

Module 5: Rating the SOPA

What are the goals of this module?

In this module, you will learn about:

- preparing to be a SOPA rater
- how to rate the SOPA; and
- sample SOPA ratings.

Part 1: Becoming a SOPA Rater

Who can be a SOPA rater?

As a SOPA rater, you are responsible for documenting student performances on the assessment and assigning accurate, reliable ratings to determine their proficiency levels.

SOPA raters must be:

- trained to rate the assessment, through completing this SOPA Training Program including Module 7: SOPA Rating Practice and reading the *SOPA Manual*;
- very familiar with the SOPA Rating Scale; and
- highly proficient in the target language.

Trained SOPA raters can rate assessments that they administer or SOPAs administered by someone else. In all cases, ratings should be based only on what students say, not what teachers think they may be capable of but did not express during the assessment. This means that a good SOPA rater should be able to do the following:

- Apply rating procedures consistently to promote the reliability of ratings by one rater and ratings by different raters
- Take efficient and relevant rating notes.
- Evaluate the highest level of proficiency that students are able to sustain to assign global ratings.
- Write rating justifications that provide examples of student speech to support the ratings.

How do I prepare to rate the SOPA?

After completing training, SOPA raters must become thoroughly familiar with the levels and descriptions in the SOPA Rating Scale and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines to which it is aligned.

As a reminder, we recommend that one person administers the SOPA and a second person serves as the SOPA rater. If you are able to have separate administrators and raters, raters should also follow these steps to prepare to support the assessment:

1. Practice using recording equipment.

Gather equipment for video recording which may include additional lapels or tabletop microphones to capture student voices. Arrange the recording equipment and microphones in the room designated for SOPA administration to ensure that student voices can be heard. Because you need to capture

nonverbal as well as verbal responses, it is important that both students and the materials they are using are clearly visible. Test all elements of recording, including saving digital files.

2. Review the assessment schedule and the SOPA task scripts.

The assessment schedule provides the information you need to label the SOPA Rating Sheets and keep accurate records. By becoming familiar with the SOPA task scripts, you will be ready to prompt the SOPA administrator if there is a need to probe for more language, move to another task, or end the assessment.

3. Review the SOPA Rating Scale and the SOPA Rating Sheets.

Thoroughly review the SOPA Rating Scale to become familiarized with the descriptors for each sublevel as well as the SOPA Rating Sheets to prepare for notetaking.

What do I use to rate the SOPA?

The SOPA assesses student performances against predetermined rating criteria rather than in comparison to other students. There are two tools used to rate the SOPA—the SOPA Rating Scale and the SOPA Rating Sheet. Note that the SOPA Rating Sheet is aligned to the SOPA tracks, so it is important to select the correct rating sheet for Track 1 or Track 2 based on which track is administered. It's also important to have printed copies of both the SOPA Rating Scale and SOPA Rating Sheet when rating the SOPA.

SOPA raters evaluate students' speech and listening comprehension during the assessment against the descriptions or criteria on the **SOPA Rating Scale**. They apply these criteria to document evidence of student performance, rate the highest level of speaking and listening sustained for each task, and assign a global rating based on the full assessment on the **SOPA Rating Sheet**.

The question to ask when evaluating task responses and assigning global ratings in line with the SOPA Rating Scale is, *What is the highest level of speaking and listening proficiency the student sustained?*

What are the levels in the SOPA Rating Scale?

The SOPA Rating Scale includes three major proficiency levels—Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced, each of which is subdivided into Low, Mid, and High levels. Level descriptors are based on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and appropriate for the developmental level of young learners.

The top section of the rating scale provides level descriptors for speaking in terms of quantity and function of speech, vocabulary, and comprehensibility. The bottom of the rating scale provides level descriptors for listening including supports needed for comprehension.

Click each sublevel to view that section of the SOPA Rating Scale.

- Novice Low (NL)

At the Novice Low level, students can produce isolated words and/or memorized expressions to exchange greetings or name familiar objects; use limited vocabulary and practiced language on very familiar topics; and outside of communicating with memorized expressions, their language may have errors or be unintelligible.

For listening comprehension, students can occasionally recognize isolated, very familiar words with support from gestures or visuals.

- Novice Mid (NM)

At the Novice Mid level, students can produce a number of practiced words and/or phrases to provide information; use simple vocabulary and practiced language on very familiar and everyday topics; and communicate minimally with frequent pauses and use of native language.

