



# Introducing the Global Scale of English Learning Objectives



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Students often complain about their lack of perceived progress and will welcome the opportunity to work towards certain, defined objectives.”

*Barbara Gardner,  
Learning Technologies Training Coordinator,  
Study Group*



## Global Scale of English Learning Objectives: making learning more effective

This document introduces the Global Scale of English (GSE) Learning Objectives. These Learning Objectives have been developed by Pearson English over a number of years in collaboration with teachers, ELT authors and language experts from around the world. They form the backbone of our mission to ensure that our products and services have a positive and measurable impact on learners' lives.

In order to learn English as effectively and efficiently as possible, a learner needs to know three things:

- What level is my English?
- Am I making progress?
- What should I aim to learn next to meet my long-term goals?

To answer these three questions, learners and teachers need the following as part of an overall English learning ecosystem:

- A clear and precise definition of what it means to be at a particular 'level' of proficiency
- English teaching and learning materials which are aligned to the 'level' definitions
- An assessment tool designed to profile a learner's proficiency across all four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening



The Global Scale of English represents the most significant advance in performance-based approaches to language learning, teaching and assessment since the development of the Common European Framework of Reference.”

*David Nunan Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Applied Linguistics, University of Hong Kong*

The GSE Learning Objectives form part of the first point above: providing an accurate definition of what it means to be at a particular 'level' on a scale of English language proficiency. Four sets of Learning Objectives have been developed, each tailored to meet the needs of specific audiences – Learners of Professional English, Academic English, Young Learners and General Adult learners.

For more information about our work in this field, please visit [English.com/gse](https://www.english.com/gse).

## The Global Scale of English

The Global Scale of English (GSE) is a standardised, granular scale which measures English language proficiency. Unlike some other frameworks which describe attainment in broad bands, the Global Scale of English identifies what a learner can do at each point on the scale across speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

The scale is designed to motivate learners by accurately demonstrating step-by-step progress. Using the Global Scale of English, teachers can match a student to the right course materials to suit their exact level and learning goals.

The Global Scale of English serves as a standard against which English language courses and assessments worldwide can be benchmarked, offering a truly global and shared understanding of proficiency levels.

Visit [English.com/gse](https://www.english.com/gse) to learn more.

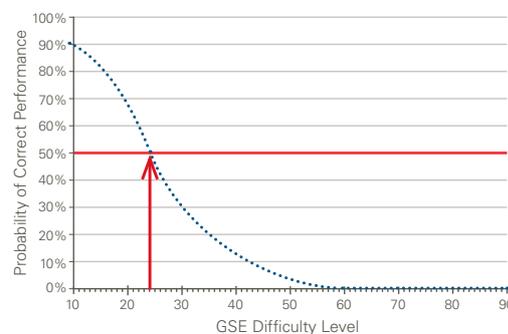
The GSE Learning Objectives are mapped to the Global Scale of English and describe what a learner can do at different levels of proficiency on the scale.

## What it means to be at a level

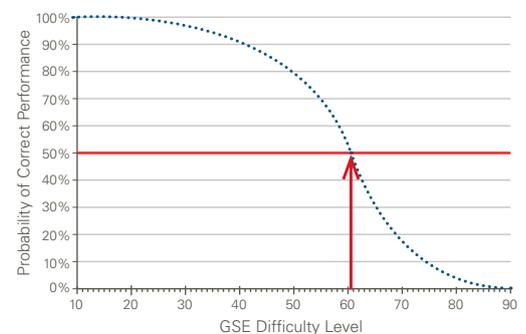
Learning a language is not like learning mathematics or electrical engineering, where each topic builds upon a previous one in a sequence. Language learning is not necessarily sequential, and a learner might be strong in one area, where they have had a lot of practice or a particular need or motivation, but quite weak in another.

For that reason, to say that a learner is 'at' a certain level on the Global Scale of English does not mean they have necessarily mastered every GSE Learning Objective for every skill up to that point. Neither does it mean that they have mastered none at a higher GSE value. If a student is assessed as being at 61 on the scale, it means s/he has a 50% probability of being able to perform Learning Objectives at that level, a greater probability of being able to perform Learning Objectives at a lower level, and a lower probability of being able to perform Learning Objectives at a higher level. Language learning is unique to every individual.

A learner at 25 on GSE



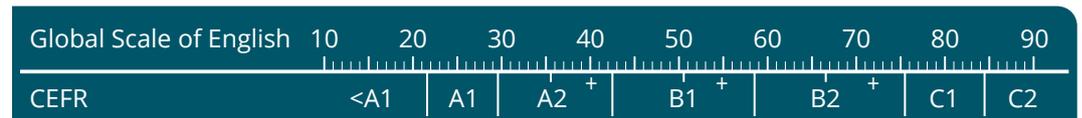
A learner at 61 on GSE



## Extending the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The work to develop the GSE Learning Objectives builds upon the research carried out by Brian North and the Council of Europe in creating the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)<sup>1</sup>.

The Global Scale of English itself has been psychometrically aligned to the CEFR.



The CEFR uses a six-level classification of learner proficiency from A1 (low basic) to C2 (fully proficient). The amount of instruction needed to progress learners from one level to the next varies widely according to level, context, native language, age, ability, and other factors, so it is difficult to quantify exactly. However, it has been observed that most people studying for three or four hours per week (as is the case for many language learners) may take two or more years to move from one CEFR level to the next – and as proficiency increases, it takes even longer to move to the next CEFR level. When learners spend two or more years studying without reaching a new CEFR level, it can leave them feeling that they are making little or no progress.

In developing the GSE Learning Objectives, we have extended the number and range of learning objectives – or ‘Can Do Statements’ – that are included in the CEFR, providing information to support a far more granular definition of language proficiency. Students are much more motivated when they can see every small step in their progression.

## Personalisation of progress



For teachers, assessment specialists and content developers, the GSE ecosystem provides a detailed picture of language performance at different levels of proficiency and for individual skills. By combining course materials with assessment tools that are aligned to the Global Scale of English, teachers can:

- understand their students' levels of proficiency more precisely
- monitor students' progress at a granular level
- make more informed choices for each student or class

<sup>1</sup> These learning objectives extend and build on the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in their intended use "...[for]...the planning of language learning programmes in terms of their assumptions regarding prior knowledge, ...their objectives, [and] their content" (Council of Europe, 2001, p6). Like CEFR, the GSE Learning Objectives are also intended for use in "the planning of language certification in terms of the content syllabus of examinations [and] assessment criteria, in terms of positive achievement." (ibid)

## Informing teaching and assessment materials

Authors, editors and teachers are increasingly aware of the need to be learner-focused and to create syllabuses and courses that reflect learner needs and expectations. The GSE Learning Objectives constitute a detailed and graded model of student target performance across a range of skills and domains.

Our authors and editors are using the GSE Learning Objectives as the starting point for the creation of all new teaching and learning materials. The following example from *SpeakOut* illustrates how the authors have developed content to support the GSE Learning Objective for Speaking:

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35 Can describe a travel experience with a few very basic stock phrases.

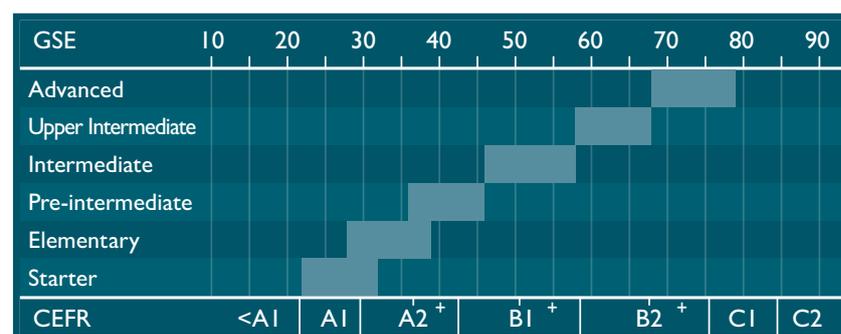
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In the lesson, learners engage with a series of staged activities designed to support and guide them towards being able to describe a travel experience of their own.

