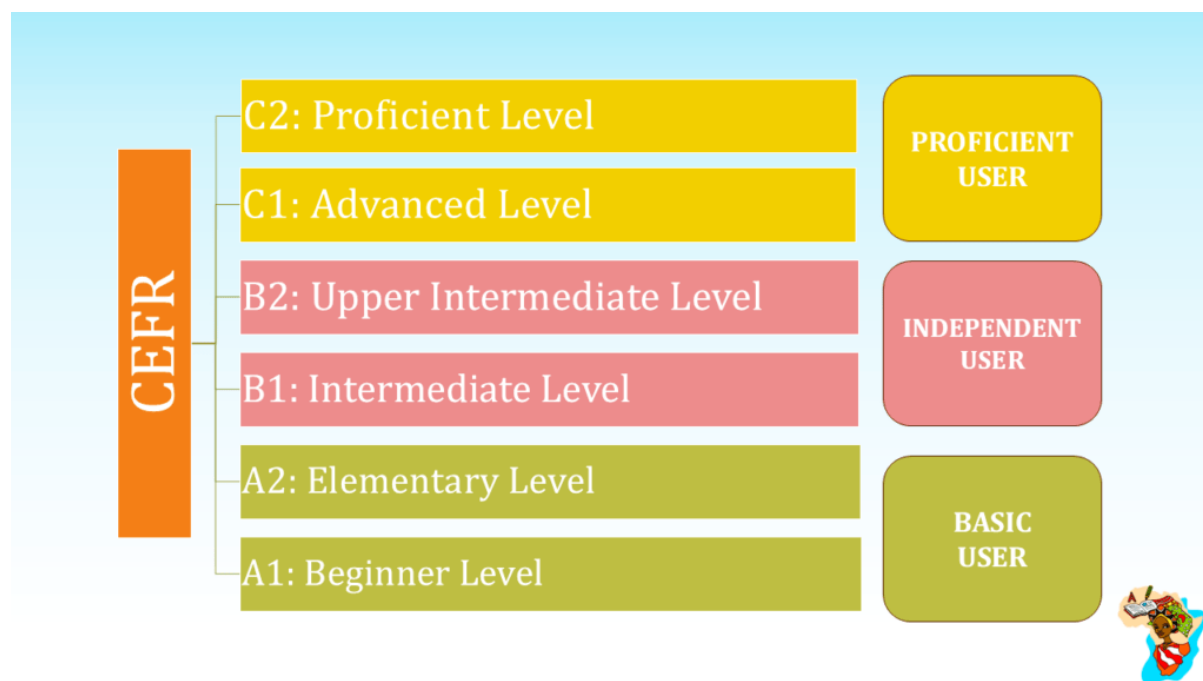


English Methodology: Measuring Your Progress With the CEFR Language-Learning Levels (A1-A2-B1-B2-C1-C2), with Very Detailed Charts!

Learn How to Measure your Learning Progress using the CEFR levels



The CEFR: A Crucial Document for Language Learners and Institutions

Hi and welcome! At the end of this lesson, you will know how to measure your language-learning progress using the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR).

The [CEFR](#) is an illustrious and indispensable document which was first published in 2001 by the [Council of Europe](#).

Not only does the CEFR define the different levels of learners of foreign languages, but it also provides a solid structure that teachers and examiners can use in order to determine someone's language ability.

For the most part, it describes the different types of skills that one can acquire in the following areas:

- **Listening:** The ability to understand an audio document.
- **Reading:** The ability to understand written content.
- **Spoken Interaction:** The ability to communicate with someone or a group of people while speaking.
- **Spoken Production:** The ability to say something to a person or a group of people.
- **Writing:** The ability to use words in order to form correct sentences and paragraphs in the target language.

The CEFR is **communication** and **action-oriented**. Its several descriptors strive to define what the learner **CAN** do at each step of his or her language-learning process.

Thanks to the CEFR, you can identify as a **Basic User**, an **Independent User** or a **Proficient User**. This enables you to know where you position yourself on the steep ladder of language-learning.

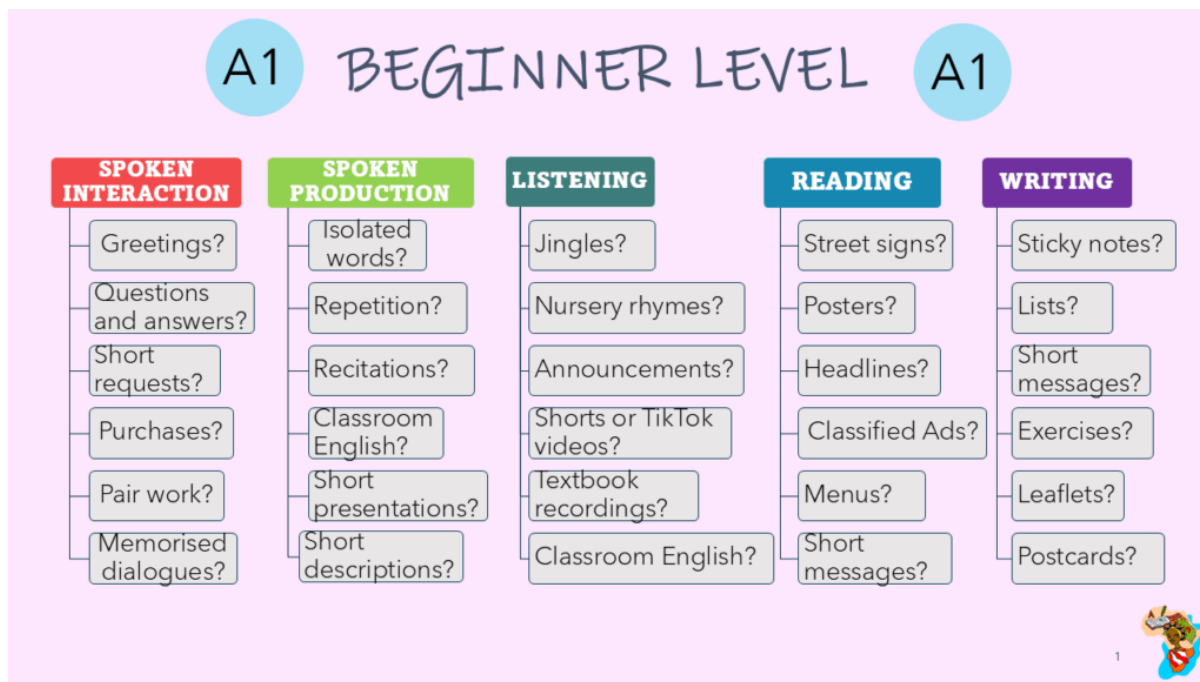
What does this mean?

- As a **Basic User**, you are at the very bottom of the scale. You start at **A1 (Beginner Level)** and walk or run your way up to **A2 (Elementary Level)**. **Simplicity** characterises this stage.
- As an **Independent User**, you are in the middle of the steps. You begin at **B1 (Intermediate Level)** and proceed to **B2 (Upper Intermediate Level)**. This stage is all about **confidence**.
- As a **Proficient User**, you are at the end of your arduous journey, so to speak. You are comfortably reaping the fruits of your labour at **C1 (Advanced Level)** and impressing the people around you at **C2 (Proficient Level)**. **Mastery** defines this stage.

Important: Progress through these scales is not linear. You can be at level A2 in **Spoken Production** and B2 in **Reading**.

CEFR Stage 1: Basic User— Let the Journey Begin!

CEFR A1 (Beginner Level): Simple, Personal, Familiar



Learning English at beginner level is usually much fun because everything seems easy and simple. Progress is very fast as you acquire new skills especially in vocabulary: *the Alphabet, numbers, colours, food, clothes, names of animals*, etc. Translating from your mother tongue to English is very frequent at this point.

In English grammar, you mainly focus on the **Simple Present**, **Be** and **Have** and the **Imperative Form**.

Spoken Interaction (A1): At **A1**, your vocabulary is limited so you stick to what is simple, personal and familiar. You can inquire about someone's health. Additionally, you are able to ask very simple questions and answer them. For example you can say: *What's your name?* and answer: *My name is*, etc. Moreover, the ability to formulate questions enables you to ask someone for something: *Can I have the salt, please? What's the date today? What time is it? Where is the supermarket?*, etc. In class, you can do **pair work** activities where you are encouraged to work with a partner. It is also common to memorise dialogues and act them out. In a nutshell, there is little room for creativity.

Spoken Production (A1): Since you do not know many words, it is not unusual to just say single words and use hand gestures or facial expressions to communicate with someone, e.g. blurting out *Milk*, in a shop and showing the product in order to buy it. You are also encouraged to repeat words in order to learn their pronunciation as well. Teachers also ask students to learn poems by heart and recite them in front of everyone. Moreover, in class, students are encouraged to use [Classroom English](#) for communication: *Today is Monday the 17th; Madam, I don't have a ruler*, etc. At this stage, you can also make small presentations and descriptions about familiar people or places.

