

Overview

When you take an English test, you get a score. Often, you'll also get some indication of what that score means, expressed as an English level or label, for example "beginner" or "advanced". There are many different English levelling systems in use around the world, and an even wider variety of English tests, which have implicit or explicit levelling systems built into their scoring. Some English levelling schemes are built into a particular English test, while others are theoretical frameworks without any associated test.

The most reliable way to find out your English level is to take a well-designed assessment test. There are many tests to choose from, but taking the EF SET is a good place to start. You can use your EF SET score as an English level certification on your CV and on LinkedIn. The EF SET (50 min) is currently the only standardized English test that reliably measures all skill levels, beginner to proficient, in alignment with the internationally recognized standard, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Other standardized English tests are able to assess some proficiency levels, but not the entire CEFR scale. Using the EF SET to track your English level over months or years gives you a standardized way to evaluate your own progress.

English level certification is required in applying for many university programs and visas. In the job market, although there are rarely official requirements, certifying your English level makes you stand out from the crowd. But in a broader sense, measuring your English level reliably, and being able to track your level change over time, is important for any English learner – how else will you know if your English is improving?

Converting from one English level to another

Although it is notoriously hard to map one levelling system to another, the table below gives you a good approximation. If you've taken one of these tests, this table gives you an idea what type of score you might be able to get on another one.

CEFR ¹	EF SET	TOEFL iBT ²	IELTS ³	TOEIC (R&L) Total Score ⁴	Cambridge English Scale ⁵	Global Scale of English ⁶
pre-A1	0 - 20	n/a	n/a	n/a	80 - 99	n/a
A1 Beginner	21 - 30	n/a	n/a	120 - 220	100 - 119	22 - 29
A2 Elementary	31 - 40	n/a	n/a	225 - 545	120 - 139	30 - 42
B1 Intermediate	41 - 50	42 - 71	4.0 - 5.0	550 - 780	140 - 159	43 - 58
B2 Upper Intermediate	51 - 60	72 - 94	5.5 - 6.5	785 - 940	160 - 179	59 - 75
C1 Advanced	61 - 70	95 - 120	7.0 - 8.0	945 - 990	180 - 199	76 - 84
C2 Proficient	71 - 100	n/a	8.5 - 9.0	n/a	200 - 230	85 - 90

Why it's important to know your English level

The English level system you use to describe your English skills is usually imposed on you from the outside. An employer, a school, a teacher, or an immigration authority asks you to take a particular English test, so you do, and then you describe your English level using that test's system. Depending on your goals and location, you are likely to be more familiar with one system of English levels than another. For example, if you're applying to university in the USA, you probably know what a TOEFL score of 100 means, whereas if you're trying to get a visa to move to the UK, you're more likely to be familiar with the CEFR level B1.