

Help and Frequently Asked Questions

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Eligibility Requirements to Bring the Exam:

- Applicants must be citizens of the United States.
- Applicants must be at least 20 years old to apply. They must be at least 21 years of age to be appointed. All career candidates must be appointed to the Foreign Service prior to the date at which a candidate reaches age 60. Applicants must be at least 20 years of age and no older than 59 on the date of the examination. The age limit is based on date of birth: applicants are not eligible one day after their 59th birthday.
- Availability for worldwide assignment, including Washington, D.C.
- No applicant will be considered who has previously been separated from the Foreign Service under sections 607, 608, 610, or 611 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended, or who resigned or retired in lieu of separation under these provisions. In addition, no applicant will be considered who has previously been separated for failure to receive a career appointment under section 306 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended or who resigned or retired in lieu thereof.
- *No specific educational level or proficiency in a foreign language is required for applicants.*

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Testing Accommodations

The Foreign Service Written Examination is prepared and administered by ACT for the U.S. Department of State. In accordance with Federal law, the U.S. Department of State will provide reasonable accommodation to enable qualified applicants with disabilities to bring the FSWE. Accommodation may include a reader, a person to record answers, a separate testing room, extra testing time, a Braille or cassette version of the test and/or large-print versions of the exam. Decisions for these and other accommodations will be made on a case by case basis.

All applicants, including those with disabilities requesting accommodations, must register online. Requests for testing accommodation and **complete**, current (within the last five years) supporting documentation must be received by the application deadline [March 1, 2007 for foreign (international) test centers and March 8, 2007 for U.S. test centers] and must be sent with a copy of the online confirmation received after submission of an online application. Send requests for testing accommodations and complete supporting documentation to:

*Foreign Service Written Examination
PO Box 4070
Iowa City, IA 52243-4070, USA.*

Requests that are incomplete or are not supported by appropriate documentation by the registration deadline may not be approved. Candidates who need testing accommodations are requested to register as early as possible in order for ACT to have sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.

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The Alternate Test Date for Religious Beliefs

All applicants, including those requesting an alternate Sunday test date, must register online. An applicant whose religious beliefs preclude him or her from taking the examination on April 21, 2007 may apply to **test on Sunday, April 22, 2007**. The alternate test date is available only as an accommodation for those who, for religious reasons, cannot bring the examination on the scheduled Saturday date. These registrants may request an accommodation to bring the examination on the alternate test date, April 22. The accommodation request must be in writing and should include documentation supporting the need for a religious accommodation. This documentation must be received by the application deadline [March 1, 2007 for Foreign (international) test centers and March 8, 2007 for U.S. test centers] and must be sent with a copy of the online confirmation received after submission of an online application to:

*Foreign Service Written Examination
PO Box 4070
Iowa City, IA 52243-4070, USA.*

Please note that the applicant may initially receive an Admission Letter for the Saturday

test site, but will be reassigned to the alternate test date test site as soon as ACT receives and approves his or her documentation. The applicant will be reissued a new Admission Letter once ACT has received and established the alternate Sunday test center.

Alternate test dates for the examination will not be authorized for any reason other than for Saturday Sabbath observance.

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Contact Information

To correct information, inquire about registration status, or for registration questions:

- Call (319) 341-2500 or 1-800-205-6358. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Central Time.
- Fax (319) 337-1122
- Write:

*Foreign Service Written Examination
PO Box 4070
Iowa City, IA 52243-4070, USA.*

- Email fswe@act.org

To report **technical** problems with completing online registration, we have provided an email address for these specific concerns. The address is fswe@act.org.

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AOL and the Online Registration

If you are using **America Online (AOL)** to connect to the Internet, please follow these directions to access the Foreign Service Written Examination Online Registration from AOL.

Follow the directions below for best access to Online Registration for your hardware and software.

1. **AOL 4.0 through 9.0 for Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, or XP (32 bit):** For users running Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, or XP on a Pentium class machine with 16 MB RAM and between 50 MB and 230 MB free disk space (depending on which version and options are used).

Under these configurations, you may use the AOL for Windows native browser

for Online registration.

2. **Macintosh:** The AOL Macintosh browser will not work with this application.

Use a third-party browser, Netscape Communicator 4.7 or Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 or above. Netscape Communicator for Macintosh may be downloaded from Microsoft's website.

Once you have installed your Web browser, follow the [instructions](#) at the bottom of this section to use it.

Instructions for running an external browser with AOL

- Open your AOL software and sign on to AOL
- Minimize AOL
- Start your external browser by double-clicking its program icon
- Enter <http://www.act.org/fswe/> into your external browser to enter online registration

If you are using a non-native browser with AOL, **be careful not to miss AOL's 45 minute disconnect alert.**

Additional Requirement: This application uses *Secure Socket Layers* (SSL) to encrypt your registration information. You must have SSL enabled to register electronically.

