

Module 4: Administering the SOPA

What are the goals of this module?

In this module, you will learn about:

- preparing to be a SOPA administrator
- how to administer the SOPA; and
- sample SOPA administrations.

Part 1: Becoming a SOPA Administrator

Who can be a SOPA administrator?

As a SOPA administrator, you play a critical role in ensuring that students are able to give their best performances on the assessment.

SOPA administrators must be:

- trained to administer the assessment, through completing this SOPA Training Program and reading the *SOPA Manual*;
- experienced in working with children; and
- highly proficient in the target language.

Depending on how you and your program decide to use the SOPA, you may end up assessing your own students, which may help students feel comfortable with the assessment. You may also assess students you do not teach or know very well. In both cases, a good SOPA administrator should be able to switch from the role of a teacher to an objective test administrator and do the following:

- Put nervous students at ease.
- Manage pairs of students so that they have equal opportunities to respond to SOPA tasks.
- Use student responses to decide when follow-up questions are needed and to select the next task during Track 2.

How do I prepare to administer the SOPA?

After completing training, SOPA administrators must follow seven steps to prepare to administer the assessment. Some steps may be completed by program administrators or teachers as a team rather than individual SOPA administrators. Click on each step to learn more.

1. Choose the grade levels and classes to assess.

As described in Module 2, your school district or language program typically decides when and in what grades the SOPA should be administered. The SOPA can be administered annually and to students in any grade from PreK through 8.

2. Obtain parental consent for video recording.

If SOPA administrations are being video recorded for rating or training purposes, you may need to obtain parental permission as required by local policies and procedures. If consent is needed, consent letters should be translated into the language(s) understood by parents and guardians. Collect consent

letters and make plans for administration to accommodate students who cannot be recorded. You can find a sample consent letter under the “Resources for administering the SOPA” section of the SOPA Resource Library on the main website.

3. Select the SOPA track.

In Module 3, you learned that SOPA administrators need to select Track 1 or Track 2 before administering the assessment. You may need to use both tracks to assess different pairs of students in your program.

To select the SOPA track, consider your students’ development and proficiency levels and your program type. Track 1 is recommended for students expected to perform at or below the Intermediate Mid proficiency level and/or for students enrolled in traditional world language programs. Track 2 is recommended for students expected to perform above the Intermediate Mid proficiency level and/or for students enrolled in dual language or immersion programs. If you are unsure of which track to use, prioritize the expected proficiency level of your students over program type.

4. Prepare and review the scripts for each SOPA task.

Create and familiarize yourself with scripts for all SOPA tasks in the track(s) you will administer. These scripts include everything you will say in the target language and everything you will do during the task based on topics and materials you select to match the needs of your students. See Module 3 for more detailed information on how to develop scripts.

Whether you are preparing new scripts or gathering scripts that have already been developed, check that all scripts are complete in line with the task template to ensure that you are providing the same task instructions and input to all students being assessed. Finally, print and put your scripts in order so that you can easily move through the tasks during the assessment.

5. Match pairs of students.

Student pairs for the SOPA should be matched as closely as possible based on their perceived level of speaking proficiency in the target language and their social compatibility in order to obtain ratable speech samples. When students are mismatched in speaking proficiency, it is harder for the SOPA administrator to probe for the highest level of the more advanced student while also including the other student in tasks above their comfort level, and both students may say less than they are capable of. When students are mismatched socially, shyer students may withdraw and not demonstrate what they can really do in the language.

The students’ language teacher may be best equipped to select the pairs so that students of the same level are matched. Be sure to also check for parental permissions to pair students who will be video recorded.

6. Create an assessment schedule.

After students have been paired appropriately, prepare a daily schedule for assessment. Time slots of 30 minutes should be scheduled for each pair to allow for 20 minutes of assessment and 10 minutes for setup between sessions. The schedule should identify student pairs and the track to be used for each pair. You may adjust the length of each session based on what you know about your students.

7. Gather materials and set up a room for administration.

Based on the selected SOPA track(s), gather all materials you need for SOPA administration. These include printed SOPA scripts, SOPA Rating Sheets for each student pair, and the SOPA Rating Scale (see Module 5 for detailed information on rating materials); manipulatives and other materials for each task as listed in the SOPA scripts; and rewards to be given out at the end of the assessment.

Reserve a quiet room with enough space for SOPA administration and video recording. The room should have a table and four chairs, with furniture appropriate to the students' size. A round table that allows both students to sit near each other and reach the assessment materials is ideal. The room should be as free as possible from visually distracting materials such as posters and objects that are not part of the assessment.

Check for learning

Complete the following check for learning to see what you have learned in this part of the module.

1. Which of the following are characteristics of an ideal SOPA administrator? Select all that apply.
2. True or False: It is best to pair SOPA students randomly.
3. Put the steps to prepare for SOPA administration in the correct order.

