

CEFR

Changes to the Common
European Framework of Reference
for Languages

What is the CEFR?

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the **creation of language syllabuses** and curriculum guidelines, the **design of teaching and learning materials**, and the **assessment of foreign language proficiency**.

How is it structured?

The framework is based around the **4 modes of communication**:



Production



Reception



Interaction



Mediation
NEW

EACH MODE OF COMMUNICATION HAS A RANGE OF DESCRIPTOR SCALES WHICH OUTLINE THE LEVELS (PRE-A1 - C2) FOR A PARTICULAR ABILITY

How will the 2018 changes affect me?

The main effects of the changes to the **CEFR will simply be to enrich your teaching** and your students' English language journey. Though the **CEFR** does provide a definitive guide to assessing the level of proficiency a learner commands, the framework is primarily based around the ongoing processes of learning and teaching. For example, it can also be used as:



A guide to negotiate learners' own language priorities and goals



A basis for talking to parents and helping them to visualise their child's progress



A tool for planning lessons and developing classroom tasks

Mediation

Mediation now plays a much more important role in the **CEFR**, having been added as a **fourth mode of communication**. Mediation essentially recognises **the learner as a social agent** in the language learning process. The descriptor scales for Mediation fall into 3 categories:



Mediating communication



Mediating concepts



Mediating Text

NEW DESCRIPTOR SCALES

Literature

There are 3 new descriptor scales relevant to creative text and literature:

- Reading as a leisure activity
- Expressing a personal response to a creative text
- Analysis and criticism of creative texts

Online

There are **2 new scales** which concern the multimodal activity typical of web use:

- Online conversation and discussion
- Goal-orientated online transactions and collaboration

Other new descriptor scales

New scales have been provided for the categories 'Using telecommunications' and 'Giving information'.

Pre-A1

Descriptors for this band of proficiency are provided for many scales.

Phonology

The scale for Phonology has been redeveloped with a focus on sound articulation and prosodic features such as intonation, tone and rhythm.

Plus levels

The plus levels, eg. A1+, B2+ have been strengthened.

Changes to 2001 descriptors

A1-C1 – Due to its increasing irrelevance, the word ‘native speaker’ has been removed from the descriptors.
C2- Some very absolute statements have been adjusted, eg. ‘Has no difficulty with spoken language’ becomes ‘Can understand with ease virtually any kind of spoken language’.

Plurilingual + pluricultural scales (FERPA)

Plurilingual and pluricultural scales have been adapted according to the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches (FERPA). The scale “Building on pluricultural repertoire” describes the use of pluricultural competences in a communicative situation, putting the focus on skills rather than knowledge. The level of each descriptor in the scale “Building on plurilingual repertoire”, is the functional level of the weaker language in the combination.

Specifying languages

The Companion Guide recommends that the relevant languages should be specified in relation to the following scales:

- Cross-linguistic mediation
(particularly Mediating a Text)
- Plurilingual comprehension
- Building on plurilingual repertoire

New descriptors are calibrated to the CEFR levels

The new descriptor scales have been formally validated and calibrated to the mathematical scale and research of the CEFR levels.

Sign language

The PROSIGN symbol appears in sections where the descriptor scales have been adapted for sign languages.

Parallel Project: Young Learners

Two collations of descriptors for young learners from European Language Portfolios are provided for the 7-10 and 11-15 age groups respectively.

What types of changes have been made to the CEFR?

In 2018, the CEFR was updated through a series of changes. These changes primarily serve to modernise, clarify and enrich the existing framework. One of the most important changes, is the promotion of **Mediation as a new mode of communication**. Mediation essentially recognises the learner as a social agent and takes into account a broad range of concepts.

In some areas, **new descriptor scales** have been added in-keeping with contemporary research and education trends.

In others, the **existing descriptor scales** have been **updated, adapted and reinforced** to better reflect the reality of language learning. **Recommendations and general guidance** also describe more general changes to the CEFR, and the Parallel Project outlines provision for Young Learners.





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