For listening comprehension, students can understand a number of highly familiar words and phrases with support from repetition and gestures or visuals.

- Novice High (NH)

At the Novice High level, students can produce simple sentences that may be short or rely on memorized language to request and provide information and express and react to preferences on everyday topics; use vocabulary related to familiar and everyday topics; and be generally comprehensible with some breakdowns or errors.

For listening comprehension, students can understand simple sentences on familiar topics and some original sentences with contextual support.

- Intermediate Low (IL)

At the Intermediate Low level, students can produce simple sentences to create with language, handle a few uncomplicated conversations, and express and react with some details to preferences or opinions on familiar topics; use vocabulary for concrete exchanges on familiar topics; and be generally comprehensible with frequent repetition and rephrasing.

For listening comprehension, students can understand familiar and new sentence-level language in a limited number of content areas at a normal rate of speech with contextual support.

- Intermediate Mid (IM)

At the Intermediate Mid level, students can produce multiple sentences to create with language, handle a variety of uncomplicated conversations, and exchange information and express preferences or opinions on a variety of familiar topics; use vocabulary for simple social and limited academic topics; and be generally comprehensible with some pauses and repetitions.

For listening comprehension, students can understand familiar and new sentence-level language in a variety of familiar contexts at a normal rate of speech with slow-downs for unfamiliar topics.

- Intermediate High (IH)

At the Intermediate High level, students can produce connected sentences that may form paragraphs to narrate and describe in various time frames with some breakdowns, handle uncomplicated social situations with ease, and interact to meet needs and explain preferences or opinions on a variety of familiar and some concrete topics; use a range of vocabulary for simple social and some academic topics; and be generally comprehensible with breakdowns when attempting higher-level tasks.

For listening comprehension, students can understand stretches of connected speech on a range of everyday topics at a normal rate of speech.

- Advanced Low (AL)

At the Advanced Low level, students can produce a few simple paragraphs to narrate and describe in major time frames with some control, resolve an unexpected complication in familiar situations, and discuss a wide variety of familiar concrete topics; use a range of vocabulary for a variety of social and academic topics; and be comprehensible with uneven fluency of speech and some use of strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution.

For listening comprehension, students can understand main ideas and some details in connected speech on a range of everyday and some academic topics.

- Advanced Mid (AM)

At the Advanced Mid level, students can produce organized paragraphs to narrate and describe in major time frames with good control, resolve an unexpected complication in familiar situations with ease, and discuss a wide variety of familiar and unfamiliar concrete topics; use a range of vocabulary for a variety of social and academic topics with specificity; and be easily comprehensible with fluency of speech and frequent use of strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution.

For listening comprehension, students can understand main ideas and most details in connected speech on a wide variety of everyday and academic topics.

- Advanced High (AH)

At the Advanced High level, students can produce extended, organized speech to narrate and describe accurately in all time frames, resolve an unexpected complication in unfamiliar situations, and discuss and support opinions on a variety of complex concrete topics and some abstract issues; use an extensive range of vocabulary for a wide variety of social and academic topics and some abstract topics with precision; and be fully comprehensible with great fluency of speech and full use of strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution.

For listening comprehension, students can understand complex language including unfamiliar or abstract topics.

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 rater? Select all that apply.
2. True or False: SOPA raters can rate assessments that they do not administer.
3. Match the description of speaking proficiency to the level of the SOPA Rating Scale.

Part 2: Rating the SOPA

What do I need to do as a rater?

The objective for SOPA raters is to assess the highest level of language a student can sustain in speaking and listening based on the evidence that students produce across tasks. Although these skills are

related, you will assign separate ratings for speaking and listening, and students may have different proficiency levels in each.

Follow these procedures to assign ratings for each student in the pair.

For each student:

1. Take thorough notes during the assessment.
2. Evaluate the highest level of proficiency in speaking and listening demonstrated for each task.
3. Review notes and evaluations across tasks.
4. Assign a global rating for speaking.
5. Assign a global rating for listening.
6. Write justifications for the global rating.

How do I use the SOPA Rating Sheet?

The SOPA Rating Sheet is designed for you to assign ratings efficiently and document all information needed to support reporting of student ratings.

