



Mapping TOEFL, TSE, TWE, and TOEIC on the Common European Framework *Executive Summary*

Background

The Common European Framework was created by leading applied linguists and teaching specialists from the member states of the Council of Europe to facilitate international and vocational mobility. The CEF describes proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in any language, and it consists of six levels, clustered in three bands:

- A1 – A2 (Basic User)
- B1 – B2 (Independent User)
- C1 – 2 (Proficient User)

The Framework describes language knowledge and use at each level in positive “can do” statements. The CEF is widely used by learners, teachers, curriculum designers, and testing organizations alike to coordinate efforts in promoting language competence.

These statements are useful for learners because they can serve as learning objectives and as a motivational guide. The statements are useful for teachers because they act as teaching objectives and can be used to discuss the learner’s language development. They help curriculum designers create courses and materials to promote that development. They are also valuable for testing organizations because they inform test specifications (the list of skills assessed on an exam) so the organization can develop tests that identify levels of proficiency and determine mastery of a learning objective. Furthermore, mapping tests onto the CEF proficiency levels enables learners, teachers, and those who make decisions based on test scores (i.e., universities, employers, etc.) to compare learner performance on any test in any language.

ETS Goal

It was the goal of ETS to identify scores that correspond to the B1 (Threshold) level and C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) level on the following ETS tests: the paper-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Test of Spoken English (TSE), the Test of Written English (TWE), and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC).

- The TOEFL is a multiple-choice test that assesses listening, reading, and structure (grammar) and uses an academic context.
- The TSE test measures the ability to speak in an academic or professional environment.
- The TWE test measures the ability to organize and support ideas and to use standard written English.
- The TOEIC is a multiple-choice test that assesses listening and reading for the workplace.

The B1 and C1 levels were chosen because they are entry levels to the B and C bands. In the future, ETS will conduct standard-setting studies to map scores on the next generation TOEFL test onto the CEF. The new test will be introduced in 2005 and will assess speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Standard-setting Study

Standard setting is the process by which informed experts make score requirement recommendations that correspond with the level of knowledge, skill, proficiency, mastery, or readiness candidates need in order to be placed in a certain category. This process is sometimes called benchmarking. The end result of standard setting is a recommended minimum requirement, also referred to as a cut-score or threshold score.

This process should be used when setting score requirements for many purposes including admissions into institutions of higher education, employment or promotion, and benchmarking test performance on a conceptual framework such as the CEF.

Study Participants

This ETS standard-setting study consisted of two panels of 21 English language instructors and language testing experts from 14 European countries. The panels participated in a two-day standard-setting workshop held in Europe. Panel 1 was responsible for the TOEFL, TSE, and TWE tests, and Panel 2 was responsible for the TOEIC test. The purpose of the workshop was to identify the minimum scores required for learners to be categorized in the B1 and C1 levels.

Methodology

Before the workshop panelists were asked to review information on the ETS tests and on the CEF, and to describe on paper the key characteristics of the B1 and C1 levels in speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

During the workshop panelists were asked to discuss the key characteristics they had listed with the group and agree upon a set of descriptors for each language skill. The purpose of this discussion was to create a common understanding of the CEF levels, which would serve to guide panelists as they made judgments about scores.

Subsequent to the preliminary discussion, the panels began the standard-setting process. Panel 1 focused first on TSE (Speaking) and TWE (Writing), and then proceeded to TOEFL (Listening, Reading, Structure). Panel 2 only concentrated on TOEIC (Listening, Writing). In standard setting there are different procedures for identifying minimum score requirements for multiple-choice tests and for constructed-response tests.

For the TSE and TWE scores, these procedures were followed (Benchmark Method):

1. Panelists reviewed sample test questions and sample responses for TSE and TWE.
2. For each question panelists individually selected the scores a learner would need to attain on each question to be categorized in the B1 and C1 levels and made their initial minimum score recommendations
3. ETS tabulated the group means, maximum and minimum ratings, and standard deviations so they could be discussed by the panel.
4. A group discussion was held so everyone could learn from one others' judgments.
5. Each panelist made a final minimum score recommendation for each level.

For the TOEFL and TOEIC scores, these procedures were followed (Angoff Method):

1. Panelists reviewed test questions for Listening, Reading, and Structure (Structure – TOEFL only).
2. Panelists individually selected the probability from 0.1 – 0.9 that a learner at the B1 and C1 levels would get each question correct and made their initial minimum score recommendations.
3. ETS tabulated the group means, maximum and minimum ratings, and standard deviations so they could be discussed by the panel.
4. A group discussion was held so everyone could learn from one others' judgments.
5. Each panelist made a final minimum score recommendation for each level.

