



Somerville Public Schools  
Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences  
SCALE  
WHERE KNOWLEDGE BLOOMS

Betty Stone, one of two Program Administrators at SCALE's English Language Learning program, has generously agreed to share their placement instruments to provide guidance for other programs. She has provided the following explanation of their intake process:

In general, SCALE wants intake/placement testing to be as quick and painless as it can be while collecting the important data we need to be able to place students in the appropriate class. With the exception of VERY basic reading if non-literacy is suspected (letters, some lines from Sam and Pat, some lines from Stories to Tell Our Children), we do not do any reading (beyond the SEE grammar) at intake.

We use the following materials, which are provided in this PDF:

1. Short SEE (24-item multiple choice grammar) -- We've made little templates (strips with holes punched out) for quick scoring.
2. Copy Test - Prospective students who report that they have attended school 0-4 years are typically asked to do the Copy Test. Others might be asked if literacy gaps are suspected.
3. Writing sample - This one is about work. The one we use more often is *Describe your family*. Typically, we only ask students to write in English. If we suspect gaps, have questions about native language literacy, we might ask for a native language sample. Writing samples are generally administered at the higher levels to refine placement at ELL 3-5.
4. *The John Test* and *The Fred Test* - *The John Test* Long Form includes the Question Asking section; the Short Form includes only Comprehension Questions and Connected Discourse. Initially, we used the Long Form, but to streamline the intake process, we now use the Short Form which, in combination with the other tools, provides sufficient information for accurate placement. (For some reason, we prefer the *John* over the *Fred*.)<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally, a student will not be able to manage the written intake materials. In such cases, the routine intake process stops and a counselor or teacher will interview the prospective student in his/her first language. Through the interview we try to construct a picture of the person's experience with formal, informal, or interrupted schooling, and the underlying reasons why s/he has not attended school.

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<sup>1</sup> For Picture #5 a setup was added ("This is in a restaurant.") because many prospective students thought the scene depicted a hospital.



13. Allan is going to make a cake \_\_\_\_.  
 A. yesterday                      B. tomorrow                      C. last week                      A    B    C
14. "I called at 7:00 and you \_\_ home."  
 A. wasn't                      B. weren't                      C. don't                      A    B    C
15. \_\_\_\_ the news on T.V. last night?  
 A. You see                      B. Saw you                      C. Did you see                      A    B    C
16. Yesterday was \_\_\_\_ today.  
 A. warmer as                      B. warmer that                      C. warmer than                      A    B    C
17. He \_\_\_\_ to the radio when the telephone rang.  
 A. listened                      B. was listening                      C. is listening                      A    B    C
18. I \_\_ live in Europe, but now I live in the United States.  
 A. was used to                      B. used                      C. used to                      A    B    C
19. Nancy \_\_ in Somerville for three years.  
 A. lives                      B. is living                      C. has lived                      A    B    C
20. Do you know where \_\_\_\_?  
 A. is the post office                      B. the post office is                      C. would be the post office                      A    B    C
21. "Didn't you get the job? I'm sorry \_\_\_\_."  
 A. hearing that                      B. to hear that                      C. hear that                      A    B    C
22. "Who attended the class?" "The class \_\_ by many students."  
 A. did attend                      B. attended                      C. was attended                      A    B    C
23. "I might see you tomorrow," means \_\_\_\_.  
 A. I won't see you                      B. I'll see you for sure                      C. maybe I'll see you                      A    B    C
24. I would have visited him if you \_\_ me his address.  
 A. give                      B. had given                      C. would have given                      A    B    C

CORRECT A \_\_\_\_\_

CORRECT B \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

# SCALE INTAKE - COPY EXERCISE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## COPY THESE WORDS:

book

hat

car

watch

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## COPY THESE SENTENCES:

1. I live in the United States.

---

2. I want to learn English.

---

3. John's sister studies English every day, doesn't she?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**WRITING SAMPLE ----- ENGLISH**

Please write a paragraph in English about your education. Describe your education in your country. What did you study? Did you like your school?