At the top of the rating sheet, fill in the assessment date, language, class, administrator, rater, and student names. Note that the rating sheet has two pages, one for Student A and one for Student B, and it is important to write the full name for each student on the appropriate sheet.

For each task and separately for each student, use the Notes section to take notes on the language the student produces and their listening comprehension as related to the proficiency level expectations for the task which are shown in the Proficiency Levels section immediately below the task name. Next, compare this evidence to the SOPA Rating Scale to evaluate the highest level of speaking and listening the student sustains during the task and record these levels in the Evaluation section.

After all tasks are completed, review the Notes and Evaluation results across tasks to determine the highest levels of language the student was able to sustain in speaking and listening during the assessment. Indicate these levels and describe how the student's performance corresponds to the ratings you assigned in the Global Rating & Justification section.

How do I take effective rating notes?

Effective rating notes record information about student language that helps you match the student's speech and comprehension to the level descriptions in the SOPA Rating Scale. Remember to record instances where a student receives assistance with answers from the other student.

When you are taking notes during a SOPA administration, maintain a pleasant expression. If your notetaking makes students nervous, you or the administrator can explain that these notes are used to help teachers in their teaching, not to focus on mistakes.

To be thorough but efficient in notetaking, it can be helpful to focus your notes based on the students' proficiency levels. Click on each tab to learn more about focusing your notes across levels.

- For Novice-level speaking, write *exactly* what students say to determine accurate ratings.
- For Intermediate- and Advanced-level speaking, write *specific examples* of speech that demonstrate the *highest proficiency* level sustained. Record examples of *key features* of the speech that reflect the descriptors of the SOPA Rating Scale.

- For all levels of listening, write *specific examples* that show student understanding or a lack of comprehension. Note that while higher level SOPA tasks are designed to elicit speech at higher proficiency levels, they may not provide enough input for students to clearly demonstrate listening comprehension at Intermediate Mid or above. For these tasks, if students show full understanding of the task instructions and questions and are successful in responding to the task, rate their listening proficiency at the same level as their speaking proficiency. If students are not able to successfully complete the task and/or demonstrate that they partially or fully misunderstand the task instructions and questions, read the descriptors of the lower levels in the SOPA Rating Scale and rate their listening proficiency accordingly.

How do I assign global ratings and write justifications?

Click on each bar to learn more.

Global ratings are a final, summary evaluation of the evidence you see across all SOPA tasks. They are not based on a calculation that includes ratings for each task. Instead, global ratings represent the highest levels of speaking and listening proficiency that the student demonstrates during the assessment. A student will likely demonstrate evidence of a range of proficiency levels across the SOPA, depending on the varying demands of the tasks. Therefore, evidence of the global rating may be seen only in a single task that targets that level of performance.

To assign global ratings, review your rating notes and the highest levels for speaking and listening that you recorded in the Evaluation section, then check the appropriate boxes for global ratings. If you are rating during administration by a paired SOPA administrator, review your notes with the administrator and confirm agreement on ratings.

When writing rating justifications, keep in mind that these are meant to capture why you rated the student's overall performance at a particular sublevel. Rating justifications should include descriptions of how the student's speech and listening comprehension correspond to the global ratings you assigned and provide examples that support the ratings. They may include information about what additional evidence would be needed to determine a higher level.

[Click here to see an example rating justification.](#)

Speaking: Intermediate Mid; Listening: Advanced Low

Sara creates original sentences and elaborates on her ideas throughout the tasks (e.g., *sí, pero mi mamá no me deja*). She relies heavily on listing structure to narrate and explain (e.g., *y después crece y crece y después tiene frutas*) and requires some further prompting to include more detail. When producing more complex, connected sentences across multiple time frames, there are frequent breakdowns due to limited control (e.g., *cuando comió, se, um, se quiere sentar porque es sentada*). Does not require modified or slowed speech in the prompts and demonstrates strong comprehension of every task.

What modifications can I make to SOPA rating procedures?

As described in Module 4, it is recommended to have two people administer the SOPA, one who serves as the administrator and one as the rater. In this format, the rater takes rating notes in real time as students respond and assigns global ratings at the end of the assessment.

Other options for rating the SOPA may be used to meet your program needs. Click on each tab to learn more about different allowable modifications for SOPA rating.

