Introduction to the CEFR

Introduction to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The overall aim of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is to provide objective criteria for describing and assessing language proficiency in an internationally comparable manner. The Council of Europe's work on the definition of appropriate learning objectives for adult language learners dates back to the '70s. The influential Threshold series (J. A. van Ek and J. L. M. Trim, Cambridge University Press, 1991) provides a detailed description in functional, notional, grammatical, and sociocultural terms, of what a language user needs to be able to do in order to communicate effectively in the sort of situations commonly encountered in everyday life. Three levels of proficiency are identified, called Waystage, Threshold, and Vantage (roughly corresponding to Elementary, Intermediate, and Upper Intermediate).

The Threshold series was followed in 2001 by the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference, which describes six levels of communicative ability in terms of competences or "can do" statements: A1 (Breakthrough), A2 (Waystage), B1 (Threshold), B2 (Vantage), C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency), and C2 (Mastery). Based on the CEFR descriptors, the Council of Europe also developed the European Language Portfolio, a document that enables learners to assess their language ability and to keep an internationally recognized record of their language learning experience.

Interchange Fifth Edition and the Common European Framework of Reference

The table below shows how *Interchange Fifth Edition* correlates with the Council of Europe's levels and with some major international examinations.

	CEFR	Council of Europe	Cambridge ESOL	IELTS	TOEFL iBT	TOEIC
Interchange						
Level Intro	A1	Breakthrough				120+
Level 1	A2	Waystage				225+
Level 2						
	B1	Threshold	KET (Key English Test)	4.0–5.0	57–86	550+
Level 3			PET (Preliminary English Test)			
Passages						
Level 1	B2	Vantage	FCE (First Certificate in English)	5.5–6.5	87–109	785+
Level 2	C1	Effective Operational Efficiency	CAE (Certificate in Advanced English)	7.0–8.0	110–120	490+ (Listening) 445+ (Reading)

Source: http://www.cambridgeesol.org/about/standards/cefr.html