

Student Performance Level (SPL) descriptors for listening and oral communication



	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
Level 0	No ability whatsoever	No ability whatsoever	No ability whatsoever
Level 1	Functions minimally, if at all, in English. Can handle only very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral communication, and in which all tasks can be easily demonstrated. A native speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers can rarely communicate with a person at this level except through gestures.	Understands only a few isolated words, and extremely simple learned phrases.	Vocabulary limited to a few isolated words. No control of grammar.
Level 2	Functions in a very limited way in situations related to immediate needs. Can handle only routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral communication, and in which all tasks can be easily demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers will have great difficulty communicating with a person at this level.	Understands a limited number of very simple learned phrases, spoken slowly with frequent repetitions.	Expresses a limited number of immediate survival needs using very simple learned phrases.
Level 3	Functions with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs. Can handle routine entry-level jobs that involve only the most basic oral communication, and in which all tasks can be demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers will have great difficulty communicating with a person at this level.	Understands simple learned phrases, spoken slowly with frequent repetitions.	Expresses immediate survival needs using simple learned phrases.

Student Performance Level (SPL) descriptors for listening and oral communication (continued)



	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
Level 4	Can satisfy basic survival needs and a few very routine social demands. Can handle entry-level jobs that involve some simple oral communication, but in which tasks can be easily demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers will have difficulty communicating with a person at this level.	Understands simple learned phrases easily, and some simple new phrases containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with frequent repetitions.	Expresses basic survival needs including asking and responding to related questions, using both learned and a limited number of new phrases. Participates in basic conversations in a few very routine social situations. Speaks with hesitation and frequent pauses. Some control of basic grammar.
Level 5	Can satisfy basic survival needs and some limited social demands. Can handle jobs and job training that involve following simple oral instructions but in which most tasks can also be demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers will have some difficulty communicating with a person at this level.	Understands learned phrases easily and short new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with repetition. Has limited ability to understand on the telephone.	Functions independently in most face-to-face basic survival situations but needs some help. Asks and responds to direct questions on familiar and some unfamiliar subjects. Still relies on learned phrases but also uses new phrases (i.e., speaks with some creativity) but with hesitation and pauses. Communicates on the phone to express a limited number of survival needs, but with some difficulty. Participates in basic conversations in a limited number of social situations. Can occasionally clarify general meaning by simple rewording. Increasing, but inconsistent control of basic grammar.

Student Performance Level (SPL) descriptors for listening and oral communication (continued)



	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
Level 6	<p>Can satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Can handle jobs and job training that involve following simple oral and written instructions and diagrams. A native English speaker not used to dealing with limited English speakers will be able to communicate with a person at this level on familiar topics, but with difficulty and some effort.</p>	<p>Understands conversations containing some unfamiliar vocabulary on many everyday subjects, with a need for repetition, rewording or slower speech. Has some ability to understand without face-to-face contact (e.g. on the telephone, TV).</p>	<p>Functions independently in most survival situations, but needs some help. Relies less on learned phrases; speaks with creativity, but with hesitation. Communicates on the phone on familiar subjects but with some difficulty. Participates with some confidence in social situations when addressed directly. Can sometimes clarify general meaning by rewording. Control of basic grammar evident, but inconsistent; may attempt to use more difficult grammar but with almost no control.</p>
Level 7	<p>Can satisfy survival needs and routine work and social demands. Can handle work that involves following oral and simple written instructions in familiar and some unfamiliar situations. A native English speaker not used to dealing with limited English speakers can generally communicate with a person at this level on familiar topics.</p>	<p>Understands conversations on most everyday subjects at normal speed when addressed directly; may need repetition, rewording, or slower speech. Understands routine work-related conversations. Increasing ability to understand without face-to-face contact (telephone, TV, radio). Has difficulty following conversation between native speakers.</p>	<p>Functions independently in survival and many social and work situations, but may need help occasionally. Communicates on the phone on familiar subjects. Expands on basic ideas in conversation, but still speaks with hesitation while searching for appropriate vocabulary and grammar. Clarifies general meaning easily, and can sometimes convey exact meaning. Controls basic grammar, but not more difficult grammar.</p>

Student Performance Level (SPL) descriptors for listening and oral communication (continued)