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**WRITING SAMPLE ----- NATIVE LANGUAGE**

Please write a paragraph in \_\_\_\_\_ about your education.

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**SCORE SHEET FOR SHORTENED VERSION OF THE JOHN TEST: A Test of Oral Proficiency for ESOL Placement**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Tester: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART I: COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

Picture 1

Is John sitting on his bed? 0 1 2

Where's the lamp? 0 1 2

Picture 2

How does John go to school? 0 1 2

Picture 3

Where is the teacher? 0 1 2

Picture 4

Where are the teacher's hands? 0 1 2

What do you think John and the teacher have been talking about? 0 1 2

Picture 5 (Tester: "This is in a restaurant.")

Who's behind the counter? 0 1 2

What's John going to do? 0 1 2

Picture 6

Why did John come to this store? 0 1 2

Picture 7

Whose dog is under the bed? 0 1 2

Is John sleeping? How do you know? 0 1 2

**PART II: CONNECTED DISCOURSE**

Fluency

2 4 6 8 10 12 14

Structure

2 4 6 8 10 12 14

**COMMENTS:**

**RESULTS:**

|         | Raw Score | Minus Repeats | Final |
|---------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Part I  |           |               |       |
| Part II |           |               |       |

**TOTAL**

**SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_**

# The John Test / The Fred Test

## Author & Date

Language Innovations, Inc. (1975-83)

## Purpose

To assess oral proficiency for placement in non-academic ESL programs.

## Description

The student is initially asked a few personal questions. If able to respond, he or she is given Parts 1-3. In Part 1, labeled "Comprehension Questions," The student is shown seven drawings depicting events in the daily life of John or Fred, and asked two to four questions about each picture. The questions are like "What is on the ... ?" and "Is he ...? How do you know?" In Part 2, labeled "Connected Discourse," the student is told, "Now I want you to tell me the story of John's/Fred's day YESTERDAY. For example, yesterday he got up, then ...." In Part 3, labeled "Asking Questions," the student is told "I want you to ask me some questions about John/Fred. I'll tell you what questions to ask. For example, ask me how old he is."

## Administration

This instrument must be administered individually. Administration is moderately complex. Some of the instructions for the students are in the manual rather than on the scoring sheet that has the questions to be read to the students. In Part 1, the questions are to be read with "normal speed and intonation."

The instructions to the students are simple, but incomplete and sometimes unclear. In Part 1, the student is not told that he or she may ask the administrator to repeat any question, yet the administrator is to do so only if the student makes the request. In Part 2, the student is told to tell a story about John or Fred's "day yesterday." It is not clear whether the drawings are supposed to be of yesterday, and thus the student is to summarize the events shown, or whether the student is to describe another imagined day in the life of John or Fred. In Part 3, the instructions are "I want you to ask me some questions... I'll tell you what questions to ask...." This requires comprehension of a convoluted and seldom used English construction.

The administration is paced. It usually takes 10 - 15 minutes.

### **Alternate Forms**

There is only one level of the instrument. There are two roughly equivalent forms called "The John Test" and "The Fred Test."

### **Reliability**

Test-retest reliability, using alternate forms of the instrument, has been high (.95). Inter-rater reliability, which is important in judgmental scoring, is not reported.

### **Validity**

No validity data are provided in the brief manual.

### **Scoring & Interpretation**

Scoring is moderately complex because it is judgmental and most of it is done as the instrument is being administered. The story the student tells in Part 2 is to be judged in respect to fluency, structure, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The manual provides some guidelines on how to assess each. Very limited norm data are provided for an unspecified group of 96 students.

### **Comments**

The instrument is adult in content and tone. One-fourth of the questions in Part 1 are about matters that are not clear from the illustrations. For instance, accompanying a drawing showing only the very front of a bus, there is the question, "Is there a man with a ... on the bus?" None of the three men shown has the specified feature, but there could be other people, not shown, who do have the feature. Some other questions are tricky, because they misidentify characteristics in the drawings. For instance, one asks why a specific person is in a specified posture, but the person is actually in another posture.

Part 1 is labeled "Comprehension Questions," but full credit is possible only, "If [each response] is what a native speaker of English would say...." Any request that a question be restated results in deduction of half-credit for the question, and the student is not forewarned of this.

There is so much ambiguity in the instructions and prompts, that native English speaking Ph.D.s probably will not average more than 93 percent of the maximum score. ESL students could easily score less than they are able by: 1) not answering when the correct answer is unclear, 2) asking that the question be repeated when the answer is unclear (and losing half-credit), or 3) becoming rattled because they think the confusion is due to their lack of English skills.

A 1987 review (in *Reviews of English Language Proficiency Tests*, pg. 47) says this instrument has been used successfully to place students in ESL classes, but that many users drop Part 3 or otherwise adapt the instrument. It also says the validity of the instrument as a general measure of oral proficiency is limited because the full range of survival competencies are not included.

### Availability

The instrument is available to everyone.

### Price

One copy of the John test and the John/Fred manual will be provided free. Permission is granted to duplicate these materials for non-commercial purposes.. Check with the source about arrangements for the Fred test.

### Source

Riverside Adult Learning Center

490 Riverside Drive

New York, NY 10027

~~(212)~~ 222-5900 ext. 115

(124)

SCORE SHEET  
 THE JOHN TEST: A Test of Oral Proficiency  
 for ESL Placement

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tester: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART I: COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

Picture 1

- What time is it? 0 1 2
- Is it morning or afternoon? 0 1 2
- Is John sitting on his bed? 0 1 2
- Is there anything on the table? What? 0 1 2

Picture 2

- How does John go to school? 0 1 2
- Is there a man with a beard on the bus? 0 1 2
- What's the bus driver doing? 0 1 2

Picture 3

- Where's the teacher? 0 1 2
- All the students are men, aren't they? 0 1 2

Picture 4

- Where are the teacher's hands? 0 1 2
- Why is the teacher sitting down? 0 1 2
- What do you think John and the teacher have been talking about? 0 1 2

Picture 5

- How many customers are there in the restaurant? 0 1 2
- Who's behind the counter? 0 1 2
- What's John going to do? 0 1 2

Picture 6

- What kind of store is John in? 0 1 2
- Why did he come to this store? 0 1 2

Picture 7

- What's under the bed? 0 1 2
- Whose (dog) is it (that)? 0 1 2
- Is John sleeping? How do you know? 0 1 2
- Why is John sleeping? 0 1 2

**PART II: CONNECTED DISCOURSE**

|                |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| Fluency:       | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 |
| Structure:     | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 |
| Pronunciation: | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6  |    |    |
| Vocabulary:    | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6  |    |    |

**PART III: ASKING QUESTIONS**

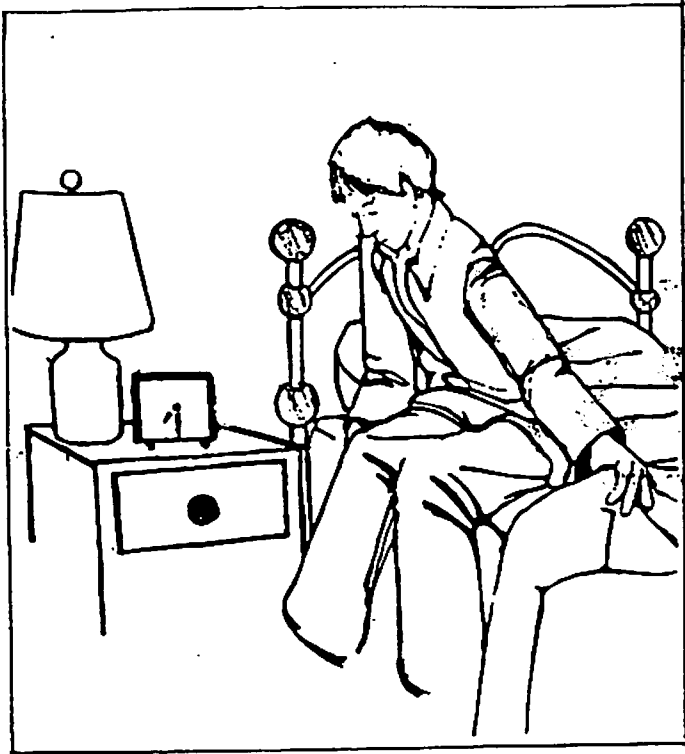
|                                                                 |       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Ask me his name.                                                | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me his address.                                             | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me if he has a phone.                                       | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me if he's married.                                         | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me how many brothers and sisters he has.                    | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me where he was born.                                       | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me when he came to _____.                                   | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me how long he's been in (school) (this program) (college). | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me what he'd like to do when he finishes school.            | 0 1 2 |

**COMMENTS**

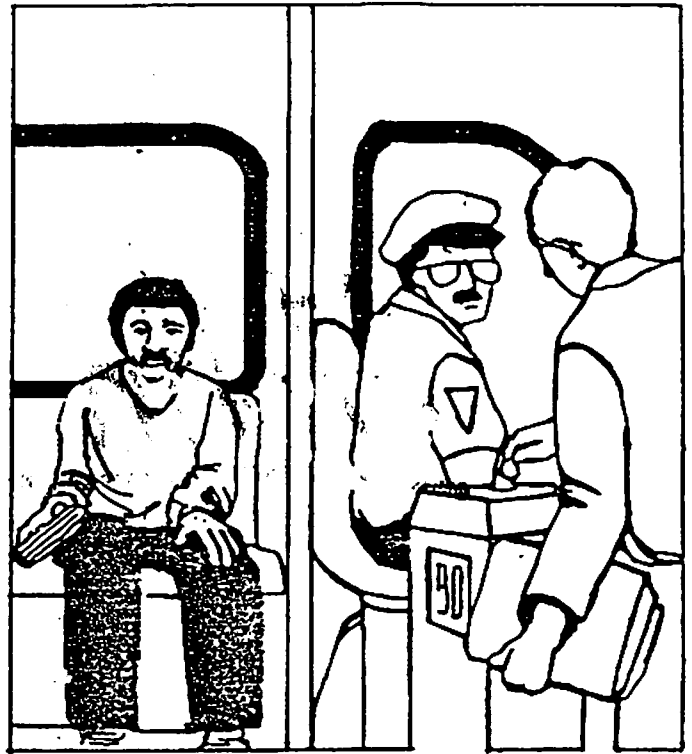
**RESULTS**

|                    | Raw Score | Minus Repeats | Final |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Part I             |           |               |       |
| Part II            |           |               |       |
| Part III           |           |               |       |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b> |           |               |       |

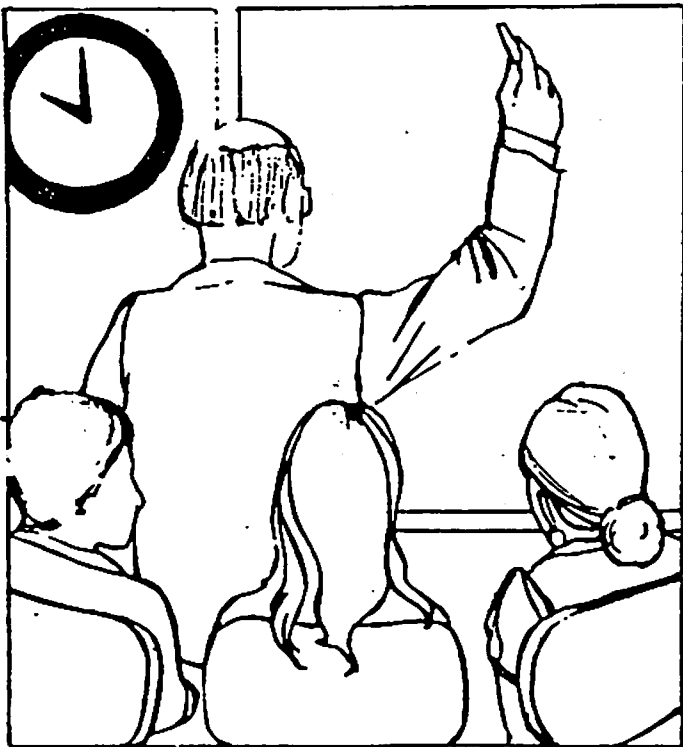
Picture #1



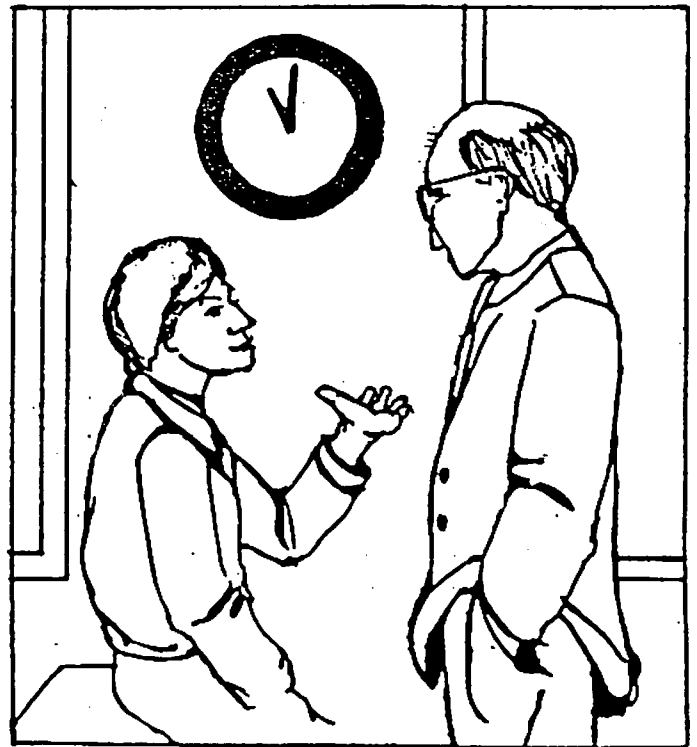
Picture #2



Picture #3



Picture #4



# THE FRED TEST

Language Innovations, Inc.

The Fred Test is an oral placement test for non-native speakers of English. This test was designed to be an alternate for the John Test, an oral placement test developed originally by ESL teachers who were working at Regional Opportunity Centers under the City University of New York. The Fred Test, like the John Test, is administered to students individually, is based on a series of pictures, and contains three parts, each of which assesses a different language skill: Part I tests oral comprehension; Part II tests ability to produce connected discourse in the form of a past tense narrative; Part III tests ability to ask questions. Teachers have found the use of only Parts I and II sufficient for successful placement at three or four levels. Adding Part III, if time permits, can allow for finer placement distinctions. The complete test takes about 10 minutes to administer; if Part III is deleted, less time is needed.

The test packet includes the series of seven pictures depicting various occurrences in a typical day of a married man named Fred; 20 copies of the score sheet; a ditto master of the score sheet; and a pamphlet with one page of brief instructions for administering the test and several additional pages of more detailed information on scoring and testing procedures as well as information on the equivalence of the John Test and the Fred Test.

Credit goes to the following people:

- to Linda Ann Kunz and members of LINC's Publications Committee for development of the original picture sequence and the questions;
- to students and teachers at New York City Welfare Education Plan and YMCA ESL programs, at Bronx Community College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, and New York University ESL programs, at Riverside Adult Learning Center in New York City, and at the Academy of World Studies in San Francisco for testing the test;
- to Dr. Genaro LaChica of Borough of Manhattan Community College for the statistical analysis;
- to Alan Robbins for the art work.