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Cannot Use IE 4.5 for Macintosh

Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.5 for the Macintosh has a known software problem that makes it incompatible with the Online Registration. Users with this combination will need to use a different browser/computer to register, [request](#) a printed copy of the registration guide, or [access](#) the Alternative Registration Method.

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Privacy Act Statement

Section 301 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended, 22 U.S.C. s 3941, provides that the Secretary of State shall prescribe, as appropriate, written examinations for appointment to the Foreign Service. The principal purposes of the information collected on the registration form are to: 1) determine your eligibility to bring the Foreign Service Written Examination; 2) register you for the Foreign Service Written Examination; and 3) ensure the integrity of the examination process. Routine uses of the information collected on the registration form include preparation of statistical reports and analyses.

Such reports and analyses are prepared in such a way that they are not individually identifiable and may be shared outside the Department. In addition, information on the form may occasionally be provided to other federal agencies in response to a request for information in connection with the hiring or retention of an employee or to Members of Congress in response to an inquiry made at the request of that individual.

Your Social Security Number is used as your applicant identification number. Executive Order 9397 authorizes solicitation of your Social Security Number for use as an identifier in personnel records management, thus ensuring your proper identification throughout the selection and employment process. Furnishing your Social Security Number, as well as other information requested on the form, is voluntary, but failure to do so may prevent timely processing of your application or may prevent us from registering you for the Written Examination.

Collection of Disability Information

Collection of the requested information is authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112). The information you furnish will be used for the purpose of producing statistical reports to show agency progress in hiring, placement, and advancement of individuals with disabilities and to locate individuals for voluntary participation in surveys. The reports will be used to inform agency management, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Congress and the public of the status of programs for employment of individuals with disabilities. All such reports will be in the form of aggregate totals and will not identify you in any way as an individual. While self-identification is voluntary, your cooperation in providing accurate information is critical.

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Paperwork Reduction Act

The time burden of this form is estimated at an average of 20 minutes, including the time needed to look for, get, and provide the information required. The Paperwork Reduction Act informs us that you do not have to provide the information requested if this form does not display a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB control number is 1405-0008. We would appreciate any comments on the estimated response burden, and recommendations for reducing it. Please send your comments to A/ISS/DIR, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520. The U.S. Department of State number for this form is DS-1998 E, 06-1999.

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Problems with Online Registration

If you are having problems completing the online registration, call ACT at (319) 341-2500 or 1-800-205-6358 between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Central Time or email fswe@act.org.

Registration Processing

Please read carefully all the instructions regarding the process and completion of the online registration. Be certain that you have completed all items correctly. If the registration is incomplete, it will not be processed. You will need to allow at least 10 days for processing before requesting registration status. Your registration must be entered by 5:00 p.m. Central Time the day of registration deadline. For foreign (international) test sites, the receipt deadline for the April 8, 2007 FSWE is March 1, 2007 and for U.S. test sites it is March 8, 2007.

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Career Track Selection Summary

Career candidates can expect to spend most, if not all, of their Foreign Service careers in the career track selected when registering for the exam. All candidates are urged to read carefully the following descriptions in the Registration Guide before making a decision. A brief overview of each career track is provided below.

Management Career Track:

- Develop contacts with host-country government and business officials.
- Advocate for the interests of the U.S. with the host government.
- Manage multi-million dollar operational and real estate budgets; oversee local employees.
- Maintain U.S. government offices and residences within the host country.
- Negotiate bilateral work agreements and reciprocal tax treatment.
- Utilize personnel and other resources to support the work of the Foreign Service.
- Oversee diplomatic security for mission.

Consular Career Track:

- Acquire expertise in local laws, customs, and political climate.
- Provide both emergency and non-emergency services to American citizens.
- Respond to inquiries from a range of sources, including congressional offices.
- Adjudicate visa applications to determine who may enter the United States.
- Work to combat consular fraud.
- Develop innovative practices to protect U.S. citizens and keep U.S. borders safe.

Economic Career Track:

- Develop contacts in host government and local business community.
- Advance U.S. economic, commercial, scientific and technological interests.
- Work with international and non-governmental organizations on U.S. interests.
- Resolve bilateral trade disputes and promote liberalization of world trade.
- Report on policy developments and make recommendations for U.S. action.

- Negotiate trade-related agreements and treaties.
- Provide assistance to local American and foreign business communities.

Political Career Track:

- Develop host country and other contacts to advance U.S. interests.
- Assess political developments and make recommendations for U.S. action.
- Convey official U.S. communications to host-country government.
- Communicate with foreign governments seeking support for shared goals.
- Participate in developing and implementing U.S. foreign policy.
- Advise U.S. policy makers on local views and their implications.