Part 2: Administering the SOPA

What is the typical format for SOPA administration?

As a reminder, the SOPA is typically administered to pairs of students by a trained administrator and a trained rater. The administrator primarily conducts the assessment by following the scripts for each task. The rater primarily takes notes and assigns ratings during the assessment and is also in charge of video recording. By having these two roles, the administrator can focus on eliciting language that demonstrates the students' highest proficiency levels, and the rater can focus on recording elements of each student's speech to facilitate assigning accurate ratings.

In programs where there are enough trained staff, this administration format is preferred because each educator can focus on their role, allowing students to show what they can do in the target language and facilitating accurate ratings. This format can be more efficient because extra time for rating does not need to be added to the assessment schedule or later for delayed rating.

Where it is not feasible based on training and staffing, there can be a single SOPA administrator/rater. In these cases, the administrator can focus solely on administration and recording so that ratings can be completed at a later time or serve in a dual role by rating students' responses in real time. See Module 5 for detailed guidance on administering the SOPA with a single administrator and with delayed rating.

How can I create a positive atmosphere for the assessment?

SOPA administrators set the tone for students' experiences during the assessment. As an administrator, you are responsible for creating a positive, safe environment where students feel comfortable and assured that they are being given the same opportunities to understand and perform to the best of their ability.

Creating a positive atmosphere starts with matching students appropriately and setting up a quiet room without distractions for administering the SOPA. When students arrive, greet them with kindness and

introduce everyone in the room observing the SOPA. Throughout the assessment, call the students by name and maintain a relaxed atmosphere. It is appropriate to encourage and compliment students as they respond with a smile and kind words such as “thank you” or “that’s great!”. If a task is clearly too difficult, provide answer options, ask simpler questions, or move on to the next task. To end the assessment on a positive note, finish with a Wind Down activity that both students can complete successfully, congratulate the students, and thank them for participating. Consider also offering them a small prize or choice of reward.

Remember that students bring different backgrounds and learning experiences that affect how comfortable they feel when being assessed. Younger children in particular may be reluctant to speak with SOPA administrators they do not know. Consider having classroom teachers introduce you and explain the SOPA in advance so that students are more likely to engage with you on the day of administration. To put students at ease, you can refer to the SOPA as an activity or interview instead of as a test.

What do I do at the beginning of the assessment?

Complete the following steps at the beginning of the assessment for each new student pair:

1. Verify student names as they enter the room and mark any changes in the assessment schedule.
2. Introduce yourself and everyone present and direct students where to sit.
3. Set up microphones. Confirm that the students and assessment materials are clearly visible.
4. Complete the Warm Up task which provides instructions to students.

What do I do during the assessment?

During the assessment, follow the scripts for each task in your selected SOPA track. Remember that the goal of the assessment is for students to say as much as they can in the target language. SOPA administrators should practice the following techniques:

- Give students equal opportunities to answer questions and alternate who is asked a question first. Make sure that neither student dominates during the assessment due to greater language proficiency or a more outgoing personality.
- Allow students time to think about their answers and do not provide immediate assistance that may prevent them from speaking up.
- Students may assist each other with answers. Note on the rating sheet where assistance was received so that ratings can be accurate.
- Adjust the time spent on each task according to the proficiency level and responses of the students. For example, it is often appropriate to administer tasks at a slightly slower pace to beginning-level students to allow them the time they need to respond to the best of their abilities.
- Make smooth transitions from one task to the next.

[Click here to learn more about managing student pairs during the SOPA.](#)

Sometimes it can be difficult to manage pacing and encourage responses from both students because they are not matched well, having a hard day, or energetic and excited as is often the case for younger learners.

Watch this video to see how SOPA administrators manage the assessment and gave both students opportunities to respond. Pay attention to how the SOPA administrators redirected more extroverted students, encouraged more introverted students to participate, and managed the situation when students talked over each other.

What do I do at the end of the assessment?

After completing the Wind Down task which includes thanking the students and offering a reward, dismiss students from the room. If there is time before the next assessment, review and discuss rating notes. Reset task scripts, assessment materials, and microphones for the next pair of students.

What modifications can I make to the SOPA administration procedures?

As you learned in this module, the SOPA is typically administered in person to pairs of students by a trained administrator and a trained rater following standardized procedures, but modifications can be made as needed. Click on each tab to learn more about different allowable modifications for SOPA administration. Note that validity studies on the SOPA have not been conducted for individual or virtual administration, so these modifications may affect the validity of the assessment.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Administrators may provide accommodations in the SOPA administration procedures for students with disabilities as long as the accommodations do not compromise the purpose of the assessment as a measure of speaking and listening proficiency. Permissible accommodations include frequent breaks, individual administration, or extended time for students who are normally provided extended time during testing.