**PART I: COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

Picture 1

Is Fred asleep? 0 1 2

Is there anything on the table? What? 0 1 2

What time is it? 0 1 2

Picture 2

Is F. in the kitchen or the bedroom? 0 1 2

How many children does he have? 0 1 2

Both of them are boys, aren't they? 0 1 2

Picture 3

How does Fred go to work? 0 1 2

Is there a young man next to Fred? 0 1 2

What's the woman doing? 0 1 2

Picture 4

Whose office is that? 0 1 2

Where's his secretary? 0 1 2

Why is she standing up? 0 1 2

Picture 5

Where's Fred's briefcase? 0 1 2

Why is he waiting in the doorway? 0 1 2

How long has it been raining? 0 1 2

Picture 6

What kind of a store is Fred in? 0 1 2

Who's behind the counter? 0 1 2

What's Fred going to do? 0 1 2

Picture 7

Is Fred tired? How do you know? 0 1 2

Why did he take off his tie? 0 1 2

What's under the TV set? 0 1 2

**PART II: CONNECTED DISCOURSE**

|                |          |          |          |          |           |           |           |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Fluency:       | <u>2</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>12</u> | <u>14</u> |
| Structure:     | <u>2</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>12</u> | <u>14</u> |
| Pronunciation: | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u>  |           |           |
| Vocabulary:    | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u>  |           |           |

**PART III: ASKING QUESTIONS**

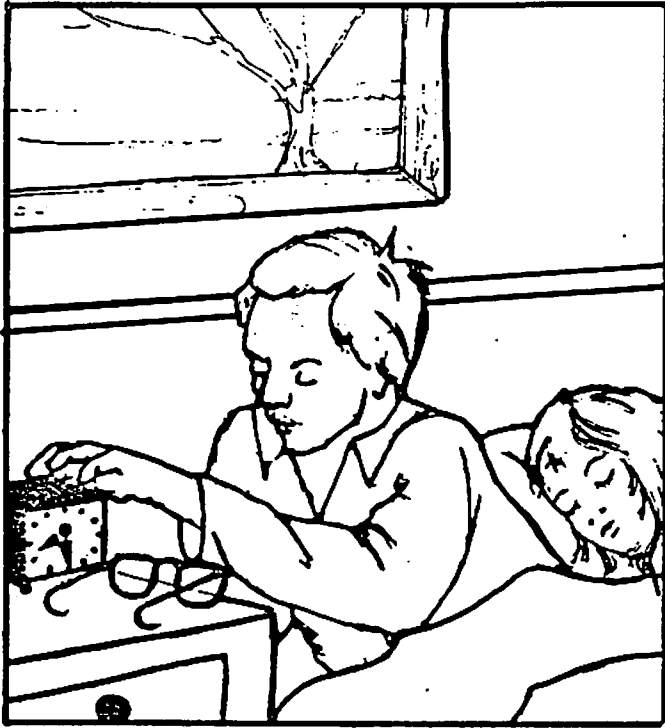
|                                                |       |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Ask me his name.                               | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me his address.                            | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me whether he smokes.                      | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me how long he's been married.             | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me how many children he has.               | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me when he got his job.                    | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me if he'd like to get a<br>different job. | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me what he usually does on<br>weekends.    | 0 1 2 |
| Ask me what he's going to do this<br>weekend.  | 0 1 2 |

**COMMENTS**

**RESULTS**

|                    | Raw Score | Minus Repeats | Final |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------|-------|
| Part I             |           |               |       |
| Part II            |           |               |       |
| Part III           |           |               |       |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b> |           |               |       |

