

# Citizenship Interview Test

# **Test Administration Directions**

2020 version

# Citizenship Interview Test (CIT) Overview

#### 1. Getting Started

This course provides all materials necessary to complete self-training online. CASAS recommends CIT trainees assemble their own CIT Assessment Manual with the materials presented in this training. This enables each trainee to make notes while completing their training, and to use the manual as a reference source. Begin by reading the instructions to learn how to administer and score this test. With successful completion of the entire self-training process, examiners will receive test administration certification from CASAS.

#### 2. Purpose of the Citizenship Interview Test

This is a standardized oral assessment instrument that tests the listening and speaking skills of adult ESL/Citizenship learners in the context of a simulated oral interview at United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The purpose is to help programs determine whether an individual is ready to pass the naturalization English interview successfully. The primary use of the CIT is as a certification test; it is best to administer the test at the end of a citizenship preparation course. It may also be used for initial screening or for pre-post testing, but only in states where the state plan approves these additional purposes. Results from this test may not be submitted to USCIS.

#### 3. Target Population

This test is appropriate for **adult ESL learners currently enrolled in a citizenship preparation course.** Adults with limited English speaking skills from any language background may take the test, and it is ideal for beginning to advanced ESL learners. Those at a low beginning level of English **may** be able to take this test **if** they have studied in a citizenship preparation course.

#### 4. Test Design

The CIT is an easy-to-use interview test administered one-on-one. It is not designed for group administration. The examiner scores each response during the interview using a 0-1-2 scoring system. Each interview takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes. The CIT can be administered remotely. Go to the California Remote Testing page of the CASAS website for details about CIT remote testing.

#### 5. Competencies Tested

This test assesses oral and aural skills required for passing the USCIS naturalization interview. It does not include questions requiring knowledge of U.S. government and history. Test content includes questions on these topics:

Topics	CASAS Competencies
1. Basic Communication	
2. Personal information and history	0.1.2, 0.2.1
3. Employment information, job history, and income	0.2.1, 4.1.8
4. Information from the N-400 Application for Naturalization	0.2.1, 2.7.3, 3.3.1, 3.4.5, 5.3.6, 5.3.7, 5.5.6, 7.2.1
5. Morality and loyalty to the U.S. Constitution	0.2.1, 2.7.3, 5.1.1, 5.1.4, 5.5.2, 5.6.3, 7.2.1

#### 6. Use of Test Results

Results from this assessment should be used in conjunction with other formal and informal indicators to determine a learner's level, progress within a program, or readiness to pass the USCIS oral interview English component. The CIT may be used for standardized reporting only if administered by a certified examiner according to all specified test directions.

### **The Certification Process**

#### 1. Standardized Administration Requires Certification

The CIT test requires training to become a certified examiner able to order test materials. Although administration and scoring are relatively simple and designed for adult education programs, the test is a performance assessment that consists of rating a language sample. Therefore, training is necessary to achieve scoring consistency.

Throughout the certification process, examiners are thoroughly trained to conduct testing in a standardized manner. Standardized test administration requires following the administration instructions and script precisely and scoring the test according to scoring criteria in these Test Administration Directions. This process ensures that all individuals administer and score the test in a uniform manner. After certification, examiners are authorized to administer and score the test, but they cannot train others.

#### 2. Steps to Certification

There are three parts to becoming certified.:

**Part I.** Successfully complete the test administration certification quiz given in this certification training course.

**Part II.** Successfully complete at 80% accuracy three of six certification interviews in the Certification Training Course.

**Part III.** Conduct and record two interviews. Submit scored test booklets and audio files to CASAS at <a href="CIT@casas.org">CIT@casas.org</a>.

- One Form 973 and one Form 974
- Recorded interviews should be with beginning high or intermediate level English language learners (ELL).

#### 3. Test Examiners

Test examiners must be regular certificated or classified staff members. Examiners should have strong English skills with little or no accent. Examiners should be individuals who will conduct testing in a standardized manner. All test examiners must be certified by CASAS.

#### 4. Annual Recertification

Once examiners receive certification from CASAS, programs may use test results from a certified examiner for accountability purposes to report standardized scores for one year. To maintain certification, examiners will need to participate in annual re-certification. There may be fees for the annual recertification process.