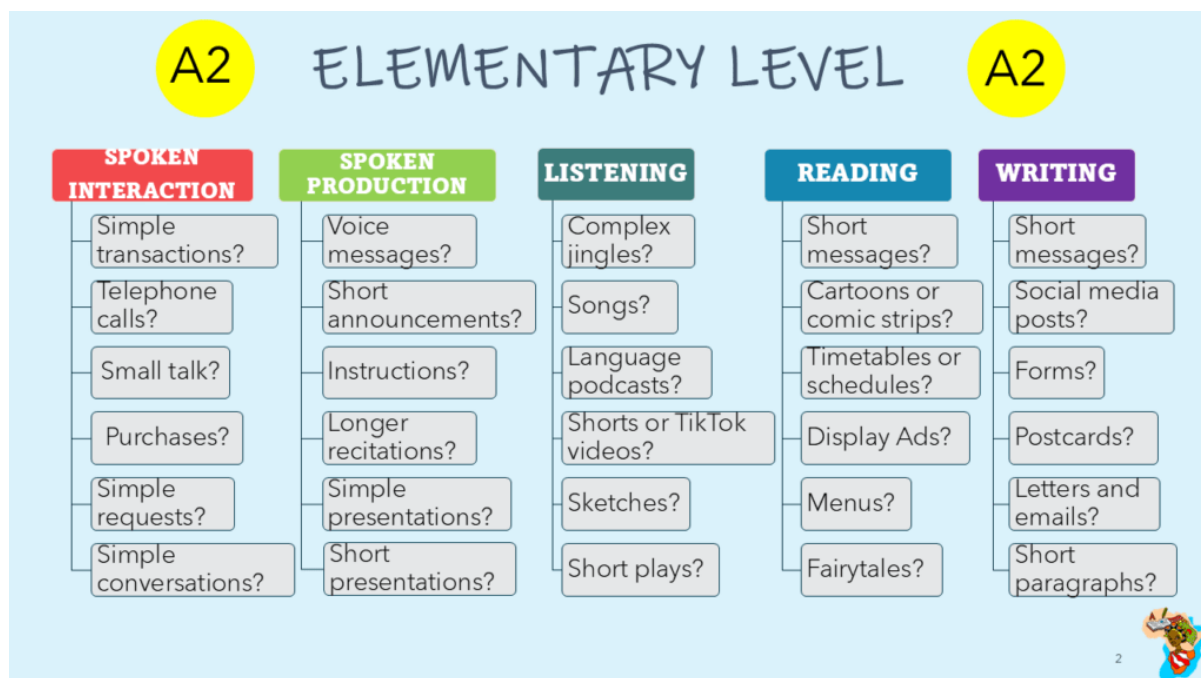
Listening (A1): You start with audio documents like jingles that are easy to remember because they are repetitive. Nursery rhymes are also popular at this stage even though their intended main listeners are children. At this point, you are also able to understand simple announcements such as those you would hear at the train station or the airport. TikTok videos or YouTube shorts are also very easy to understand because their content is not long. In class you often do '**Listening Comprehension**' exercises to fill in missing information in a worksheet e.g. *name, age, job*, etc. Lastly, you can understand most orders such as: *Take out a pen and a piece of paper, Write today's date*, etc.

Reading (A1): At **A1**, you can read most street or road signs and understand them: *Exit, Entrance, Left, Right, Push, Pull*, etc. You can also understand the main information on posters or billboards. Besides, newspaper headlines are also not difficult to understand: *Schools closed as storm devastates city, Mayor encourages citizens to vote*, etc. Classified Ads which are generally short and catchy are also great reading comprehension opportunities. At the restaurant, you can also read menus and choose the food you want, especially if you are helped with photos. Finally, at this stage, you should be able to understand text messages as well.

Writing (A1): This is a skill that is usually last to acquire. However, you can try as much as you can to write at **A1** one level: sticky notes, shopping or to-do lists, short messages, or postcards to your friends, etc. It is also common to do simple writing exercises in the classroom or when you are self-studying. You can equally write simple leaflets to advertise a service. Finally, you can also practise spelling of single words or do dictations of short paragraphs in a classroom setting. You can read more about the different types of writing in this [post](#).