Single administrator-rater

A single SOPA administrator may serve as both administrator and rater at the same time. In these cases, extra time must be built into the assessment schedule to allow for taking notes and completing evaluations after each task as well as assigning global ratings and writing rating justifications at the end of each assessment. Tell students at the beginning of the assessment that you are taking notes. At the end of the assessment, mark any ratings that should be reviewed later. Alternatively, if the assessments are being recorded, the administrator can focus solely on administration and they or another trained rater can complete ratings at a later time.

Delayed rating

Video recordings can be used to rate SOPA assessments after they are administered, either by the SOPA administrator or a different trained rater. Delayed rating may be used to assign initial ratings, to verify ratings or check ratings flagged for review during administration, or for double rating, where two raters assign independent ratings which are then discussed to come to a final rating agreement.

The same materials and procedures are used when rating the SOPA based on recordings as when rating in real time. When completing delayed rating, raters must be provided with the SOPA task scripts. They should also review the manipulatives and other materials provided to students for each task if they are not already familiar with these from administration.

Double rating

Video recordings can be used for double rating or rating verification. The same rating materials and procedures are used for the second rating as for the original rating. To come to a final rating agreement, time must be allotted for rating discussion, consensus, and documentation of final ratings. For more information about what to do when encountering disagreements about ratings, see the SOPA Manual.

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

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

- How many students need to be assessed over what time period?
- How many trained staff are available to rate the SOPA?
- Have different staff trained and practiced for the specific roles of administrator and rater?
- Do you have accessible recording equipment and parental permission to record?
- Do you want the SOPA to be double rated?

Considering practical constraints of staff, time, and resources as well as your purposes for assessment and plans for analyzing and reporting result can point to which format for SOPA rating is right for you, whether that is rating by one staff member while the SOPA is being administered by another staff member; delayed rating using recordings of the SOPA administration; and double rating with other staff members to verify the ratings provided in real time during the administration.

How can I report the SOPA results?

In addition to being used by classroom teachers, SOPA results can be shared with various stakeholders including administrators, parents, and students as described in Module 2. To report SOPA results at the school level and facilitate data analysis, you can use a school reporting form that includes the student's first language, date of assessment, teacher or class, and global ratings for speaking and listening. You may find a sample school reporting form under the "Resources for rating the SOPA" in the SOPA Resource Library on the main website. Individual SOPA reports should include more information about task performances and the rating scale to help parents or students understand how to interpret the results.

Part 3: Sample SOPA Ratings

Video Activity

Taking rating notes and assigning global ratings for videos of full SOPA administrations allows you to practice using the SOPA Rating Scale and Rating Sheet and compare your ratings to our rating notes.

To complete this activity, choose one video to view in its entirety. All videos have captions for you to read along, and the videos in Spanish and Mandarin Chinese have subtitles in English. As you are watching the video, complete the SOPA Rating Sheet with student names, notes, and evaluations. Then, assign your global ratings and write justifications. Finally, compare your notes and ratings to the expected ratings. You can download the SOPA Rating Scale, blank SOPA Rating Sheets, as well as completed *Module 5 Video Activity Expected Ratings* 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.

Reflection/Discussion

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

- Where did your ratings differ from the expected ratings? How do the notes and justifications help explain these ratings?
- What did you find challenging about rating the SOPA? Why?
- How can you set up SOPA rating to work well for your program?

Conclusion

What did we cover in this module?

As a reminder, in this module you learned about:

- preparing to be a SOPA rater
- how to rate the SOPA; and
- sample SOPA ratings.

What should I do now?

Now that you have completed Module 5, you should think about how you will approach SOPA rating. For example, will you have separate administrators? Will you record administrations? If modifications are needed, make sure to follow the guidance provided in this module to ensure the accuracy and efficiency of your SOPA ratings. After determining how you will approach SOPA rating, you can start to think about next steps for planning and preparing for rating.

Visit the SOPA Resource Library on the main website to download some documents that may be helpful to you in this process, including the SOPA Rating Scale, SOPA Rating Sheets for Track 1 and Track 2, and a sample school reporting form under the “Resources for rating the SOPA” section.

When you are ready, complete the Check for Learning for this module and then move onto the next module, 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. Put the steps to rate the SOPA in the correct order.
2. Which of the following is recommended to take effective rating notes?
3. Which of the following are allowable according to the SOPA rating procedures? Select all that apply.