- Speaking and vocabulary activities check learners' language knowledge and pre-teach key travel vocabulary, working with images and text
- Controlled writing provides practice of travel vocabulary in context
- Pre-reading prediction prepares learners for the reading passage describing a travel experience
- Follow-up activities raise awareness of key phrases used to describe a travel experience
- Speaking activities enable practice in a controlled context
- As a final activity, learners work in groups and prepare to describe a travel experience of their own, which they then present to the class

By the end of the lesson, learners have received the input required (skills, structures, vocabulary) and demonstrated their ability to perform the Learning Objective.

Many Pearson English courses for adult and young adult learners, such as *SpeakOut*, *Cutting Edge*, *Total English*, *Language Leader* and *Focus* are aligned to the Global Scale of English. You will find information on the back cover of the Student's Book that indicates the GSE range covered by each stage of a course:



The above chart indicates the target range on the Global Scale of English (and the CEFR). This indicates the range of GSE Learning Objectives that authors have written to for that level.

Assessment tools have also been created to report on the Global Scale of English. The newest assessment offering from Pearson English is *Progress* – a package of three tests taken at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of a course of study to measure progress. At each stage, a test report indicates a learner's score on the Global Scale of English – and identifies specific GSE Learning Objectives that require further work to improve. To learn more about *Progress*, go to [English.com/progress](https://www.english.com/progress).

## Sources and origins in the Learning Objectives

Many of the communicative descriptors contained in the Learning Objectives either come from the original CEFR document (Council of Europe, 2001) or are slightly modified versions of these. We have created the additional descriptors by consulting a variety of sources, including:

- The Council of Europe's *Breakthrough* specification (Trim, 2009)
- The EAQUALS/British Council Core Inventory (British Council/EAQUALS, 2010)
- British and American English course materials
- Syllabuses from various Ministries of Education.

The GSE Learning Objectives are coded for purposes of copyright and to show their origin:

(C)	Common European Framework descriptor, verbatim, © Council of Europe
(C <sub>A</sub> )	Common European Framework descriptor, adapted or edited, © Council of Europe
(N2000)	North (2000) descriptor, verbatim
(N2000 <sub>A</sub> )	North (2000) descriptor, adapted or edited
(N2007 <sub>A</sub> )	North (2007) expanded set of C1 and C2 descriptors, adapted or edited
(P)	New Pearson descriptor

## Collaborating with teachers worldwide to create the GSE learning objectives

The project to calibrate Learning Objectives has involved thousands of experienced ELT teachers from over 50 countries. Some attended training workshops and others took part via online surveys. All teachers rated the difficulty of newly created learning objectives on either the Global Scale of English or the CEFR. The data was then collated and analysed by a team of psychometricians. See the back cover for how you can get involved.

## References

- British Council/EAQUALS (2010) *Core Inventory for General English*. London, British Council and EAQUALS. <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/british-council-equals-core-inventory-general-english-0>
- Council of Europe (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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- Trim, J. (2009) *Breakthrough*. Strasbourg, Council of Europe. Available on [www.ealta.eu.org](http://www.ealta.eu.org)

## Personalised learning

We have developed learning objectives tailored to meet the needs of four specific audiences: Adult Learners of General English, Learners of Academic English, Learners of Professional English and Young Learners (aged 6-14). These sets of learning objectives take account of the different goals across all four skills for each group of learners.

Visit [English.com/gse](https://www.english.com/gse) for more information about the Global Scale of English and to download the four sets of GSE Learning Objectives.



# *The GSE Teacher Toolkit*

Find it on [english.com/gse](https://www.english.com/gse)

*With Learning Objectives, Vocabulary and Grammar, the GSE Teacher Toolkit is a comprehensive, free and fully searchable online tool.*

### *The GSE Teacher Toolkit can help:*

- Plan a curriculum, lesson or assessment
- Map existing materials to the GSE/CEFR or create new materials at the right level
- Create admin reports and give feedback