Individual administration

If you need to administer the assessment to a single student rather than a pair of students, ask only the questions listed for Student A in the task template. Disregard instructions related to taking turns. During Task 3 of Track 1, fill in for Student B by asking the student to give commands to you.

Virtual administration

If your program is unable to administer the SOPA in person, video technology can be used for virtual administration. To reflect the face-to-face and interactive elements of the assessment, administrators and students must use video throughout the assessment. It is not allowable to administer and rate the SOPA based only on audio. As with in-person SOPA administration, you can record the virtual administration to facilitate and verify rating.

For virtual administration, students and SOPA administrators need to have a stable internet connection and use a video-enabled device, such as a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer. It is important to select a video conferencing platform that is free, accessible, and easy to use, and it may be helpful to choose a platform that students already know.

Prepare digital versions of all test materials and use the screen-share function to show them to the students when appropriate during the assessment. If you prepared manipulatives for certain tasks, it's also important to think about how they can be used in virtual administrations. You may consider sending the manipulatives to students at home or preparing digital versions of manipulatives that are appropriate for the tasks. Throughout administration, make sure to look into the camera so that students stay engaged and know when it is their turn to speak during each task.

If you experience technical difficulties that disrupt the audio or video connection before the end of the assessment, restart the session as soon as possible and continue where you left off. If you are unable to immediately resume the session, reschedule the assessment at a later time and start with the task that was interrupted.

Single administrator

If you need to administer the SOPA by yourself, you will be responsible for setting up and operating the recording equipment and for verifying student information as well as following the scripts to administer each task.

If you are also planning to rate students' performances in real time during administration, include additional time in the schedule to allow you to take rating notes and evaluate each task during the assessment, and complete global ratings and rating notes after the students leave the room. Tell students at the beginning of the assessment that you are taking notes on what they can say in the target language to help teachers in their teaching. At the end of the assessment, mark any ratings that should be reviewed later. See Module 5 for detailed information about rating the SOPA.

[Click here](#) to see how a SOPA can look different with a single administrator.

How do I know if I need to make modifications to SOPA administration?

Think about the following questions when deciding if you need to make modifications to SOPA administration:

- Are there any students who will need to be assessed one-on-one?
- Are there any students being assessed who require testing accommodations?
- How many students need to be assessed over what time period?
- How many trained staff are available to administer the SOPA?
- Have different staff trained and practiced for the specific roles of administrator and rater?
- Will staff be able to administer the SOPA to all students in person?

Considering practical constraints of staff, time, and resources as well as your students' needs and your purposes for assessment can point to which format for SOPA administration is right for you, whether that is administration by an administrator/rater team or by a single administrator; administration to pairs of students or one student at a time; and in person or virtual administration.

Part 3: Sample SOPA Administrations

Video Activity

Watching videos of full SOPA administrations shows how administrators set up the assessment, administer each task, transition between tasks, and end the assessment on a positive note. In all of these videos, there is a second person offscreen operating the recording equipment.

To complete this activity, choose two videos to view in their entirety. All videos have captions for you to read along, and the videos in Spanish and Mandarin Chinese have subtitles in English. While you are watching each video, take notes on what you see using the *Module 4 Video Activity Notetaking Sheet*, which you can download from the Resources section in the top right corner of this training program. You will use your notes to answer the questions for reflection and discussion. [Click here](#) to see the videos.

Reflection/Discussion

The following questions are designed to help you reflect on what you have learned in this module.

The questions for reflection and discussion are:

- What did you observe in the SOPA administration videos that worked well?
- What did you observe in the SOPA administration videos that could be improved?
- How can you set up SOPA administration to work well for your program and your students?

Conclusion

What did we cover in this module?

As a reminder, in this module you learned about:

- preparing to be a SOPA administrator
- how to administer the SOPA; and
- sample SOPA administrations.

What should I do now?

Now that you have completed Module 4, you should think about how you will approach SOPA administration. For example, will you need to administer the assessment to some students individually? Will you be providing any accommodations for students with disabilities? If modifications are needed, make sure to follow the guidance provided in this module to ensure a successful SOPA administration. After determining how you will approach SOPA administration, you can start to think about next steps for planning and preparing for administration.

Visit the SOPA Resource Library on the main website to download some documents that may be helpful to you in this process, including a checklist for SOPA administration, a sample parental consent letter for recording, and a sample assessment schedule under the “Resources for administering the SOPA” section.

When you are ready, complete the Check for Learning for this module and then move onto the next module, Module 5: Rating the SOPA. While we recommend that everyone review this module, if you are only going to be administering the SOPA, you may choose to skip ahead to Module 6: Putting It All Together.

Check for learning

Complete the following check for learning to see what you have learned in this part of the module.

1. What can help make the SOPA a positive experience for students? Select all that apply.
2. Match the SOPA administration activity to before, during, and after the assessment.
3. Which of the following are allowable forms of SOPA administration? Select all that apply.