officials should be responsible for the handling, storage, security, and administration of the ALCPT.

B. PHYSICAL CONTROL OF TEST MATERIALS

ALCPT test booklets, audio recordings, scoring keys, and used answer sheets are controlled test items and must be handled accordingly. The validity of test results depends on proper control and security of these materials. Controlled items must be:

1. stored in a locked cabinet when not in use;
2. accounted for by serial number and inventoried at least annually by the TCO (sample inventory form in Appendix B);
3. logged out and in each time they are used, and the log retained at for least one year (sample security log in Appendix C);
4. handled, transported, and administered only by authorized personnel.

C. PREVENTION OF TEST COMPROMISE

1. APPROPRIATE TEST USE

Inappropriate use of a test can lead to the test becoming compromised. **ALCPT items are NOT to be released to any unauthorized person for any purpose. They are NOT to be placed in databases or on the internet as "practice" tests.**

2. TEST FREQUENCY

ALCPT forms can be quickly compromised by administering them too frequently. Results are unreliable if students and/or instructors become familiar with test items. ALCPT's must be given no more often than:

- At the beginning of a course for placement
- One time at the end of each ALC level (after book 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, and 34)

Since the ALCPT can only be administered once per level, it is recommended that on-going student assessment consist of books quizzes, instructor evaluations, or other diagnostic tools. If these assessments indicate that students need to be recycled to an earlier book, then this should be done before the end-of-level ALCPT is administered.

3. INSTRUCTORS' FAMILIARITY WITH TEST ITEMS

Instructors must not become familiar with ALCPT test items. Knowledge of the test places instructors in the position of either teaching specific information they know to be on the test, or avoiding the subject matter entirely to prevent "teaching the test." Both of these situations result in test bias, unreliable test scores, and compromised ALCPTs.

4. GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

In the event of the termination of a contract for which DLIELC had approved ALCPT use, the contract holder must destroy all ALCPT forms and notify DLIELC/Testing.

5. DLIELC USER AGREEMENT

If ALCPTs are compromised because of a violation of the User Agreement, DLIELC retains the right to refuse future ALCPT sales to the country/contractor in violation for a period of up to three years.

D. PROCEDURES FOR LOST OR COMPROMISED ALCPTS

To preserve the global integrity of the ALCPT, it is necessary for TCOs to alert DLIELC/Testing of the loss or possible compromise of ALCPTs, in part or whole, or of any of its components and to investigate such compromise immediately. The procedures are:

1. IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- a. The TCO immediately stops all testing with the test form(s) in question.
- b. The TCO alerts DLIELC/Testing of the situation by email or fax and includes a summary of the compromise with any known details. The summary should include:
 - i. test information (for example, ALCPT form 56: booklets 19 and 22 missing, score key missing, etc.)
 - ii. date (or probable date) of loss or compromise

- iii. verification that all testing with the form in question has been stopped
- c. ALCPT forms proven to have been compromised are not used for a period of one year.

2. INVESTIGATION

The TCO conducts an internal investigation and/or arranges for an investigation by an outside agency to determine facts concerning the loss or compromise.

3. RECORDING

The TCO keeps the complete report of the investigation, including findings and a statement of corrective action taken, in the user agency's Continuity Book

Alerting DLIELC/Testing of actual or potential test compromise enables DLIELC/Testing to inform other ALCPT user agencies who use the same form(s).

CHAPTER 3

TEST ADMINISTRATION

A. TESTING FACILITIES

Testing rooms should be well lit, ventilated, and quiet. A sign such as "QUIET, TESTING IN PROGRESS," is placed on the door and in nearby areas to keep noise at a minimum. Test-takers are positioned far enough from each other to ensure the integrity and validity of test results.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE SECURITY

1. SELECTION OF TEST FORMS

The TCO uses the same form for tests administered on the same day, and a different form for tests administered on different days. Doing this minimizes the likelihood of test compromise by preventing test-takers from discussing items with each other, and by limiting exposure of any specific ALCPT form.

The TCO also alternates the test forms randomly, so that it is impossible to predict which test form will be administered at any given testing session.

2. TCO, ATCO(s), AND PROCTOR(s)

The TCO is responsible for ensuring the proper administration of the ALCPT and may authorize other persons to be proctors (who assist the TCO/ATCO). In order to prevent instructors' familiarity with test items, it is strongly advised that instructors not be appointed as ATCOs or proctors. There should be one TCO/ATCO or proctor for every 15 test-takers. TCOs/ATCOs (and proctors, when available) observe test-takers continuously during the testing period. No one other than the test-takers and authorized testing personnel is present in the testing room during the test. When necessary, interpreters may assist test-takers with preliminary test directions; however, these interpreters must leave the room before the test begins.