All in all, the A1 is a stage of discovery. Content is simple and engaging. You get to like the language you are learning or not. Everything that you do at this point will constitute the building blocks of your future success.

CEFR A2 (Beginner Level): Clear, Slow, Frequent



At A2, you are not a total beginner and you already have a few tricks up your sleeve. You know how to introduce yourself and talk about what is personal and familiar: *pets, family, friends, school, job, neighbourhood, city of origin*, etc. At this stage, you are slowly and surely building your language skills. However memorisation, translation, repetition and simplicity are still very present. Moreover, you thrive when content is slow, clear and frequent.

In English, the [Present Continuous](#) tense, [Simple Past](#) tense, the [Future](#) tense, [Modal Verbs](#), [Comparatives](#) and [Superlatives](#) make their appearance. This gives you the opportunity to create short sentences that can be linked with simple connectors such as **AND**, **BUT** and **OR**.

Spoken Interaction (CEFR A2): At A2, you are able to make simple transactions at the bank or at the Post Office. You can also make or receive short telephone calls. [Small talk](#) is also easy to make at this point as you possess enough basic vocabulary to talk about yourself or the weather. The amount of words and grammatical structures you have enable you to make purchases in shops or ask someone for simple directions. Ultimately, you are able to have simple, unprepared conversations as long as your interlocutor speaks slowly and clearly and uses [high frequency words](#).

Spoken Production (CEFR A2): Speaking is easier at this stage. For instance, you can send voice messages on WhatsApp. You are also able to make short announcements in the classroom or at work. Instructions are also easy to give since you already know how to use the **Imperative Form**. Recitations continue and at this stage you can memorise longer poems and texts. Teachers will also often ask you to make simple descriptions or presentations about your family, daily routines or school.

Listening (CEFR A2): At A2, jingles remain popular but you also get introduced to songs because they are easy to remember. It is also always useful and judicious to memorise the lyrics as well. Once listening becomes a habit, you can start listening to podcasts that are made for language learners. This is adapted material or [Comprehensible Input](#) that is specifically tailored to your language level and needs. You also continue to watch TikTok videos or YouTube shorts. You can also watch longer sketches whose vocabulary is easy to remember because of their humorous nature. Lastly, short plays also provide for great listening opportunities.

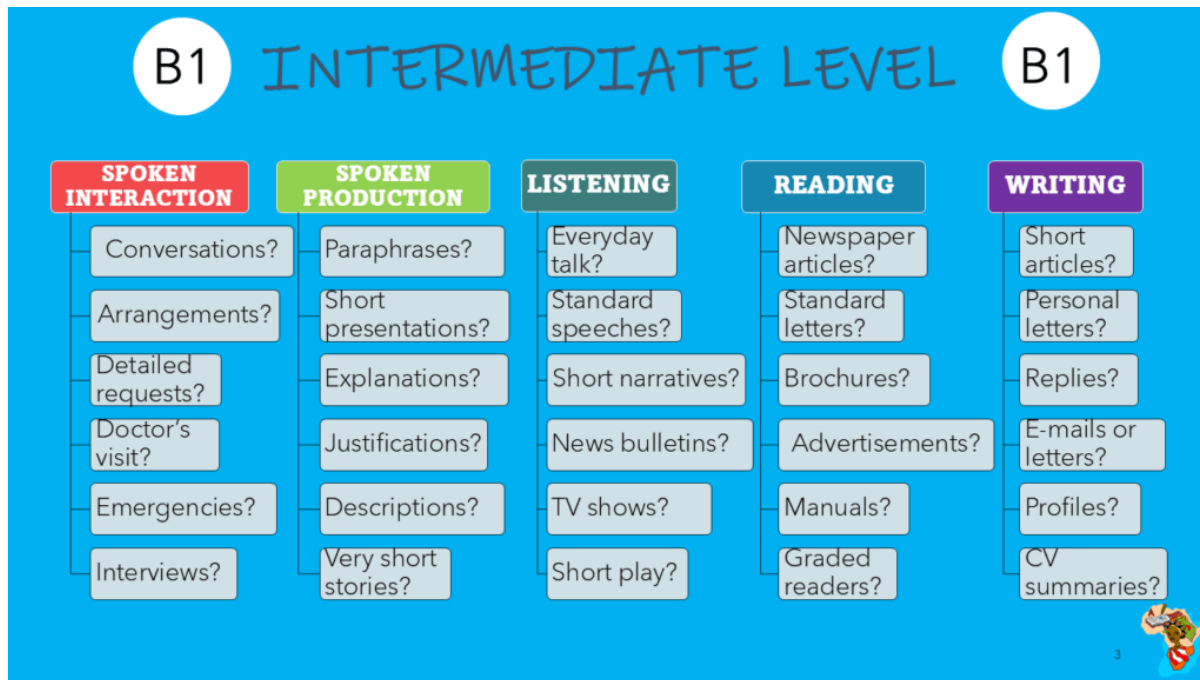
Reading (CEFR A2): Comprehension of written content is also easier at this point. You can understand short messages that are sent to you. You can read cartoon and comic strips with ease. It is also straightforward to understand timetables and schedules e.g at the airport, in the workplace or at school. Generally, it should also be easy for you to get the main message of a display Ad online or in a print newspaper or magazine.