Results

After the panelists' final recommendations were calculated, the results indicated the following scores on TOEFL, TSE, TWE, and TOEIC corresponded with the B1 and C1 levels on the CEF. Although the computer-based TOEFL test was not included in the study, the TOEFL CBT scores in this chart are comparable to the scores panelists recommended for the paper-based test. Visit www.ets.org/toefl to view the TOEFL CBT-PBT concordance table used for this extrapolation.

ETS Test and Test Section	Score Scale Range	B1 Minimum Score	C1 Minimum Score
TOEFL PBT Total	310 – 677	457	560
TOEFL PBT Listening	31 - 68	46	56
TOEFL PBT Reading	31 - 67	46	56
TOEFL PBT Structure	31 - 68	45	56
TOEFL CBT Total	0 - 300	137	220
TOEFL CBT Listening	0 - 30	12	22
TOEFL CBT Reading	0 - 30	13	22
TOEFL CBT Structure	0 - 30	14	23
TSE*	0 - 60	45	55
TWE**	0 - 6.0	4.5	5.5
TOEIC Total*	10 - 990	550	880
TOEIC Listening	5 - 495	320	480
TOEIC Reading	5 - 495	240	395

*TSE and TOEIC are reported in 5-point increments.

**TWE is reported in 0.5-point increments.

Descriptors from the Common European Framework

(excerpts taken from the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge University Press, 2001)

B1 – Threshold Level

Global Descriptors

- Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.
- Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken.
- Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or are of personal interest.
- Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reason and explanations for opinions and plans.

Speaking

- Can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within his/her field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of events. The description is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and the main points are explained with reasonable precision.
- Can develop an argument well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time.
- Can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans, and actions.
- Can take follow up questions in presentations, but may have to ask to repetition if the speech was rapid.
- Can exchange, check, and confirm information, deal with less routine situations, and explain why something is a problem.
- Can enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics.
- Can follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversations, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases.
- Can maintain a conversation or discussion but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what he/she would like to.
- Can take part in routine formal discussion of familiar subjects that involves the exchange of factual information, receiving instructions or the discussion or solutions to practical problems.
- Can present a point of view clearly, but has difficulty engaging in debate.

Writing

- Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.
- Can write accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text.
- Can summarize, report and give her/her opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within his/her field with some confidence.

Listening

- Can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday topics or topics within his/her field, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent.
- Can follow the main points of extended discussions around him/her.
- Can understand presentations that are straightforward and clearly structured.
- Can follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversation, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words or phrases.
- Can follow much of what is said around him/her on general topics provided interlocutors avoid very idiomatic usage and articulate clearly.

Reading

- Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
- Can identify main conclusions in clearly signaled argumentative texts.
- Can recognize the line of argument in the treatment of the issue presented, though not necessarily in detail.

C1 – Effective Operational Proficiency Level

Global Descriptors

- Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning.
- Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.
- Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes.
- Can produce clear, well-constructed, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

Speaking

- Can give clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
- Can give a clear, well-structured presentation of a complex subject, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reason and relevant examples.
- Can handle interjections well, responding spontaneously and almost effortlessly.
- Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly.
- Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions. There is little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies; only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder natural, smooth flow of language.
- Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive, and joking usage.
- Can contribute to complex group discussions, even on abstract, complex unfamiliar topics.
- Can argue a formal position convincingly, responding to questions and comments and answering complex lines of counter argument fluently, spontaneously and appropriately.

Writing

- Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons, and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
- Can write in an assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind.
- Can write clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues.

Listening

- Can understand enough to follow extended speech on abstract and complex topics beyond his/her field, though he/she may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar.
- Can recognize a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts.
- Can follow extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly.
- Can easily follow complex interactions between third parties in group discussion and debate, even on abstract, complex unfamiliar topics.
- Can understand in detail speech on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond her/his own field, though he/she may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar.
- Can easily follow complex group discussions, even on abstract, complex unfamiliar topics.

Reading

- Can understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not they relate to his/her own area of specialty, provided he/she can reread difficult sections.
- Can understand in detail a wide range of lengthy, complex texts likely to be encountered in social, professional, or academic life, identifying finer points of detail including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions.