

Assessment GUIDE



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Introduction

The aim of this assessment guide is to help you make decisions about your students' language level. It contains questions and ideas for tasks that you can use to test learners' speaking skills. You can use the activities and ideas here together with other tests or assessments that you use at your school to place your students into levels for a new course, or to decide if a course has been successfully completed. You could also use the activities to obtain useful information about your learner's strengths and weaknesses in English.

Just like your coursebook series, the language levels in this assessment guide match five of the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), with sections from levels A1 to C1. In each part, in the '**What can Learners Do?**' section, there is a description of the communication activities that students should be able to achieve at that specific level and the themes or topics associated with those activities. That's followed by a **Language Quality** section which provides a description of the expected learner performance in the communication activities. The final section in each part of this guide includes 3 or 4 sets of suggestions for **practical activities** that you can use to assess speaking skills at each level.

It's important to take the activity and theme, and not just linguistic performance, into consideration when assessing speaking. Naturally, learners at lower levels will be able to perform less demanding, less complex activities in English than learners at a higher level. And, while a lower level language learner's speaking will contain mistakes and lack accuracy, it may be appropriate for the needs of the communication activity that they are engaged in, and should be assessed as such. For example, it is perfectly acceptable for an A1 level learner to do the relatively simple task of introducing a classmate using individual words and short, memorized utterances. However, it would be pointless to use the task of introducing a classmate to measure a learner's ability at C1 level. At a C1 level we need to give learners more challenging communicative activities to complete in order to demonstrate their language ability.

The point of looking at what learners at each level can do as well as the quality of their language use is to encourage you to focus on abilities and attributes rather than just weaknesses or deficiencies with grammar or pronunciation.

Furthermore, it's important to remember that good oral communication is about much more than good grammar. This is reflected in the 'Language Quality' sections of this guide which cover coherence and cohesion, vocabulary and phonological control. Be sure to take these into consideration, alongside grammar, in your grading procedures. It's a good idea to also include task completion.

LEVEL A1

WHAT CAN A1 LEVEL LEARNERS DO?

Students at an A1 level should be able to do things like exchange simple greetings, give personal information, ask and answer questions on very familiar topics and describe where they live; use numbers and talk about quantities and costs; and, ask for and give people things.

LANGUAGE QUALITY

Remember that students at this level show only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns, and their vocabulary is limited to a repertoire of words and phrases related to concrete situations. So, when grading your students, be careful not to penalise grammatical mistakes too heavily and take into consideration other factors too such as vocabulary and task completion. Language use at this level is characterized by use of the simplest everyday polite forms of greetings and farewells, introductions and saying please, thank you, sorry etc.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1, Level A1: Questions for checking that a learner is at A1 level

Ask a few questions from 2 or 3 of the groups below to confirm that he/she has reached A1 level.

About You

- What's your last name?
- How do you spell it?
- Where are you from?
- What's your telephone number?
- When's your birthday?

Family

We're going to talk about your family.

- How many people are there in your family?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters? What are their names?
- How old are they?

Jobs

We're going to talk about jobs.

- Do you have a job? (If no: Think of someone in your family with a job.)
- What is your job? (What is his/her job?)
- Where do you work? (Where does he/she work?)
- Do you like your job?

Weekends

We're going to talk about things you do at the weekend.

- Do you get up early on weekends?
- What do you usually do during the day?
- What do you do on Saturday and Sunday evenings?

Activity 2, Level A1 Introduction Task

Have learners introduce a classmate to you and introduce you to the classmate.

Activity 3, Level A1: Price Role Play

Roleplay a situation where learners ask for and give prices.

Activity 4: Level A1: Picture Prompts

Learners are asked to identify and name items and activities based on visual prompts.

LEVEL A2

WHAT CAN A2 LEVEL LANGUAGE LEARNERS DO?

By the time they reach level A2 on the CEFR, the communication activities that learners should be able to do include making simple transactions in shops, post offices or banks; asking for basic information and buying tickets for public transportation and getting simple information about travel. At this level, learners can discuss with other people what to do, where to go and make arrangements to meet; give descriptions of themselves, other people, the place where they live, their hobbies, educational background and job, as well as give basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences.

LANGUAGE QUALITY

Learners at this level use some simple structures correctly but make regular basic mistakes even though it may be clear what they are trying to say. For example, they tend to mix up tenses and forget to conjugate verbs correctly. Also, keep in mind that their use of memorised phrases and expressions to make themselves understood can give the impression of a higher degree of grammatical accuracy than is actually the case, so you will want to get as much evidence as possible of their ability to use specific language structures. At this level, language use is characterized by very short social exchanges and use of the simple common expressions and basic routines. Learners can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and", "but" and "because", they also have sufficient vocabulary for coping with simple everyday situations and their pronunciation is clear enough to be understood.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1, Level A2: Questions for checking that a learner is at A2 level

Ask some questions from two or three of the groups below:

Free time and Leisure

- What do you do to be healthy?
- What do you like to do to relax?
- What do you find stressful about your life?
- What do you think is better, pop music or rock music? Why?
- Do you prefer to use a user-friendly phone or one which can do many things?
- Do you think that the people from your country are friendlier than people from other countries?

Skills and Abilities

- What are you really good at?
- Can you play a musical instrument?
- How many languages can you speak?
- What do you want to learn to do in the future?

Travel

- Tell me about a recent travel experience.
- Where did you go?
- Who did you do with?
- How did you travel?
- How was the trip?

Activity 2, Level A2: Roleplay - A Day Out

Learners are instructed to arrange and organise a day out in a local city.

Activity 3, Level A2: Game - Find the Differences

Learners play a spot-the-differences game based on images of a house or room.

Activity 4: Level A2: Comparisons

Learners are shown images containing two similar objects, animals, people of different sizes and are asked to make comparative sentences about the images.

LEVEL B1

WHAT CAN B1 LEVEL LANGUAGE LEARNERS DO?

Learners at a B1 level can start, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest and they can maintain a discussion even if it is sometimes difficult to follow exactly what they are trying to say. They can deal with most situations that arise when making travel arrangements and travelling as well as express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference, and give and seek personal views and opinions in informal discussions with friends, agreeing and disagreeing politely while doing so. Other communication activities that learners can carry out at this level include narrating a story, relating the plot of a book or film, and describing reactions to it; giving detailed accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions; describing dreams, hopes and ambitions; and, explaining and giving reasons for plans, intentions and actions.

LANGUAGE QUALITY

Learners at this level can perform a wide range of language functions and show good control of grammatical structures when talking about familiar predictable contexts and situations, successfully conveying simple information of immediate relevance and getting across the most important points, despite the occurrence of persistent errors. They can keep a conversation going but have to pause to plan and correct what they are saying - especially when talking freely for longer periods. Vocabulary is sufficient for learners to express themselves on most familiar topics relating to everyday life (i.e. families, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events) while pronunciation is characterised by the ability to approximate intonation and stress in words and longer utterances.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1, Level B1: Questions for check that a learner is at B1 level

Ask some questions from two or three of the groups below:

All about You

- How would you describe yourself?
- What do you like?
- What are you like?
- Are you ever impatient?
- Have you ever been dishonest? What did you do?
- What kind of things do you find inconvenient?
- What are you neighbours like?
- What kind of building do you live in?

Your Life

- Would you ever change anything about your life? What would you change? Why?
- Has your life ever taken an unexpected turn?
- Would you like to be famous?
- If you could change one thing in your country, what would you change?
- Have you ever been very lucky? What happened?
- What is the biggest risk you have ever taken?
- Do you believe in coincidences?

Sports and Leisure

- Do you enjoy playing any sports? What?
- Can you describe how you play your favorite sport?
- Have you ever taken part in a sponsored event to raise money for charity?

Activity 2, Level B1: Pair Discuss - The Last Film I Saw...

Partner A tells partner B about a film that they have seen recently, describing the plot and giving their opinion. Partner B is required to ask two follow-up or clarifying questions.

Activity 3, Level B1: Event Planning Group Task

Learners in small groups are asked to plan an event such as a community talent competition or a sports day. They are given a visual prompt to stimulate the discussion and are asked to justify and explain their ideas and discussions.

B2 LEVEL

WHAT CAN B2 LEVEL LEARNERS DO?

Learners with a B2 level of English are capable of initiating, maintaining and ending conversations and discussions naturally with effective turn-taking. What's more, they can exchange considerable quantities of factual information on matters within their field of interest; and, convey degrees of emotion and highlight the personal significance of events and experiences. They can engage in and actively participate in extended conversation on most general topics, providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments on personal opinions. They can also help a discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in etc. Also, giving clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to fields of interest; understanding and summarizing orally short extracts from news items, interviews of documentaries containing opinions, argument and discussion; and, understanding and summarizing orally the plot and sequence in an extract from a film or play is within their capabilities. They can construct a chain of reasoned argument, link ideas logically, explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options; and speculate about causes, consequences, hypothetical situations.