	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
Level 8	Can participate effectively in social and familiar work situations. A native English speaker not used to dealing with limited English speakers can communicate with a person at this level on almost all topics.	Understands general conversation and conversation on technical subjects in own field. Understands without face-to-face contact (telephone, TV, radio); may have difficulty following rapid or colloquial speech. Understands most conversations between native speakers; may miss details if speech is very rapid or colloquial or if subject is unfamiliar.	Participates effectively in practical and social conversation and in technical discussions in own field. Speaks fluently in both familiar and unfamiliar situations; can handle problem situations. Conveys and explains exact meaning of complex ideas. Good control of grammar.
Level 9	Can participate fluently and accurately in practical, social, and work situations. A native English speaker not used to dealing with limited English speakers can communicate easily with a person at this level.	Understands almost all speech in any context. Occasionally confused by highly colloquial or regional speech.	Approximates a native speaker's fluency and ability to convey own ideas precisely, even in unfamiliar situations. Speaks without effort. Excellent control of grammar with no apparent patterns of weakness.
Level 10	Ability equal to that of a native speaker of the same socioeconomic level.	Equal to that of a native speaker of the same socioeconomic level.	Equal to that of a native speaker of the same socioeconomic level.

Drawn from:

Grognet, A. G. (1997). *Performance-based curricula and outcomes: The mainstream English language training project (MELT) Updated for the 1990s and beyond*. Denver, CO: Spring Institute for International Studies.

Office of Refugee Resettlement (DHHS). (1985). *Competency-based mainstream English language training project (MELT) resource package*. Washington, DC: Author. (Alexandria, VA: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, No. ED 264 384, 232 pp.)

National Reporting System (NRS) ESL functioning level descriptors

National Reporting System (NRS) ESL functioning level descriptors

Outcome Measure Definitions			
EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS—ENGLISH –AS-A-SECOND LANGUAGE LEVELS			
Literacy Level	Speaking and Listening	Basic Reading and Writing	Functional and Workplace Skills
<p>Beginning ESL Literacy Test benchmark: CASAS (all): 180 and below SPL (Speaking) 0-1 SPL (Reading and Writing) 0-1 Oral BEST: 0-15 BEST Plus: 400 and below Literacy BEST: 0-7</p>	<p>Individual cannot speak or understand English, or understands only isolated words or phrases.</p>	<p>Individual has no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language. May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language and may have difficulty using a writing instrument.</p>	<p>Individual functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures or a few isolated words, such as name and other personal information; may recognize only common signs or symbols (e.g., stop sign, product logos); can handle only very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English. There is no knowledge or use of computers or technology.</p>
<p>Beginning ESL Test benchmark: CASAS (all): 181-200 SPL (Speaking) 2-3 SPL (Reading and Writing) 2-4 Oral BEST 16-41 BEST Plus: 401-438 Literacy BEST: 8-46</p>	<p>Individual can understand frequently used words in context and very simple phrases spoken slowly and with some repetition; there is little communicative output and only in the most routine situations; little or no control over basic grammar; survival needs can be communicated simply, and there is some understanding of simple questions.</p>	<p>Individual can recognize, read and write numbers and letters, but has a limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading; can write a limited number of basic sight words and familiar words and phrases; may also be able to write simple sentences or phrases, including very simple messages. Can write basic personal information. Narrative writing is disorganized and unclear; inconsistently uses simple punctuation (e.g., periods, commas, question marks); contains frequent errors in spelling.</p>	<p>Individual functions with difficulty in situations related to immediate needs and in limited social situations; has some simple oral communication abilities using simple learned and repeated phrases; may need frequent repetition; can provide personal information on simple forms; can recognize common forms of print found in the home and environment, such as labels and product names; can handle routine entry level jobs that require only the most basic written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated. There is minimal knowledge or experience using computers or technology.</p>
<p>Low Intermediate ESL Test benchmark: CASAS (all): 201-210 SPL (Speaking) 4 SPL (Reading and Writing) 5 Oral BEST: 42-50 BEST Plus: 439-472 Literacy BEST: 47-53</p>	<p>Individual can understand simple learned phrases and limited new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with frequent repetition; can ask and respond to questions using such phrases; can express basic survival needs and participate in some routine social conversations, although with some difficulty; has some control of basic grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing a familiar vocabulary; can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations, but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety, but shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense), and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).</p>	<p>Individual can interpret simple directions and schedules, signs and maps; can fill out simple forms, but needs support on some documents that are not simplified; can handle routine entry level jobs that involve some written or oral English communication, but in which job tasks can be demonstrated. Individual can use simple computer programs and can perform a sequence of routine tasks given directions using technology (e.g., fax machine, computer).</p>