Public Diplomacy Career Track:

- Develop and maintain contacts with those who influence public opinion.
- Serve as post spokesperson, and address all media inquiries, support Ambassador with media events.
- Explain the complexities of U.S. society, culture, and foreign policy agenda.
- Manage academic and cultural programs and encourage bilateral participation.
- Ensure U.S. positions are understood and that misrepresentations are corrected.
- Promote U.S. core values of free speech and transparency.

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Test Center Choice

Every consideration is given to assign you to the requested test center. But, because of space limitations, this is not always possible. In large metropolitan areas, some test centers will be located in suburban areas. Test center assignments are made on a first-come, first served basis. The exact location of the test center where you are assigned will be printed on your admission letter. **You are guaranteed a seat at the assigned location only.**

All information regarding test center hotel and food accommodations are the responsibility of the examinee. Possible information might be accessible through the Internet.

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Test Center Admission and Regulations

- All applicants, including those requesting the alternate Sunday test date or a testing accommodation, must register online.
- If you provide an email address when you register, you will receive an email providing directions for downloading your admission letter when you have been assigned to a test center. You will not be mailed an Admission Letter. Early registrants will receive their admission letters after February 1, 2007. Registrants registering after February 1, 2007 and later can expect their admission letter

within 72 hours.

- Bring your admission letter with you to your test center; you will be required to show it to the supervisor at the test center. Also bring a second means of identification, such as a government-issued ID, driver's license, passport, or any document bearing your photograph. Test center supervisors are authorized to refuse admittance to applicants whose identities cannot be positively established.
- The admission letter is not transferable to another person.
- If you lose your admission letter, or if you have not received it **ONE WEEK** before the test date, immediately notify ACT at 1-800-205-6358 or (319) 341-2500 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. central time and request authorization to bring the examination. If you are properly registered and it is too late to mail an authorization, ACT will give you the test center reporting location and reporting time.
- The staff at each test center will observe certain common procedures to ensure that all applicants have equal testing time and that the operation of the center meets the requirements for standardized testing.
- The Foreign Service Written Examination will be given only on the day and time scheduled. Makeup examination cannot be authorized for any reason.
- You should report to the test center at the time shown on your admission letter. Actual starting time of the exam may vary at different centers due to differences in the amount of time necessary for pre-test administrative procedures. If you report to the center later than the time stated on your admission letter, you will not be admitted.
- **No pencils are furnished at the center.** Bring an eraser and three or four No. 1 or 2 pencils for marking your answer sheet and a black ink pen for writing the essay.
- Applicants are not permitted to continue any part of the examination beyond the established time limit. Bring a watch since there may not be a clock visible to you in the testing room. Proctors are present throughout the examination.
- Scoring will be based on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for guessing.
- **The only things candidates are permitted to bring into the testing room are soft-lead (No. 1 or 2) pencils, erasers, and black-ink ink pens for the essays.** For example, candidates may not bring highlighters, backpacks, purses, briefcases, food or drink, beeping alarms, calculator watches, wristwatches with picture-taking feature, pagers, cellular phones, books, notes, scratch paper, Palm Pilots or other handheld computers, any type of digital assistants or wireless email devices, rulers, calculators, cameras, radios, tape recorders, lapboards/desktops, or aids of any kind into the testing rooms. Candidates may not wear hats, earplugs, or headphones. Any such materials brought by applicants will be collected by testing staff and returned when the applicant has completed the examination and is leaving the testing room. Test center supervisors will not permit anyone found with such materials after the test begins to continue the test.
- Scratch paper is not permitted. The margins of the test book may be used for notes and figuring. All responses must be marked on the answer sheet. No credit will be given for work done in the test book.

- If any applicant is discovered engaging in any kind of misconduct during the course of the test administration (e.g., creating a disturbance; giving or receiving help; using notes, books, or papers of any kind; working on one section of the test during the time allotted for another section; removing test materials or notes from the test room; or taking part in an act of impersonation), the applicant will be dismissed from the center, and the answer sheet will not be scored.

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Foreign Language Proficiency Description

Code for Language Proficiency Scale (developed by the Department of State's School of Language Studies).

1. *Elementary Proficiency* requires the ability to satisfy routine travel and courtesy needs and read basic lesson material and common signs, etc.
2. *Limited Working Proficiency* requires the ability to satisfy routine social and limited office needs and to read intermediate or simple colloquial texts.
3. *General Professional Proficiency* requires the ability to speak accurately and with enough vocabulary to handle social representation and professional discussions within special fields of knowledge.
4. *Advanced Professional Proficiency* requires the ability to speak and read the language fluently and accurately on all levels pertinent to professional needs.
5. *Native or Bilingual Proficiency* requires language skills equivalent to that of the educated native speaker.

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