#### 5. CASAS Contacts

Send digital interview recordings and test booklets to the CASAS CIT Team:

CIT@casas.org

For all questions regarding the Citizen Interview Tests contact CIT@casas.org.

#### **Training & Technical Support**

For training support,

email <u>CIT@casas.org</u>

For technical support,

email <u>techsupport@casas.org</u>

#### **Before Test Administration**

#### 1. Follow Test Security Measures

Instructors and CIT examiners should understand that it is not appropriate to use test questions to prepare students for the test; this invalidates results. Instructors should tell examinees not to discuss test questions with one another to ensure that everyone can benefit from the test. Agencies should not duplicate any test materials. All CASAS test booklets are copyrighted. Keep blank test booklets, used test booklets, and all standardized test materials locked in a secure cabinet.

#### 2. Select the Examinees

This assessment is for adults:

- · From any language background
- With limited English-speaking skills
- Enrolled in a citizenship preparation program
- At a beginning high to advanced high level of English

#### 3. Prepare the Testing Room

The testing environment requires a quiet room or office, removed from active student areas such as classrooms, cafeterias, or hallways. Because examinees will be sharing personal information, as well as for test security, it is important they are not within earshot of others. The interview room should be equipped with a table and two chairs.

#### 4. Arrange to Make a Digital Audio Recording of the First Two Interviews

Arrange to make a digital audio recording of the first two interviews. For any recorded interview, the examinee must sign the recoding release on the last page of the test booklet. It is not necessary to record subsequent interviews, but it can be very helpful to have a recording of a learner's performance. Make sure that the quality of the recording is good.

#### 5. Conduct All Interviews Outside the Classroom

One method for scheduling testing is to arrange for instructors to excuse learners from class one-by-one on specific days. It is important to administer this interview test during a scheduled class period, so that learners do not have a chance to discuss the questions and, thereby, invalidate test results.

#### 6. Prepare the Instructor and the Examinees

Before the assessment process begins, it is vital that the examinees and their classroom instructors understand the nature of this test. Examiners should acquaint instructors with the points below, so they can explain this information to class members who will take the CIT:

- 1. The test is an interview that takes approximately 15 20 minutes.
- 2. Students take the test in a designated room (specify when and where), not their classroom.
- 3. Results can help students know more about their speaking skills in English.

- 4. The test may be difficult for beginning level learners, but it is good practice.
- 5. During the test, the examiner cannot answer any questions.
- 6. Students should not discuss questions with other class members or practice in class.
- 7. The examiner will keep personal information given in the interview in confidence.
- 8. The examiner is not from the USCIS, nor is the examiner a USCIS representative.
- 9. Results will not be shared with the USCIS.

### **About the Test Booklets**

Review these features of the test booklets:

#### 1. Two Test Forms, 973 and 974

There are two forms of the test, Forms 973S and 974S, so that examinees who need to take the test again can take another form of the test. (Note: "S" indicates a speaking test.) Both tests are approximately equal in difficulty. Some questions appear on both tests. If the examinee does not pass Form 973, wait until that examinee receives another three to four weeks of instruction, then administer Form 974. If the examinee fails Form 974, that examinee can participate in another period of instruction and then take Form 973.

#### 2. Instructions to the Examinee

Open the test booklet. Read the Instructions to the Examinee **verbatim** to each examinee at the beginning of the interview.

#### 3. Demographic Fields

Test booklets contain fields on the back page to collect demographic information. The examiner will need to obtain some of the demographic information in advance from the instructor or the school administration office, such as the examinee's ID number.

The remainder of demographic information is collected from the following test questions during the interview process:

• Form 973: 1, 3, 7, and 28

• Form 974: 1, 3, 9, and 29

During the interview, write the examinee's responses to these questions on the lines provided in the test booklet.

#### 4. Scoring Column

The scoring column is on the right side of each page. Circle the score for each item as you proceed through the test.

#### 5. Test Sections

The test is divided into three parts. In general, the test questions progress in difficulty. Section one contains the swearing-in question, which often proves to be a little challenging. It is necessary to include this question in the first section because of procedures followed at the USCIS interview.

#### 6. Two-Part Questions

Some of the questions have two parts, A and B. Score only part B of a two-part question.