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EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONING LEVEL DESCRIPTORS—ENGLISH -AS-A-SECOND LANGUAGE LEVELS			
Literacy Level	Speaking and Listening	Basic Reading and Writing	Functional and Workplace Skills
<p>High Intermediate ESL Test benchmark: CASAS (all): 211-220 SPL (Speaking) 5 SPL (Reading and Writing) 6 Oral BEST: 51-57 BEST Plus: 473-506 Literacy BEST: 54-65</p>	<p>Individual can understand learned phrases and short new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly and with some repetition; can communicate basic survival needs with some help; can participate in conversation in limited social situations and use new phrases with hesitation; relies on description and concrete terms. There is inconsistent control of more complex grammar.</p>	<p>Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, chronological order); can use context to determine meaning; can interpret actions required in specific written directions; can write simple paragraphs with main idea and supporting detail on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures; can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>Individual can meet basic survival and social needs, can follow some simple oral and written instruction and has some ability to communicate on the telephone on familiar subjects; can write messages and notes related to basic needs; complete basic medical forms and job applications; can handle jobs that involve basic oral instructions and written communication in tasks that can be clarified orally. The individual can work with or learn basic computer software, such as word processing; can follow simple instructions for using technology.</p>
<p>Low Advanced ESL Test benchmark: CASAS (All): 221-235 SPL (Speaking) 6 SPL (Reading and Writing) 7 Oral BEST 58-64 BEST Plus: 507-540 Literacy BEST: 66 and above</p>	<p>Individual can converse on many everyday subjects and some subjects with unfamiliar vocabulary, but may need repetition, rewording or slower speech; can speak creatively, but with hesitation; can clarify general meaning by rewording and has control of basic grammar; understands descriptive and spoken narrative and can comprehend abstract concepts in familiar contexts.</p>	<p>Individual is able to read simple descriptions and narratives on familiar subjects or from which new vocabulary can be determined by context; can make some minimal inferences about familiar texts and compare and contrast information from such texts, but not consistently. The individual can write simple narrative descriptions and short essays on familiar topics, such as customs in native country; has consistent use of basic punctuation, but makes grammatical errors with complex structures.</p>	<p>Individual can function independently to meet most survival needs and can communicate on the telephone on familiar topics; can interpret simple charts and graphics; can handle jobs that require simple oral and written instructions, multi-step diagrams and limited public interaction. The individual can use all basic software applications, understand the impact of technology and select the correct technology in a new situation.</p>
<p>High Advanced ESL Test benchmark: CASAS (All): 236-245 SPL (Speaking) 7 SPL (Reading and Writing) 8 Oral BEST 65 and above BEST Plus: 541-598 Exit Criteria: SPL 8 (BEST Plus 599 and higher)</p>	<p>Individual can understand and participate effectively in face-to-face conversations on everyday subjects spoken at normal speed; can converse and understand independently in survival, work and social situations; can expand on basic ideas in conversation, but with some hesitation; can clarify general meaning and control basic grammar, although still lacks total control over complex structures.</p>	<p>Individual can read authentic materials on everyday subjects and can handle most reading related to life roles; can consistently and fully interpret descriptive narratives on familiar topics and gain meaning from unfamiliar topics; uses increased control of language and meaning-making strategies to gain meaning of unfamiliar texts. The individual can write multiparagraph essays with a clear introduction and development of ideas; writing contains well formed sentences, appropriate mechanics and spelling, and few grammatical errors.</p>	<p>Individual has a general ability to use English effectively to meet most routine social and work situations; can interpret routine charts, graphs and tables and complete forms; has high ability to communicate on the telephone and understand radio and television; can meet work demands that require reading and writing and can interact with the public. The individual can use common software and learn new applications; can define the purpose of software and select new applications appropriately; can instruct others in use of software and technology.</p>

Source: NRS Implementation Guidelines, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. <http://www.nrsweb.org>