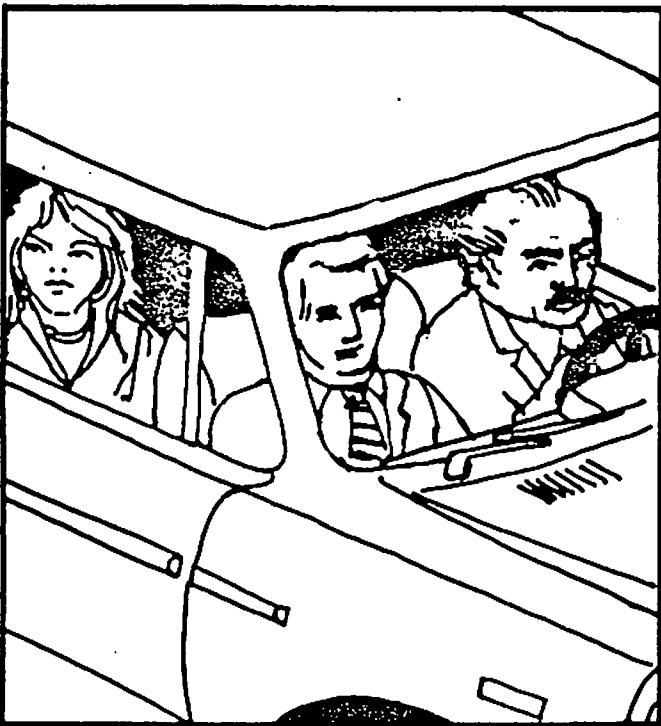
Picture #1



Picture #2



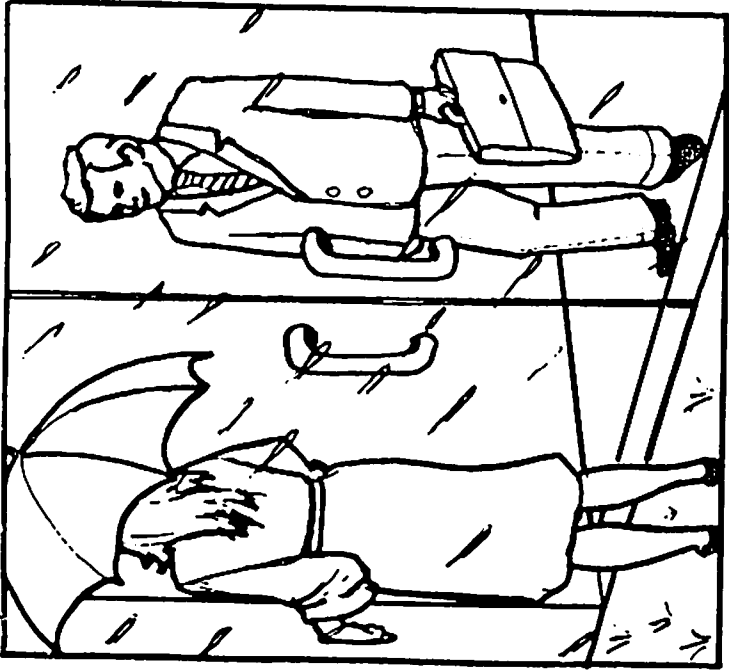
Picture #3



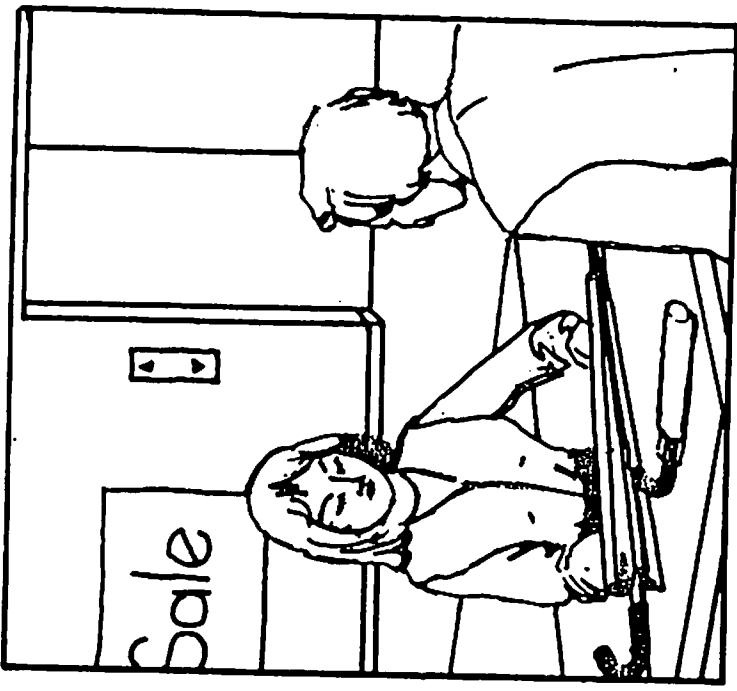