LANGUAGE QUALITY

Learners at this level have a good control of grammar with only occasional slips. Language use is characterised by consistently correct use of simple structures and some complex forms, while mistakes do not lead to misunderstandings and can be self-corrected. Although they may need to search for expressions, there are few noticeable long pauses and they have sufficient vocabulary to express themselves on matters connected to their field and on most general topics. Learners can produce stretches of language with fairly even tempo and they generally use appropriate intonation, place stress correctly and articulate individual sounds clearly.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1, Level B2: Questions for check that a learner is at B2 level:

Language Learning

- Why are you learning English?
- In what ways will English help you in the shorter term and in the longer term?
- How would you describe your experiences of learning languages?
- What's the best way to improve your languages skills outside of school?
- What other languages do people in your country study? In your view, is it a good idea to study other languages?

Society

- Do you think we have a responsibility to help people who are less fortunate than us? Why?
- If yes, what is the best way to do this? If no, what do you think will happen to these people?
- What do you think are the most important social problems in this country?
- What do you think the government could do to improve the situation?

Stress

- What makes you stressed?
- Is stress necessarily a part of life, or should we aim to avoid it?
- How do you deal with stress?
- Do you think people suffer from stress now more than they used to?

Achievements

- We're going to talk about something very extraordinary that someone set out to do—something extreme and strange—perhaps something you've read about in the media.
- What did that person do?
- Why did they want to do it?
- How do you feel about people who do such strange things? Do you admire them/think them ridiculous?
- Would you ever consider doing something like that yourself?

Activity 2, Level B2: News Report Summary

Learners read a short news report on an unfamiliar subject and summarize orally to you.

Activity 3, Level B2: Hypothetical Situations Pair or Group Discussions

Learners read a description of a difficult or uncomfortable situation - for example, they return to their hotel room to find that their wallet and passport has been stolen - and are asked to speculate as to how they and other people they know would react.

C1 LEVEL

WHAT CAN C1 LEVEL LEARNERS DO?

Language learners that have completed a C1 level course should be able to successfully engage in the following communication activities: keeping up with animated conversations between highly proficient users of English; using language fluently, accurately and effectively on a wide range of general, professional or academic topics; using language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage; and, expressing ideas and opinions clearly, precisely, and presenting and responding to complex lines of reasoning convincingly. They can also give clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects; summarize long and demanding texts; give extended descriptions or accounts of something, integrating themes, developing particular points and conclusions appropriately; give a clearly developed presentation on a subject in their fields of personal or professional interest, departing when necessary from the prepared text and following up spontaneously on points raised by members of the audience.

LANGUAGE QUALITY

Language users at this level maintain a consistently high degree of grammatical accuracy and errors are rare and difficult to identify. Expression is fluently and spontaneous, and almost effortlessly. Only a few conceptually difficult subjects hinder a natural, smooth flow of language. They can produce clear, smoothly-flowing, well structured speech, showing control over ways of developing what is said in order to link both ideas, and the expression of them, coherently. At this level, learners have a good command of a broad vocabulary allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions. Furthermore, they rarely need to search obviously for expressions or compromise on saying exactly what is said.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1, Level C1: Questions for check that a learner is at C1 level

Work

- What are the main industries in the area that you live?
- What are these companies like to work for?
- Would you consider moving elsewhere to find work? Why or why not?
- What action can the government take regarding employment or industry in the area that you live?

Music

- How do you consume music? (Do you stream it, download it, etc.?)
- Musicians and recording companies sometimes complain that their profits are being reduced because fewer people pay to listen to music nowadays. Does this worry you? Does it affect how you consume music?
- Do you think people listen to a greater variety of music these days as a result of the availability of so much music?

Conspiracy theories.

- We're going to talk about conspiracy theories, such as the possibility that the moon landings were faked. What other conspiracy theories do you know of?
- Generally, what is your opinion about conspiracy theories? Are they nonsense, or do you sometimes think there is some truth in them? Why do so many people believe in them?
- Do you think we are always told the truth about major events? If not, tell me about instances where the public was not told the truth.

Games

- We're going to talk about games. Other than computer games, do you ever play games with your friends and family? If yes, what kinds of games? If no, why not?
- Do you think that games can be used for learning? Is this true for adults as well as children?
- If you had to spend an evening playing games with friends, what game or games would you choose and why?
- Do you prefer individual games or team games?
- Games of skill or games of luck? Games that are physically active or mentally challenging? Give your reasons.

Activity 2, Level C1: Pair Picture Discussion

Learners are shown three images on a related topic - for example, three different images of people engaged in green activities -and are asked a series of questions which prompt them to speculate, connect and rationalize opinions. For example: Which activity would most benefit your community and why? Which activity do you think has the biggest environmental impact? How do you feel when people say that environmentalism is a waste of time?

Activity 3, Level C1: Profession/Academic Presentation

Learners prepare and give a presentation on a work or school issue. The presentation should be authentic where possible.

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