

Measuring Language Proficiency



Understanding the CEFR

The Common European Framework of Reference has become the industry standard for measuring language proficiency and a key resource for educational policy worldwide.

The Six CEFR Levels

The CEFR measures language ability in a scale of levels, which start from A1 for beginners to C2 for those who mastered a language. Here are the six CEFR levels with a summary of what one can do at each level.

CEFR Level	Level Name	Can-Do Description
C2	Upper Advanced	Fully operational command of a language, e.g. can argue a case confidently, justifying and making points persuasively.
C1	Advanced	Good operational command of a language, e.g. can participate effectively in discussions and meetings.
B2	Upper Intermediate	Generally effective command of a language, e.g. can make a contribution to meetings but unlikely to follow complex arguments.
B1	Intermediate	Limited but effective command of a language in familiar situations e.g. can participate in familiar topics & exchange simple factual information.
A2	Elementary	Limited command of a language in familiar situations e.g. can understand and pass on simple messages.
A1	Beginner	Very limited command of a language, e.g. may know some basic phrases but cannot communicate well.

How much study is needed?

Vantage is often asked about the number of study hours required to reach a certain CEFR level. It's not possible to give a simple answer to this. The study hours needed vary depending upon several factors, such as the number of hours a student studies, the inclinations and age of the individual. Equally important is the amount of exposure to English outside of normal classroom lesson times.

The figures in the table below can be seen as an approximate guideline. The chart assumes the student starts at the absolute beginning level (A1).

CEFR Level	Number of learning Hours Needed
C2	approx. 1,000 – 1,200
C1	approx. 700 – 800
B2	approx. 500 – 600
B1	approx. 350 – 400
A2	approx. 180 – 200

Putting it all together

Here's an example of how the chart works.

Take an individual with no knowledge of English that wants to reach the B1 level. They would need some 350 to 400 hours of study. If that person studied 6 hours a week, it would take approximately 58 to 67 weeks to reach this lower immediate level of English proficiency.