#### 7. The Final Question on the Test

This is an easy question that will help examinees feel successful at the end of the interview. It is not scored, but please write the answer in the blank provided for demographic data collection purposes.

#### 8. Speaking Level Descriptor Chart

The CASAS Speaking Level Descriptor chart provides a general description of an ESL learner's speaking skills at each level. If the examiner does not already know the examinee's level, the chart will be of assistance in selecting the level.



# Basic Skill Levels for Oral Language

CASAS Level	Proficiency Level	Description*	
E	8	Proficient Skills SPL 8 Participates effectively in most social and work situations; participates in practical and social conversations and in technical discussions in own field. Can meet work demands with confidence, and interact with the public including negotiating and compromising.  Demonstrates control of grammatical patterns.	
D	7	High Advanced/Adult Secondary SPL 7 Functions independently in everyday community, social and work situations except when under tension or pressure. Clarifies general meaning using a variety of strategies. Gives an oral report on a research topic. Takes a position on an issue and argues that position. Speaks with fluency on familiar technical subjects or special fields of interest. Expresses personal values and judgments. Engages in problem solving discussions including predicting consequences of actions.	
С	6	Low Advanced SPL 6 Functions effectively in most survival, social and work situations. Participates in conversations and communicates on the telephone on a variety of topics using a variety of complex structures. (Errors are common and may inhibit communication.) Clarifies meaning through strategies such as paraphrasing. Gives sequential oral directions to complete a complex task (personal or work-related) that involves multiple steps. Participates in group discussions of current issues in the news in a social or work setting. Adjusts language used according to the level of formality required by the situation. Demonstrates control of basic grammar.	
В	5	High Intermediate SPL 5 Functions independently in most familiar personal and work situations. Participates in face-to-face conversations on topics beyond immediate survival needs. Clarifies meaning by rewording or repeating. Uses some spontaneity and creativity in producing language not previously learned or memorized. Demonstrates increasing but inconsistent control of grammar. Retells a story or gives a short oral report in a personal, school or work-related context. Participates in problem-solving activities. Participates as an applicant in a simulated job interview.	
В	4	Low Intermediate SPL 4 Functions satisfactorily in basic survival and very routine social and work situations. Participates in simple face-to-face conversations dealing with familiar topics. Gives oral directions to do a familiar personal or work-related task of several steps. Participates in simple telephone conversations. Makes statements, asks and answers questions in the simple present, past and future tenses on familiar topics.	
A	3	High Beginning SPL 3 Functions with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs. Answers and asks simple questions related to basic personal or work needs using previously learned phrases or simple sentences. Gives simple oral directions for finding a specific location. Communicates simple personal information on the telephone. Has some control of basic grammar including the present, past and future tenses.	
A	2	Low Beginning SPL 2 Functions in a very limited way in situations related to immediate needs; provides basic personal information and responds to simple learned phrases spoken slowly and repeated often. Asks simple questions. Makes statements related to basic needs using previously learned words and phrases.	
A	1	Pre-Beginning SPL 0 No ability to function orally in English. SPL 1 Functions minimally in English. Communicates only through gestures and a few isolated words. Provides limited personal information, (e.g. name, country of birth). Answers simple familiar questions with "yes", "no", or one-word responses.	

<sup>\*</sup>Description provides indicators of students' skills upon completion of each level.

#### **Test Administration**

#### 1. Gather Test Materials

Required Test Administration Materials	<b>V</b>
One test booklet for each examinee (alternate use of Form 973 and 974)	
Rubric, Scoring Guidelines, and Anchors to refer to while scoring	
Digital recorder e.g. smartphone (for certification only)	
Pen or pencil for the examiner	

#### 2. Begin the Interview

The examiner sits behind a table in the testing room and begins by filling out some of the demographic fields. When the examinee enters the testing room, the examiner greets the examinee and asks the examinee to take a seat in the chair opposite the examiner, ensuring that the examinee cannot read the test questions. Using the test booklet, the examiner begins by reading the test instructions as indicated on the test script. These comments should *not* be translated into the examinee's native language. If the examiner is recording the interview, then he or she asks the examinee to sign the recording release on the back of the test booklet.

#### 3. Follow Interviewing Procedures

#### A. Interviewing Procedures: Protocols for Examiners

- 1. Be pleasant and natural.
- 2. Read the question exactly as written, at a normal rate of speech.
- 3. Wait silently and patiently at least three seconds for a response.
- 4. If the examinee asks the examiner to repeat the question, asks for clarification, makes a facial expression that is clearly asking for clarification, or asks a question, the examiner should repeat the entire question only once, using the exact same words. Examiners cannot repeat questions a second time.
- 5. If the examinee does not answer the question after the first repetition, wait three seconds for a response. Proceed to the next question.
- 6. If the examiner cannot hear the examinee's response because it is too softly spoken, the examiner should say, "I'm sorry, I can't hear you. Please say that again."
- 7. If the examinee gives a **partial answer** to a question, **wait three seconds**, then proceed to the next question.

#### **B. Interviewing Procedures: Restrictions**

The examiner should not...

- 1. Use body language or hand gestures.
- 2. Translate any part of the test into the examinee's native language.
- 3. Discuss test questions before, during, or after the test.
- 4. Answer questions from the examinee during the interview or after the test.
- 5. Make comments to the examinee, such as "Good," "Next question," or "Almost done."
- 6. Repeat a question if the examinee says, "I don't know."
- 7. Paraphrase any test question.
- 8. Announce the item numbers.
- 9. Deviate from the test script.

# **Scoring**

The CIT training includes extensive scoring instruction. There are three important documents designed to explain scoring methods for CIT:

- 1. The Rubric
- 2. Scoring Guidelines
- 3. Scoring Anchors

#### 1. The Rubric

To learn scoring, begin with the Rubric. The Rubric is the foundation of the scoring system. It explains the underlying principles for scoring a 0, 1, or 2 for "Communication of Meaning." "Communication of Meaning" includes two aspects for judging the quality of a spoken response to a question: clarity and completeness. Please refer to the Self Training Instructions for more information about clarity and completeness. During the CIT interview tests, examiners may refer to the Rubric.

#### 2. The Scoring Guidelines

Other general rules for scoring are explained in the Scoring Guidelines. The Scoring Guidelines support the Rubric. During CIT interview testing, examiners may also refer to the Scoring Guidelines.

#### 3. The Anchor

There are two sets of Anchors: one for Form 973 and one for Form 974. Anchors provide examples of performance at various levels in the form of scored responses for each test question. The Anchors also provide notes on individual items where necessary. To become an accurate CIT scorer it is important to study the Anchors for both test forms. During CIT interview testing, examiners may also refer to the Anchors to accurately judge the examinee's responses to each test question.

#### 4. Scoring Procedure

The examiner scores each question during the interview. While scoring, examiners should not give credit or make allowances for:

- 1. responses given in the native language
- 2. responses given through gestures
- 3. answers more intelligible to bilingual individuals or to instructors

Examiners should try to avoid scoring too leniently or too severely. Refer to the Rubric, Scoring Guidelines, and Anchors with each question to avoid "drifting" in scoring.

# **Recording Interviews**

#### 1. Recording Interviews

To complete the certification process, each examiner must record and submit two "certification audios", one Form 973 and one Form 974, described in Part II. Examiners should follow the instructions below carefully regarding recording and labeling digital audio recordings. After you pass Part III, you are not required to record subsequent interviews. However, some examiners find having a recording of an interview to check scores helpful. Scoring or checking scores from the recording is acceptable, however audio files must be deleted once they have been received by CASAS or when scoring is completed

Agencies should keep a small number of pass and fail examples of completed CIT test forms for auditing purposes. These need to be kept for three years plus the current year in a central agency location, unless an agency knows that they will be the subject of an ongoing audit, in which case they must keep records for 5 years. Blank and completed CIT test forms 973/974 print or PDF need to be secured in a locked cabinet (print) or secure computer (digital.) (See the CASAS Administration Manual for additional information related to saving and archiving documents.)

#### 2. Recording Tips

Do a sound check before the interview. Many microphones record muffled sound. Please test yours. Try to avoid background noise — be aware of squeaky chairs, street sounds and other noises. Save each digital audio recording with the examiner's name and form number (i.e. Marialee 973)

#### 3. Recording Authorization

Before recording any interview, ask the student to sign the recording release on the test booklet.

# **Calculating the Score**

#### 1. Tallying the Raw Score

Add the scores circled from each test question to arrive at the total score at the end of the test. This is the raw score.

#### 2. Determining the Scale Score

Use the conversion chart on the following page to convert the raw score to a CASAS scale score. Look at the conversion chart for Form 973. Notice that if an examinee receives a raw score of "20" on this form, the scale score is 196. A passing score on the CIT is a scale score of 206 or higher on both forms. The raw score for passing is different on Form 973 and Form 974.

#### 3. Entering the Scale Score into TOPSpro (TE) Software

To record CIT results on the TOPSpro test record:

- 1. Fill in all starred fields.
- 2. Enter the test form number in Field 4 (973S or 974S) and the raw score in Field 9.
- 3. In Field 10 (Test 1), if the scale score is 206 or more, enter 999 for pass. If the scale score is below 206, enter 000 for fail.

# **Interpreting Scores**

#### 1. The Passing Score Range

The minimum passing score is 206 on both forms. Scores from 206 to 240 on Form 973 and from 206 to 245 on Form 974 are in the passing range. Examinees with CIT scale scores that are above 206 have a greater possibility of passing.

#### 2. Determining a Passing Score

CASAS has set a cut score (passing score) for the CIT that predicts whether students are ready to pass their immigration interviews based on the best available studies and data. Since each USCIS office currently has different policies and standards for passing or failing applicants, this research takes into consideration pass and fail experiences from USCIS offices throughout the various regions of the country.

#### **Prior Studies**

Several years prior to beginning CIT test development, CASAS participated in a research project in collaboration with USCIS and the Center for Applied Linguistics to predict the target speaking performance level needed to pass the USCIS English Interview. This study related applicant performance to the Student Performance Levels (SPLs) that were developed in the early 1980s for use in the federally funded refugee project for limited English speakers. This research suggested that examinees would generally pass the English language component of the USCIS oral interview at or above SPL Level 4, which corresponds to the CASAS Low Intermediate ESL level.

#### **Expert Opinion Standard Setting Study**

After the 2002-2003 CIT field test, CASAS conducted a standard setting study to determine a passing score for the CIT. This study involved field practitioners from different parts of the country who have been preparing citizenship students for USCIS interviews for many years, and who have received repeated feedback from their students with respect to whether they went on to pass or fail their USCIS interviews. Based on this experience, these experts used their best judgment to rate a set of 20 recorded CIT interviews. For each of the 20 interviews, the field experts predicted the students' chances of passing the USCIS English interviews. During their independent reviews, the expert raters were not given the students' class level or scale score on the CIT interview. The results from their surveys were carefully analyzed and compared to the study sample examinees' CIT scores.

Another factor that was considered in setting the standard is that a 60 percent passing rate was used by USCIS to determine the minimum passing score for the standardized Government and History test in the 1990s. This information was also used to derive the initial cut score for the CIT.

# CIT Forms 973 and 974 - Speaking

CIT Fo	rm 973			
Score Conversion Chart				
Raw Score	Scale Score			
0	160 170			
2	175			
3	178			
4	180			
5 6	182 183			
7	185			
8	186			
9 10	187 188			
11	189			
12	190			
13 14	190 191			
15	192			
16	193			
17 18	194 194			
19	195			
20	196			
21 22	196 197			
23	198			
24	198			
25 26	199 199			
27	200			
28	201			
29 30	201 202			
31	203			
32	203			
33 34	204 205			
35	205			
36 37	206 207			
38	207			
39	208			
40 41	209 210			
42	210			
43	211			
44 45	212 213			
46	214			
47	215			
48 49	216 218			
50	220			
51 53	222♦			
52 53	225 <b>♦</b> 230 <b>♦</b>			
54	240♦			

CIT Form 974				
Score Conversion Chart				
Raw Score	Scale Score			
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 31	159 170 175 179 181 183 184 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 193 193 194 195 196 197 197 197 198 199 200 201 201 202 203 203 204 205 205			
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52	206 207 207 208 209 209 210 211 211 212 213 214 215 215 216 217 219 220 221 223			
54 55 56	229♦ 234♦ 245♦			

Shaded area is the passing range.

