

The Practical Language Framework



The *Practical Language Framework* was created to provide a systematic means of understanding, classifying and tracking the language learning journey. The framework encompasses the various elements of communicative language competency and aims to provide a model for the development of language learning assessments and resources for educators and organizations.

The framework is organized according to 8 stages of language competency, ranging from the foundation stage of language acquisition (*Steel*) to mastering the language (*Diamond*). Within each stage, the framework is sub-divided into 6 levels.

The framework categorizes language development into four components; *accuracy*, *reception*, *interaction* and *pronunciation*.

Accuracy refers to a learner's ability and use of the appropriate grammar and syntax in a range of contexts and situations. It is often reflected in the type and frequency of mistakes that may occur in a learner's spoken communication and includes correct usage of relevant grammatical structures and their precision within the introduced language system.

Reception reflects a learner's understanding and response to spoken and written communication and their ability to follow the gist of an argument or conversation and obtain necessary information from an exchange. This category focuses on the ability to process input and make meaning from text or spoken material, to recognise words and phrases, as well as explicit or implicit messaging.

Interaction validates whether a learner is able to partake in dialogue and communicate effectively using appropriate discourse markers. This category is concerned with the learner's choice of language and grammatical constructs during verbal communication to contribute constructively and appropriately during verbal exchanges. It also reflects the learner's ability to initiate and maintain a conversation, as well as express opinions and articulate a point of view.

Finally, **pronunciation** is concerned primarily with a learner's intelligibility and their control of phonological features. Inflection, word and sentence stress, connected speech and the correct production of individual sounds all relate to how a learner's pronunciation develops over the course of language learning.

The PLF Competency Chart



	ACCURACY	RECEPTION	INTERACTION	PRONUNCIATION
DIAMOND	Shows high accuracy and sophisticated control of most linguistic and lexical structures in a diverse and varied range of contexts.	Can identify implied information easily and easily process most forms of written text and extended speech, including abstract and structurally complex written text and spoken material.	Can present clear arguments in an appropriate style, engage easily in any conversation or discussion and is able to use most idiomatic or colloquial expressions accurately.	Highly intelligible with appropriate intonation. Word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated correctly and accurately.
TITANIUM	Can express themselves with high level of grammatical and lexical range in a wide range of situations.	Accurately infers implied information. Can understand development of ideas and opinions over whole texts and in a wide range of spoken materials.	Accurately conveys meaning in conversations or discussions. Can use language effectively and with some flexibility.	Word stress is generally accurate placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated correctly and accurately.
PLATINUM	Maintains good grammatical and lexical control in a majority of sentences; some inaccuracies in complex sentence structures.	Able to infer implied information. Some problems recognising vocabulary and phrases in more specialised or technical material. Can interpret unfamiliar words easily based on context.	Can initiate and respond appropriately and able to convey meaning in a sustainable way with some inappropriate choices.	Mostly intelligible. Shows good control of phonological features.
GOLD	Has a good command of most simple sentence structures and is able to provide a suitable range of vocabulary. Inaccuracies may be present but do not hinder communication and are promptly self-corrected.	Is able to follow and show understanding of a range of spoken materials in a variety of common situations such as everyday conversations, news reports and lectures. Some difficulty with inferences. Attempts to interpret unfamiliar words based on context.	Can engage in appropriate turn-taking with limited sophistication. Some support or prompting may be required with more complex and unfamiliar topics.	Pronunciation problems sometimes interfere with communication. Uses a mix of phonological features with mixed control.
SILVER	Can consistently maintain grammatical control of predictable structures. If an attempt is made for more complex structures, they are often inaccurate. Lexical range is limited.	Able to identify the main idea, general and specific information in material where topic is reasonably familiar. Is able to attempt interpreting unfamiliar vocabulary and phrases based on context.	Can actively participate in conversations and discussions of a familiar nature; able to articulate opinions and a personal point of view. Some support or prompting required with unfamiliar topics.	Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features. If effective control is used, it is not sustained.
BRONZE	Uses basic grammatical structures with limited control and little to no flexibility. Lexical range is limited to high-frequency words and their use within familiar contexts.	Can understand texts and spoken text that are directly related to everyday situations and regarding familiar matters.	Can communicate in a simple and direct tasks and engage in an exchange of information on familiar topics.	Uses a limited range of phonological features; incorrect inflection and pronunciation difficulties evident in individual words.
COPPER	Can convey meaning about predictable and familiar situations. Simple and direct lexical choices predominate and basic grammatical mistakes occur and may distort meaning.	Unable to identify the main idea, general and specific information but can recognise predictable information in simple, everyday material.	Can interact in a simple way but cannot sustain an interaction and requires frequent repetition or rephrasing of information. Is able to ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate concern or on very familiar topics.	Some effort required to understand phrases; repeated stress, pronunciation and intonation difficulties prevent intelligibility.
STEEL	Uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary. Sentences are short and include simple sentence forms only.	Is able to recognise familiar words in simple written text and spoken materials.	Interaction is wholly dependent on repetition, repairing and rephrasing. Simple information exchange is possible, focused on personal information and using simple, pre-prepared and pre-packaged structures.	Pronunciation of a very limited number of learnt words. Phrases can be understood with effort.

The PLF Equivalencies



	TOEFL iBT	IELTS (ACADEMIC MODULE)	CEFR
DIAMOND	115 – 117 110 – 114	8.5 8 7.5	C2
TITANIUM	102 – 109		
	94 – 101	7	C1
PLATINUM	79 – 93	6.5	
GOLD	60 – 78 42 – 59	6 5.5	B2
SILVER	40 – 52	5	
BRONZE	28 – 35	3	B1
COPPER			A2
STEEL	0 – 30	2.5	A1

The *Practical Language Framework* provides guidelines for mapping categories to the *IELTS 9-band scale*, *TOEFL iBT scores* and the *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)*, however, it is important to understand the challenge in comparing results from different language tests to each other. Each test differs significantly in their format, design, test delivery method and purpose. The CEFR, as an example, has descriptors that are based on a descriptive scheme, is meant to be used as a reference and is not specific to any one language. It offers six levels, arranged into three categories, whereas the IELTS 9-band scale offers a 9-band score system from 1 (the lowest) to 9 (the highest), is specific to the English language and offers separate band scores for each skill (listening, speaking, writing and reading). The TOEFL test relies heavily on academic topics, uses American English and is widely accepted as part of university entrance requirements globally. The Professional Language Framework is specific to vocational English and focuses on communicative ability. The framework and levels therefore correspond to what a learner should be able to do in a work or study context.

Please note that the following is an indication of benchmarking to the CEFR, TOEFL and IELTS and should be used only as an indication of the relationship between the various scales. The following should not be interpreted as exact equivalencies. The Practical Language Framework is based upon a growing body of internal and external testing and research. As AILAT continues to develop and refine the framework, these mapping guidelines may also undergo changes. The scores referred to are the overall, mean band scores and not the band scores for individual components. Each scale (CEFR, TOEFL iBT and IELTS) is shown in comparison to the Practical Language Framework but does not necessarily map as indicated in this guideline, to each other.