Writing (CEFR A2): At this stage you are able to write short messages to your friends and come up with simple social media posts on Facebook or Instagram. You can also fill out forms or write postcards. Emails which contain short paragraphs can also be written at this point. Finally, you can also continue practising spelling of single words that you started at the beginner level, adding dictations of short paragraphs and longer texts in the long run.

To sum up, **A2** is the stage where you feel that you know something about the language you are learning. You can start communicating with people and you are not at a complete loss for words. The newly acquired skills enable you to start developing your confidence which will be essential to start your learning journey as an **Independent User**.

CEFR Stage 2: Independent User—Confidence, Your Stepping Stone to Fluency!

CEFR B1 (Intermediate Level): Everyday, Standard, Regular



Your world starts to broaden at **B1**. You are able to access more content in your target language and can deal with most situations in everyday life. At this point, you are confident enough to talk about things that matter to you: your family, job and interests. The vocabulary that you have enables you to talk about dreams, hopes and ambitions and you can comment on current affairs.

In English grammar, you learn about the [Present Perfect](#) tense, the [Past Perfect](#) tense, the **Passive** and **Active Voices**, [Conditionals](#), etc. At **B1**, you start speaking or writing with ease but mistakes are still frequent.

Spoken Interaction (CEFR B1): What a pleasure it is at this point to be able to have face-to-face conversations with strangers. What about being able to make travel arrangements or plan events such as parties? At **B1**, you can also arrange a doctor's visit and go through it in the target language but not without difficulty. Your skills at this stage equally allow you to handle emergency situations and interviews. However, your language is not smooth yet and you still make many vocabulary or grammar mistakes. What is important is that you are able to understand and get yourself understood.

Spoken Production (CEFR B1): Does your ability to speak English get better at **B1**? Yes, definitely. You [paraphrase](#) content mainly and this helps you to master grammatical structures and remember regular vocabulary easily. You are also able to talk about films and books and explain your different opinions or point of view. **B1** equally gives you the ability to justify your opinions and describe experiences. Lastly, you can tell very short stories that your audience can follow and understand.

Listening (CEFR B1): Listening also becomes easier at **B1**. You slowly graduate from **Comprehensible Input** to normal input. Hence, you can understand everyday talk, standard speeches, short narratives, news bulletins, familiar TV programmes and simple technical instructions. This is done effectively as long as the language is not complicated and too far from your area of expertise or knowledge.

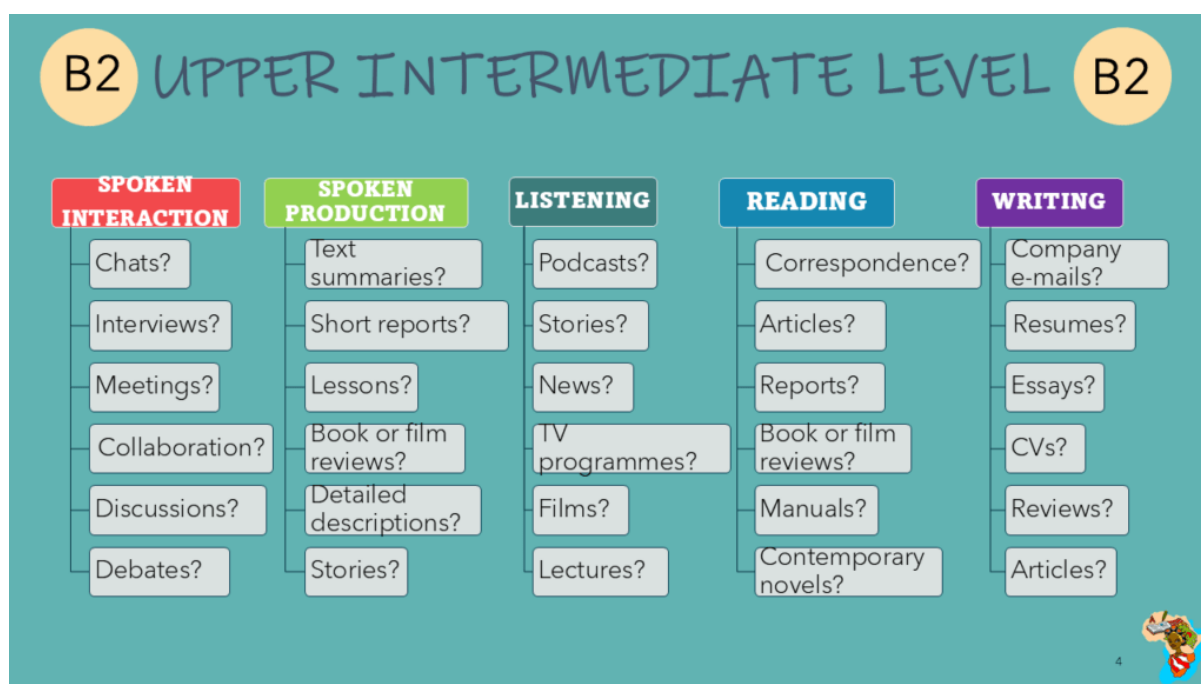
Reading (CEFR B1): Reading also becomes more enjoyable at **B1**. You start understanding the main points of a newspaper article, a standard letter, an information brochure, an advertisement and a

manual. You can also read fairly lengthy stories in [graded readers](#). At **Learn English With Africa**, we also have stories that are tailored to your language needs. We invite you with pleasure to check out our books [here](#).

Writing (CEFR B1): Thanks to the exposure to English that you have at **B1**, you can start writing short articles using prompts. Detailed personal letters are also popular at this level. In these letters, you can talk about your health, feelings, future plans, hopes and dreams. Another writing exercise that you can do at this point is to inquire about an advertisement that you saw. You can also write business e-mails and letters and fill out your profile on internet sites that require you to do so. The **B1** level also enables you to write a summary of your Curriculum Vitae (CV).

To summarise, **B1** is the stage where your language wings are starting to spread. You continue to translate but also try to use the language you are learning in a creative way. Although you still have difficulties as far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned, you don't shy away from speaking and learning opportunities. You know that errors are part and parcel of your language journey. Most of all, you are aware that mastering a language takes years. What matters at this point is to do everything you can to go to the next stage.

CEFR B2 (Upper Intermediate Level): Detailed, Diverse, Dense



The B2 level is considered sufficient for most employers. This is because you are able to carry out everyday and professional tasks without too much trouble. You are articulate and logical enough to make yourself understood and you are confident enough to venture into uncharted territories. Translation is still part of your learning process but slowly you start using unilingual dictionaries and thesauruses because you prefer their precision and thoroughness.

In grammar, the **Future Perfect** tense, the **Future Continuous** tense, The [Past Perfect Continuous](#) tense, [Reported Speech](#) and [Relative Clauses](#) finally show up. At this stage, you do not make many mistakes. When you do, you notice the mistake and often correct it yourself.

Spoken Interaction (CEFR B2): At this stage, interaction is natural and almost effortless. You can do face-to-face or video chats with ease. Job interviews are also easy to do at this stage as you have enough vocabulary to help you. In a professional setting, you can participate in a meeting and get your message across to your colleagues or clients. This also facilitates collaboration and discussions if you are working on a particular project. Finally, you can confidently participate in [debates](#).

Spoken Production (CEFR B2): At this point, you have developed the ability to speak clearly and give more details in your spoken production. You can summarise texts and do short reports in an organised way using linking words. Besides, you are also able to give lessons on topics that you master. Doing book or film reviews is also fairly easy for you at this point. On top of that, you can give detailed descriptions in [oral presentations](#) and stories.

Listening (CEFR B2): At **B2** level, you can listen to podcasts done by native speakers on different social issues. You also continue to understand stories, news bulletins, TV programmes, films and even university lectures. The difference is that you can now understand in detail. The subjects do not also have to be far from what you already know. Finally language has to be clear and standard with no unusual words or accents. Moreover, when watching films, you might still need to put the subtitles on.

Reading (CEFR B2): The **B2** level enables you to understand a variety of written texts such as business reports, features in magazines or newspapers, business or academic reports, detailed book or film reviews, specialised instructions in a manual and contemporary novels. You can understand quickly and summarise the main points.

Writing (CEFR B2): Writing at **B2** is not yet a piece of cake but you can do it with some degree of ease. You can write company e-mails, detailed resumes, essays or compositions, Curricula Vitae (CVs), extensive book or film reviews and articles in your field of interest. Generally speaking, you are able to handle most written tasks in a professional and academic setting.

In short, the **B2** level is a crucial stage in your language learning journey. Just imagine—you have already gone through four sub-stages in order to reach the point where you are. What you do after this point is a bonus. You can decide to continue learning in order to achieve full proficiency. Some learners do not want to encumber themselves with unnecessary learning baggage and decide to stop here. Yet, some learners want to continue and discover what it feels like to grab the language holy grail: Reach native-like levels of reception and production!

CEFR Stage 3: Proficient User—Mastery, A Dream Come True!

CEFR C1 (Advanced Level): Structured, Creative, Spontaneous



Reaching the **C1** level in English is no mean feat. It is not done automatically and passively. It means that you have read and listened to authentic written and oral documents for a long time. It equally means that you have dedicated a great deal of time to practising your target language. There is no miraculous solution that will take you to the top of the ladder. You need to work hard. At this point, you are just perfecting the existing structures that you have and bringing nuance into your speech or written content. You try to avoid direct translations and enrichen your vocabulary through immersion.

Grammatical structures at **C1** are more [complicated](#) and nuanced. After all, this is the **Advanced level** and rightly so. Extensive reading and frequent exposure to quality language will fast-track your progress.

Spoken Interaction (CEFR C1): At this stage, fluent, spontaneous and effortless conversations are not uncommon. You can also do successful improvisations and impress your interlocutors. Acing interviews in the target language is also easy to achieve with preparation of course! Language correction is somehow not a salient issue so you can be bold enough to do live chats on YouTube or Facebook. Participating in a panel discussion is also possible at **C1** level. Finally you can debate efficiently on different topics without suffering a lack of words or expressions.

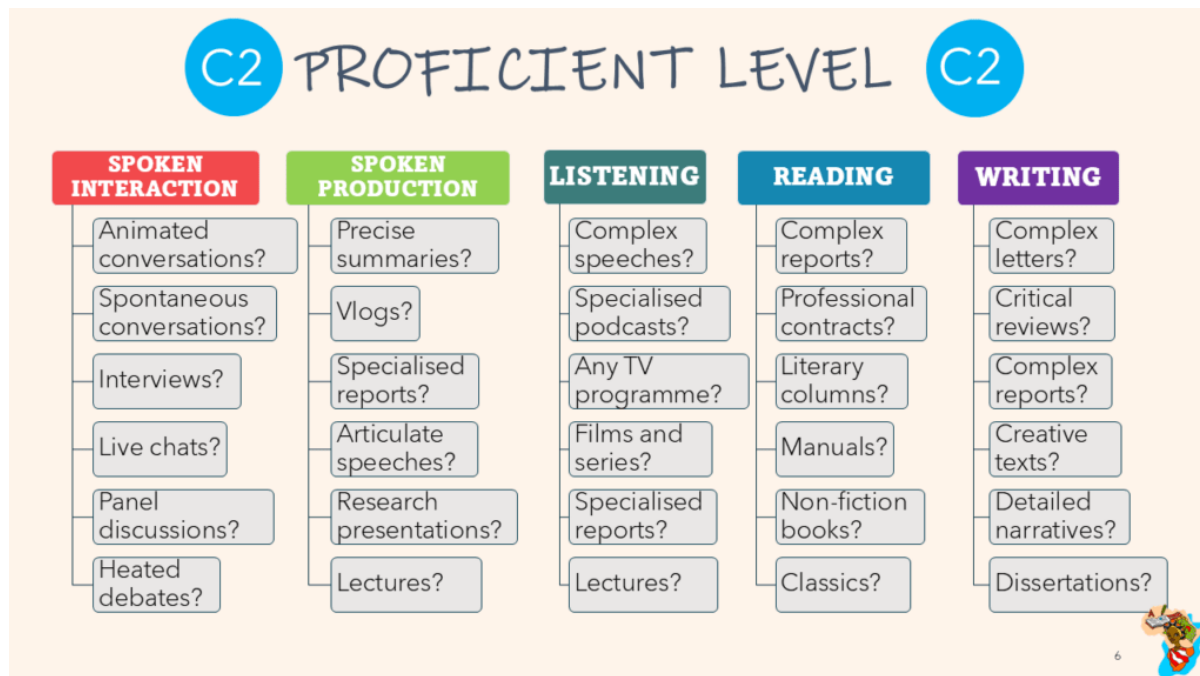
Spoken Production (CEFR C1): In **Spoken Production**, you can do precise and structured summaries, video logs or vlogs, video presentations, long and articulate speeches, detailed reports and lectures. Your discourse is very well organised and you use linking words to the best of your ability.

Listening (CEFR C1): Listening at **C1** also becomes much easier. Here, you continue to listen to podcasts, watch TV programmes, films and series with or no subtitles. Watching classic plays is also enjoyable and listening to a university lecture is not back-breaking.

Reading (CEFR C1): Reading Comprehension also gets facilitated at this point. You can read extensive reports, business contracts, literary works, newspaper columns, complex reviews and unusual texts. Additionally, you are able to get the implicit. This is why you can understand poetry or complex literary works.

Writing (CEFR C1): Writing at **C1** level does not particularly give you a headache unless you are writing a complex essay. Fair enough, at this point of your language-learning journey, you are able to write technical reports, complex reviews, very precise summaries, detailed narratives, complex correspondence and creative texts. Yes, you can start to write a collection of beautiful short stories or poems in the target language, why not?

To conclude, the **C1** level is the sweet spot just before ultimate mastery. You know that you are on your way to speak and write like an educated native speaker. Mistakes are rare and you notice them immediately and self-correction is an instant solution. You have come from far to reach the **C1** stage. You might want to stop here and rest— understandably. Yet, there is only one more step and you are there. Why stop? It is like trying to do a world tour and managing to visit all countries except the United States of America and China. It does not make any sense.



The C2 level is the holy grail. Your sweat and countless days of working on your English justify this. This is a point where you have acquired the language and it is truly yours. You can play with it, understand cultural nuances and make very rare mistakes. You now think directly in the language you have been learning and translations are rare. Sometimes some accents are rather challenging to pick and understand. However, you can be proud that you have made it so far. It is truly time to celebrate!

In English grammar, you continue perfecting your [knowledge](#) and add even more nuance to your expression. This is a life-long process and can be quickened through frequent exposure to quality books and audio content such as documentaries.

Spoken Interaction (CEFR C2): At C2 level, conversations are not only fluent but also animated. It is very easy to enter into spontaneous communication with someone. Just like at C1 level, interviews are child's play. Participating in video chats, panel discussions and heated debates is also nothing to write home about as far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned. It is a different thing if we talk about ideas!

Spoken Production (CEFR C2): In **Spoken Production**, you can do very precise summaries of texts, video logs (Vlogs), specialised reports, articulate speeches, research presentations and even lecture students. This is a moment of triumph as you master the language that you started learning perhaps many years before.

Listening (CEFR C2): You can understand complex audio content ranging from long-winded speeches, specialised podcasts, any TV programme, films and series without subtitles, specialised reports and university lectures. Sometimes you can have some difficulties in understanding someone with an unfamiliar accent. However nuances in language are easy to perceive and comprehend.

Reading (CEFR C2): Reading is a pleasure at C2. You can read and understand almost any written document in old and modern English. Obviously, you can read your way through a complex report or a business contract with specialised language. Satirical and literary columns no longer remain a secret. Manuals with technical language are also within your grasp. At this point you can also indulge in non-fiction books and classics. What a beautiful way to live and thrive in English!

Writing (CEFR C2): Writing at C2 level is an opportunity to show off your complete mastery. You no longer have to prove yourself that you can write. At this stage, you can come up with complex business

correspondence and reports, detailed critical reviews, nuanced creative works, detailed narratives and even dissertations. This is a time for exploration and implementation. Writing at this point is extremely enjoyable because you are not limited by language.

In conclusion, the **C2** level is the reward for all the effort that you have put in for numerous years. It also seems to signal the end of a long and arduous road. Yet, learning never stops, right? Languages are not dormant. They continue to evolve as our lives change. New words are invented daily and old ones are discarded. This makes language-learning all the more exciting and intriguing.



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