

Defense Language Aptitude Battery

The Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) is a standardized government test, approximately two hours in length, used to determine the natural ability of armed services members to learn a foreign language.

It is difficult to study for the DLAB in the traditional way, as the DLAB is designed to measure language-learning potential, not current knowledge. Because the testing involves a gibberish language, there is no way to create a traditional study guide, however, studying the grammatical rules that apply to each specific section of the test and knowing what to expect, will give you a definite advantage.

The DLAB test scores are ultimately used to determine the service member's eligibility for language training in accordance with (IAW) AR 611-6 and for reclassification into Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 37F, 97E, or 98G IAW DA PAM 611-21. You may take the test to fulfill a requirement, such as Special Forces or the Olmsted scholarship. You may also take it if you are trying to get a job that specifically requires language training, such as a linguist, cryptographer, or signal intelligence. This applies to the following:

- MOS – used by Army and Marines
- AFSC – Air Force Specialty Code used by Air Force
- Rating – used by Navy and Coast Guard

Thus, at the Defense Language Institute (DLI), DLAB scores are used for selection and placement. The government's intelligence agencies normally use either the MLAT or the ALAT for selection and placement. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) participated in the original validation studies of the MLAT and has continued to use it ever since. The FBI uses the DLAB score and the government's four category system to determine whether its agents would be successful if sent to receive full-time language training

Qualifying Scores

The DLAB consists of 126 multiple choice questions. Applicable service policies require that each candidate for attendance at the Defense Language Institute be a high school graduate. For admission to a Basic Language Program, the following minimum DLAB scores are required:

- 95 for a Category I language (Dutch, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish)
- 100 for a Category II language (German)
- 105 for a Category III language (Belorussian, Czech, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, Polish, Russian, Serbian/Croatian, Slovak, Tagalog [Filipino], Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese)
- 110 for a Category IV language (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean)

Individual services or agencies may demand higher qualifying scores, at their discretion. For example, the Air Force and Marine Corps require a minimum score of 100 on the DLAB for all languages, although the Marine Corps will waive it to a 90 for Cat I and II languages. The Air Force is not currently approving waivers.

The highest possible score on the DLAB is 176.