

Teaching beginners CPD module – level descriptors for ESOL

The table below shows the different terms used to describe the levels of English language learners.

Commonly used level descriptors in ELT	CEFR	ESOL Skills for Life (and National Literacy Standards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland)	SQA (Scotland)
Beginner	A1	Entry 1	Access 2 (National 2)
Elementary	A2	Entry 2	Access 3 (national 3)
Pre-Intermediate	B1	Entry 3	Intermediate 1 (National 4)
Intermediate	B2	Level 1	Intermediate 2 (National 5)
Upper intermediate	C1	Level 2	Higher
Advanced	C2		

The Adult ESOL Core curriculum

If you are teaching English in England, Wales and Northern Ireland you may have defined a beginner as a learner who is working towards E1 of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum. This is based on the national standards for adult literacy. An adult working at E1 can:

- Listen and respond to spoken language, including simple narratives, statements, questions and single-step instructions
- Speak to communicate basic information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics
- Engage in discussion with another person in a familiar situation about familiar topics
- Read and understand short texts with repeated language patterns on familiar topics
- Read and obtain information from common signs and symbols
- Write to communicate information to an intended audience

Further information about the adult ESOL core curriculum can be found on the Excellence Gateway website at:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/1516>. - interactive version or

<http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/ESOL/Adult+ESOL+core+curriculum/> - PDF version.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

If you are teaching in Scotland, you may have defined a beginner as a learner who is working towards Access 2 or National 2 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. This is a generic framework which describes the learning outcomes at Access 2 as:

- Demonstrate and/or work with basic knowledge, simple facts and ideas.
- Relate knowledge to a few simple everyday contexts with prompting.
- Use a few very simple skills.
- Carry out, with guidance, a few familiar tasks.
- Use, under supervision, basic tools and materials
- Use rehearsed stages for solving problems.
- Operate in personal and/or everyday contexts.
- Take some account, with prompting, of identified consequences of action.
- Produce and respond to a limited range of very simple written and oral communication in routine familiar contexts.
- Carry out a limited range of simple tasks to process and access information. •

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- Use a limited range of simple numerical and graphical data in familiar and everyday contexts
- Work alone or with others on simple routine, familiar tasks under frequent directive supervision.
- Identify, given simple criteria, some strengths and/or weaknesses of the work

Further information about the SCQF is available at: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/4595.html>

and on the ESOL Scotland website at:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/adultlearning/ESOL/framework/progression/levels.asp>

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) describes language ability in six levels from from A1 (beginners) to C2(Advanced). It is not specific to English, but can be used for all languages.

According to this, a learner who is at A1:

- Can understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic.
- Can understand basic notices, instructions or information
- Can complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places

Detailed guidance about the CEFR can be found on the Council of Europe website at:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp

You can download the English version of the CEFR at:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf