

## Choosing a Topic for Task 3 (Prepared Presentation)

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In general, it is best to stay away from highly theoretical or abstract concepts. Students in the classroom will ask lots of questions, so choose something you feel comfortable explaining at a basic level. Choose a topic for which you can easily provide concrete examples and for which you can easily explain complex terms *in English*. Here are some ideas for specific fields:

- Computer Science: "What is an IP address"
- Health Sciences: "What is the difference between cancer cells and normal cells"

See the following sections for department-specific information regarding Foreign Language Departments and Mathematics Department.

## Potential Foreign Language TAs

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TOP test takers who intend to TA as a foreign language teacher in the various language departments on campus (Asian Languages, Spanish & Portuguese, etc.) face a special problem when deciding on a topic for the prepared presentation (task 3).

In many foreign language departments, TAs spend their time in class speaking the target language, and only speak English during office hours or if there is some problem. However, a foreign language TA still needs competence in English to work with students in office hours and deal with student problems/concerns. Thus we need to assess the spoken English ability of these TAs as well.

For the prepared presentation, we suggest that the topic be about some academic aspect of the language such as:

- Well-known literature in the language
- An aspect of the grammar or phonology of the language
- The history, culture or demography of the language

A few words of the language may be spoken during the test as an example, but please remember that the TOP is a test of one's *English* language ability.

Also note that ***if language is not one's major field of study, one should not give a presentation on the language.*** For example, a Chemistry major from China should give a presentation on Chemistry, not on Chinese, even if he/she is applying for a TA position in the Asian Languages Department. Further questions should be directed to the TOP coordinators at [top@oid.ucla.edu](mailto:top@oid.ucla.edu).

## Potential Mathematics TAs

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Due to the highly abstract nature of the subject, "basic topics" in mathematics are a little more difficult to find than in other disciplines such as chemistry or history. Additionally, test takers should assume that their **audience only understands mathematics through high school algebra and geometry** (and in many cases has forgotten much of it).

Therefore we recommend that TOP test takers from the Mathematics department choose a topic appropriate for high school mathematics such as:

- Basic counting and probability
- The graph of a function
- Solving a linear or quadratic equation
- Factoring
- Word problems

We recommend these topics because we expect the questioners to be able to ask questions regarding these kinds of topics. If the questioners are unable to understand the presentation, they will have a difficult time asking questions. This then makes it difficult to give the test taker a question handling score.

Please avoid choosing or discussing topics such as:

- Set theory
- Abstract or linear algebra
- Calculus: differentiation and integration