Picture #4



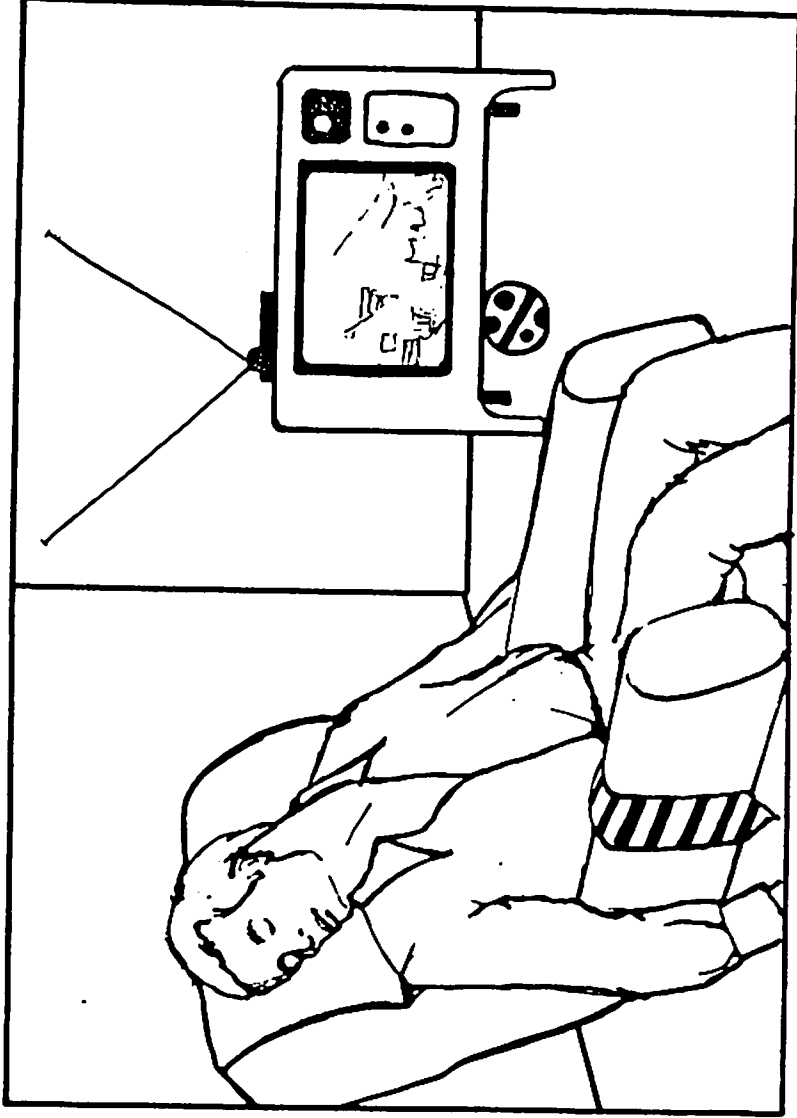
Picture #5



Picture #6



Picture #7



Picture #5.



Picture #6



Picture #7.

