

Mapping the TOEFL® ITP Tests onto the Common European Framework of Reference



Executive Summary

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment provides a common basis for describing the skills needed to reach different levels of language proficiency and is used by language instructors, educators, curriculum designers and agencies working in the field of language development.

The CEFR describes language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening on a six-level scale:

- A1–A2 (Basic User)
- B1–B2 (Independent User)
- C1–C2 (Proficient User)

The CEFR provides a descriptive context that may be used to interpret the meaning and practical significance of scores on language tests. In other words, if a test score corresponds to

one of the levels of the CEFR, it becomes clearer what that score means and what candidates with at least that score are likely to be able to do.

ETS's Goal

The TOEFL® ITP tests use an academic context to evaluate the English-language proficiency of nonnative English speakers. Designed specifically for institutions to administer to their students, the TOEFL ITP tests measure listening and reading ability, as well as knowledge of Structure and Written Expression, in both academic and social contexts.

The purpose of this mapping study was to identify the minimum scores on the TOEFL ITP tests that correspond to the A2, B1 and B2 levels of the CEFR. Minimum scores were identified separately for the Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension sections.

Standard-setting Study

Standard setting is a process by which a panel of informed experts engages in a systematic set of procedures to recommend minimum test scores (cut scores) that differentiate among levels of proficiency. For the TOEFL ITP tests, minimum scores were recommended for the A2, B1 and B2 CEFR levels for each of the three TOEFL ITP test sections (Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension).

For this study, the panel consisted of 18 experts (English-language instructors, administrators, directors or coordinators of ESL schools, departments or programs) from 14 countries.

A modified Angoff standard-setting approach was followed to identify the minimum test scores.

Post-study Adjustments

Subsequent to this study, several ministries of education expressed the need to have a TOEFL ITP recommended cut score for the C1 level of the CEFR. The C1 level reflects the beginning of the Proficient User band. Because the C1 level was not part of the standard-setting study, we estimated a C1 cut score using information from a previous standard-setting study mapping TOEFL® PBT scores to the CEFR, and analyses of test-taker responses used to create concordance tables between scores on TOEFL PBT (paper-based) and TOEFL® CBT (computer-based) tests and between scores on the TOEFL CBT and *TOEFL iBT*® tests. (The *TOEFL iBT* test is administered via the Internet.) The estimated TOEFL ITP C1 cut score is 627. The section cut scores for the CEFR C1 level were estimated from recent TOEFL ITP test results.

The table below presents the scaled cut scores for the TOEFL ITP tests:

CEFR Levels	Total Cut Score	Listening Comprehension	Structure and Written Expression	Reading Comprehension
C1	627	64	64	63
B2	543	54	53	56
B1	460	47	43	48
A2	337	38	32	31

Interpreting Results

Users of the TOEFL ITP tests can interpret the recommended minimum scores by referring to the global descriptors and other tables in the CEFR, which can be found on page 24 at www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf.

The results represent the recommendations of informed experts using a recognized standard-setting approach. However, they should be considered guidelines, as ETS does not recommend the use of rigid cut scores.

Technical Report

This standard-setting study was conducted by ETS researchers Richard J. Tannenbaum, Ph.D., and Patricia A. Baron, Ed.D., in November 2011.

For more information about the TOEFL ITP tests, visit www.ets.org/toefl_itp.

