

Understanding CEFR Levels

A simple guide to CEFR alignment, skill-based results,
and recommended placement decisions.

B2+ Strong Upper Intermediate

B2 Upper Intermediate

B1 Intermediate

A2 Elementary

A1 Beginner

What Is CEFR?

CEFR stands for the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It is an international framework used to describe what learners can generally do in a language at different stages of development.

CEFR is useful because it gives schools, teachers, students and parents a shared language for talking about English ability. Instead of only saying that a student is “good” or “weak” at English, CEFR helps describe ability through practical communication levels.

Why CEFR Matters

CEFR helps institutions describe student ability more consistently, compare skill results, and choose suitable learning pathways.

How AllSkills Uses CEFR

AllSkills uses CEFR-aligned indicators to support skill-based interpretation and recommended placement decisions.

CEFR Levels in AllSkills

A1

Beginner

Students can understand and use very basic English in highly familiar situations. They can recognise common words, respond to simple questions, and communicate basic personal information.

Typical can-do examples:

Introduce themselves; answer simple personal questions; understand familiar classroom words.

A2

Elementary

Students can understand simple sentences and common expressions related to everyday life. They can talk about routines, school, family, hobbies and familiar needs using basic language.

Typical can-do examples:

Describe daily routines; understand short messages; ask and answer simple questions.

B1

Intermediate

Students can understand the main points of clear texts and spoken language on familiar topics. They can express opinions, describe experiences and communicate in many everyday situations.

Typical can-do examples:

Give reasons; describe experiences; understand main ideas in clear speech or texts.

B2

Upper Intermediate

Students can understand more detailed written and spoken language. They can explain ideas, support opinions and communicate with greater fluency, accuracy and range.

Typical can-do examples:

Support opinions; understand longer texts; write more organised paragraphs.

B2+

Strong Upper Intermediate

Students show stronger performance within the B2 range. They can handle more complex input, express ideas with more precision and use a wider range of vocabulary and structures.

Typical can-do examples:

Interpret more complex meaning; use precise vocabulary; produce developed responses.

What a CEFR Level Does - and Does Not - Mean

A CEFR level describes what a learner can usually do in English. It does not mean that the learner knows every word, every grammar structure or every possible topic at that level.

For example, a student at B1 may still make grammar mistakes, but they can usually communicate the main message clearly in familiar situations. A student at B2 may still need support with academic writing, but can usually understand and express more complex ideas.

Helpful Interpretation

Use CEFR as a guide to current performance and learning needs. It supports planning, grouping and progress monitoring.

Avoid Over-Interpretation

Do not treat a CEFR result as a permanent label or as a full certificate of language proficiency.

Skill-Based Results

A student may not have the same level in every skill. This is normal. Many learners understand written English better than they speak it, or they may know grammar rules but need more practice using them in writing and speaking.

Skill	What it helps show	How teachers may use it
Reading	Understanding written texts, details, main ideas and implied meaning.	Select suitable reading materials and identify comprehension needs.
Listening	Understanding spoken English such as short talks, conversations or announcements.	Plan listening practice and check whether audio difficulty is appropriate.
Writing	Responding to written tasks, organising ideas and using language accurately.	Give targeted feedback on task fulfilment, coherence, vocabulary and grammar.
Speaking	Producing spoken responses, describing ideas and communicating meaning.	Support fluency, pronunciation, interaction and clarity of expression.
Grammar & Vocabulary	Supporting competence that affects performance across other skills.	Identify language gaps that may limit reading, writing, listening or speaking.

Example Skill Profile

A student profile may show different skill levels, such as Reading B1, Listening A2, Writing A2 and Speaking B1. This does not mean the result is inconsistent. It shows where the student is stronger and where further support may be useful.

Recommended Placement Level

AllSkills reports may include a Recommended Placement Level. This recommendation is designed to support educational decisions, not to replace teacher judgement or institutional placement policy.

Schools may consider the AllSkills result together with classroom performance, teacher observations, previous learning background, age or grade level, and the school's own placement criteria.

1	Review the overall recommendation. Start with the general level suggested by the report.
2	Check skill differences. Look for areas where the student is stronger or weaker than the overall result.
3	Consider classroom evidence. Use teacher observations and previous performance to interpret borderline cases.
4	Plan support. Use skill insights to guide materials, grouping and follow-up instruction.

For Parents and Students

A CEFR result can help families understand a student's current English learning profile. It can show where the student may feel confident and where they may need more practice.

Language learning is gradual. A lower result in one skill should not be seen as failure. It simply gives information about the next learning steps.

Good to Remember

CEFR levels are learning indicators. They are most useful when they guide the next step in instruction and practice.

AllSkills Positioning

AllSkills provides placement-oriented reporting. The result should be read as a recommendation, not as a permanent label.

Summary

CEFR gives a common framework for describing English ability. AllSkills uses CEFR-aligned reporting to help institutions understand student performance across skills and make informed placement decisions.

The most useful interpretation is balanced: review the overall recommendation, examine individual skill results, and consider the student's broader learning context.