3. TEST-TAKERS

Test-takers do not bring anything into the testing room, and they do not leave until they have finished the test and returned all test materials. If a test-taker must leave the room before completing the test, that test-taker is not permitted to return to the test room and finish the test. Instead, the test-taker is scheduled for retesting with another form of the ALCPT. The TCO/ATCO informs all test-takers of this requirement before the test begins

4. TEST MATERIALS

In the test room, the TCO/ATCO gives test-takers an answer sheet, two sharpened pencils, an eraser, and a test booklet. Test booklets are checked before and after testing to ensure that all pages are intact and that there are no extraneous marks. The TCO/ATCO also checks photo IDs and assigns seats. Test-takers are not informed of seat assignments until they report to the test area.

5. HANDLING TEST MATERIALS

When testing is completed, the TCO/ATCO collects all materials and checks all booklets to make sure that all are accounted for and that examinees have not marked the pages.

C. TEST ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

The TCO/ATCO follows these procedures before and during the test.

1. PROCEDURES BEFORE THE TEST BEGINS

The TCO/ATCO:

- a. logs out test materials, making sure to complete the test security log accurately;
- b. prepares the answer sheets by completing the headers, or has test-takers fill in the information just before beginning the test;
- c. makes sure the CD player is functioning correctly and that the audio can be heard by all examinees. An audio recording other than that in the ALCPT kit is used to conduct this sound check;
- d. informs test-takers to not mark the test booklet and to mark only one answer for each question on the answer sheet.

2. PROCEDURES DURING THE TEST

- a. At the start, the TCO/ATCO says:

Ladies and gentlemen, you are here to take an American Language Course Placement Test. You must be quiet; do not talk or communicate in any way during the test. If you must leave the room before finishing the test, I will pick up your test materials, and you cannot return to the room today. If you have any questions, raise your hand and I will help you. I will hand out the answer sheets now.

- b. At this time, the answer sheets are distributed to test-takers. The headers should have already been filled in. The TCO/ATCO says:

Check that the information on your answer sheet is correct.

- c. Before the booklets are distributed, the TCO/ATCO says:

I will now hand you the test booklets. When you receive the test booklet, write the number of the booklet on your answer sheet. Keep the booklets closed until I tell you to open them.

- d. The TCO/ATCO hands a test booklet to each test-taker. After all the test booklets are handed out, the TCO/ATCO says:

The test consists of two parts: “Part I – Listening” and “Part II - Reading.” Mark one answer, A, B, C, or D for each item on your answer sheet. Make a heavy, dark mark on the letter. Make only one mark for each question. If you make a mistake or an extra mark, erase it completely. Answer each question, even if you are not sure of the correct answer. Do not mark on the test booklet. Mark only your answer sheet. Now open the test booklet and listen to the directions.

The TCO/ATCO then starts the ALCPT audio recording. ***Do not stop or replay any portion of it.*** Audio recordings are played only one time during the test. Repeating any portion of it will adversely affect the validity and reliability of the test results.

- e. The TCO/ATCO must be in the testing room at all times during the test administration. There is no talking permitted during the examination. The TCO/ATCO listens and watches for any signs of attempted communication between test-takers, such as pencil tapping or other movements. The TCO/ATCO must stop any suspicious behavior.
- f. At the end of the audio portion, the test-takers will hear “This is the end of the Listening part of the test.” When Part I is finished, the TCO/ATCO says:

You may begin Part II now. You have 30 minutes to complete the test.

The TCO/ATCO also prominently posts the test completion time in front of the room, such as “**The test ends at 9:00.**” The TCO/ATCO should give the examinees a 10-minute warning and a one-minute warning before the end of the test.

- g. Test-takers who finish the test early should raise their hands. The TCO/ATCO collects their testing materials and checks the test booklets before the test-taker leaves. The test-taker then leaves the room quietly.
- h. When the allotted time is finished, the TCO/ATCO says:

Stop. The test is over. Put your pencils down. Close the test booklets. Stay in your place until I finish collecting all the test materials.

- i. The TCO/ATCO first collects all the test booklets, and then all the answer sheets, pencils and erasers.

D. CONTINUITY BOOK

A Continuity Book helps TCOs/ATCOs keep track of duties and test security measures. It also offers a source of accountability and gives new TCOs/ATCOs the necessary resources for the successful and secure continuation of the program. Continuity books might contain:

1. Latest edition of the ALCPT Handbook
2. TCO/ATCO MFRs (sample in Appendix A)
3. Test Inventory (sample in Appendix B)
4. ALCPT Administration Security Log (sample in Appendix C)
5. Test Schedules
6. Test-Taker Roster (sample in Appendix D)
7. ALCPT Approval Request form (Appendix E)
8. ALCPT communications of importance
9. Reports of actual or suspected test compromise

CHAPTER 4

TEST SCORING

A. DOUBLE MARKS

The TCO/ATCO visually scans the answer sheets to see if any items have more than one letter marked. These items are counted wrong.

B. USING THE SCORING KEY

Each ALCPT Form has a unique scoring key. **The correct answers must not be marked on completed answer sheets.** Doing so will create additional answer keys and increase the potential for test compromise.

The TCO/ATCO places the key over the test-taker answer sheet, making sure that they are properly aligned, then counts the number of correct responses and records the score on the answer sheet.

C. SCORING SECURITY

To help ensure that test security is maintained after testing:

1. SCORING

The TCO/ATCO scores all answer sheets in a secure area with no test-takers present.

2. TEST-TAKER ROSTER

The TCO maintains a roster of each test administration (sample roster in Appendix D). The roster includes:

- a. examinees' names
- b. dates of test administration
- c. test forms
- d. scores

3. ANSWER SHEETS

Scored answer sheets that have already been logged are destroyed by shredding or burning.

4. LOG IN MATERIALS

The TCO/ATCO ensures all materials used are accounted for and accurately records this in the ALCPT Administration Log before returning tests to secure storage.

CHAPTER 5

TEST SCORES AND PROGRAMING

A. PLACEMENT

The ALC Placement Guidelines table (below) provides a reference for using ALCPT scores to appropriately place students in ALC level. It does so by showing acceptable ranges of ALCPT scores for each of the ALC books.

In cases where a student scores 29 or below, additional information is especially critical. Since the ALCPT is a multiple-choice test, a score from 0 to 29 can be attributed to guessing and does not reliably measure a student’s English ability. In these cases, input from a language acquisition professional (ideally, familiar with the ALC) might be useful in determining student placement.

ALC PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

Book	ALCPT Score	Book	ALCPT Score	Book	ALCPT Score			
Level I	1	0*	Level III	13	49 - 53	Level V	25	73 - 75
	2	0*		14	51 - 55		26	74 - 76
	3	0*		15	53 - 57		27	75 - 77
	4	0* - 29		16	55 - 59		28	76 - 78
	5	0* - 29		17	57 - 61		29	77 - 79
	6	0* - 29		18	59 - 63		30	78 - 81
Level II	7	25 - 33	Level IV	19	61 - 65	Level VI	31	79 - 82
	8	29 - 37		20	63 - 67		32	80 - 83
	9	33 - 41		21	65 - 69		33	81 - 84
	10	37 - 45		22	67 - 71		34	82 - 85
	11	41 - 49		23	69 - 73			
	12	45 - 51		24	71 - 74			

* ALCPT scores of 29 or below cannot be considered valid indicators of a test-taker’s ability.

B. PROGRAM SIZE CONSIDERATIONS

Placement in an ALC book is sometimes determined by circumstances within the particular ELTP. A training program that has 100 new students entering each week will have more classes and more precise placement than a program with only 50 new students a month.

C. PROGRESS CHECKS

ALCPTs may be administered at the end of an ALC level (six books) in order to check for satisfactory progress. If the score from an end-of-level test is not within the range of ALCPT scores in the ALC Placement Guidelines table, the student's placement should be reconsidered. The student, however, may only be administered one end-of-level ALCPT. It is therefore recommended that instructors' formative assessments of the student or ALC book quizzes be used to assess whether or not a student is ready to take an end-of-level ALCPT. It is also recommended that the professional judgment of instructors and program administrators be considered for placement of students in the correct book.

D. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALCPT AND ECL SCORES

The ALCPT and ECL are generated using the same computer program and are statistically equivalent. When administered under secure, controlled conditions, the tests yield comparable scores. The correlation between uncompromised ALCPTs and ECLs is .95 or higher.

CHAPTER 6

OBTAINING THE ALCPT

DLIELC is the sole source for procurement for all ALCPT materials. There are two steps in ordering ALCPT materials:

STEP 1. DLIELC/TESTING – APPROVAL

All requests for the purchase of ALCPT materials must be screened and approved by DLIELC English Evaluation Flight (Testing). Organizations interested in purchasing the ALCPT must complete an “ALCPT Approval Request” form, found in Appendix E and available online at: http://dlielc.edu/Testing/ALCPT_reqfrm.pdf. Submit the completed “ALCPT Approval Request” form to DLIELC/Testing by email at DLI.Testing@us.af.mil, or through the contact information on page i of this Handbook.

Qualified organizations include:

1. US Security Cooperation Offices and Agencies tasked with using the ALCPT as a prescreening tool for the ECL
2. Foreign military educational institutions that provide English language training to their personnel in preparation for follow-on training (FOT) in the United States.
3. Contractors in the United States who are teaching English to IMSs in order to prepare them for FOT. The awarded contracts must stipulate that the ALCPT will only be used for the training specified in the contract and that the ALCPT materials will be destroyed upon completion of said contract.

STEP 2. DLIELC/INF – PURCHASE

Contact DLIELC Nonresident Programs Division (INF) for information about purchase orders. Procedures for purchase orders of the ALCPT are also included in the current catalog of ALC materials. The catalog is available at <http://dlielc.edu>. A hard copy of the catalog may also be obtained by contacting the Logistics Branch at dlielc.lesl.workflow@us.af.mil, DSN 473-4711 (FAX 473-3063) or 210- 671-4711 (FAX 210-671-3063).

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Sample TCO/ATCO appointing Memorandum for Record

Appendix B. ALCPT Inventory Record sample

Appendix C. ALCPT Administration Security Log sample

Appendix D. ALCPT Test-Taker Roster sample

Appendix E. ALCPT Approval Request form

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Appointment of American Language Course Placement Test (ALCPT) Test Control Officer (TCO) and Alternate Test Control Officer (ATCO)

REF: American Language Course Placement Test Handbook (latest issue)

1. The following personnel are appointed subject duties IAW reference, effective _____, and until officially relieved or released from appointment. Signatures below signify that the appointee has read and understood the ALCPT Handbook and agrees to follow its provisions.

TCO (print or type name)	RANK and SERVICE (grade and title, if civilian)
E-MAIL ADDRESS	SIGNATURE
ATCO (print or type name)	RANK and SERVICE (grade and title, if civilian)
E-MAIL ADDRESS	SIGNATURE
ATCO (print or type name)	RANK and SERVICE (grade and title, if civilian)
E-MAIL ADDRESS	SIGNATURE
ATCO (print or type name)	RANK and SERVICE (grade and title, if civilian)
E-MAIL ADDRESS	SIGNATURE

2. Appointments above supersede those of the previous TCO/ATCOs (provide names):

3. Please **retain for your records** and **for inspection purposes**. (Do **not** send to DLIELC.)

Signature of Appointing Official

Date

Name/Rank/Title of Appointing Official (typed or printed)

E-mail Address

ALCPT Approval Request

Approval by DLIELC/EEF(DLI Testing) is required **BEFORE** placing a purchase order.

User Agreement

User agrees to:

- ❖ Keep all ALCPT materials secured at all times:
 - ✓ Stored in a locked cabinet;
 - ✓ Accounted for by serial number and inventoried annually;
 - ✓ Logged after each use & the log retained for a year;
 - ✓ Handled, transported & administered **ONLY** by authorized personnel at the location to which it was sold.
- ❖ Use the test for the following purposes **ONLY**:
 - ✓ Place students in an ALC program;
 - ✓ Evaluate student progress *at the end* of an ALC level;
 - ✓ Screen candidates for readiness to take the ECL by the SCO only;
 - ✓ Evaluate the English language abilities of local personnel working for, or being considered for positions on overseas US military installations as required by US military service regulations.

- ❖ Prevent duplication (paper, electronic or other) of ALCPT materials.
- ❖ Abide by all provisions of the ALCPT Handbook, including limits on test frequency, proper test rotation, and tracking candidates who are tested.

User understands that:

- ❖ If a contractor loses the original contract for which DLIELC/EEF approved ALCPT use, the contractor is obliged to destroy all forms of the ALCPT.
- ❖ If ALCPTs have been compromised, DLIELC retains the right to refuse sales of new ALCPT forms for a period of up to 3 years.

Failure to abide by these guidelines may result in denial of future ALCPT purchases.

Contact Information

Date: _____

Purchasing organization: _____ Country: _____

Point of contact: _____

Email/phone/(DSN if applicable): _____

Test Program Information

Organization/schoolhouse administering & storing the tests:
(if different from purchaser) _____

City: _____ State/Region: _____

ALCPT test control officer (TCO): _____

Email/phone/(DSN if applicable): _____

Test security measures in place: _____

Number of sessions per year: _____ Max. number tested per session: _____

Number of test rooms: _____ Seating capacity per room: _____

Request Information

Purpose for ALCPT testing: _____

ALCPT Forms (versions) **owned**: _____

ALCPT Forms **requested** (max. 10): _____ Number of kits per form **requested**: _____

For Office Use Only: AP __ APW __ DA __

Submit to DLI.Testing@us.af.mil