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The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

Learning to Learn

Introductory Guide
for Teachers and
Educational Managers

Better
Learning

Why teach Life Competencies?

Our world is changing fast and we need to prepare our students with the skills and experiences that go beyond simply learning an additional language.

We see the increasing need to work together with people from around the world, to think creatively and solve problems, to analyse sources more critically, to communicate our views effectively, and to maintain a positive mindset in an increasingly complex world.

We understand that the engaging and collaborative nature of the language classroom is the perfect place to develop and embed these key qualities and the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports teachers in this challenging area.
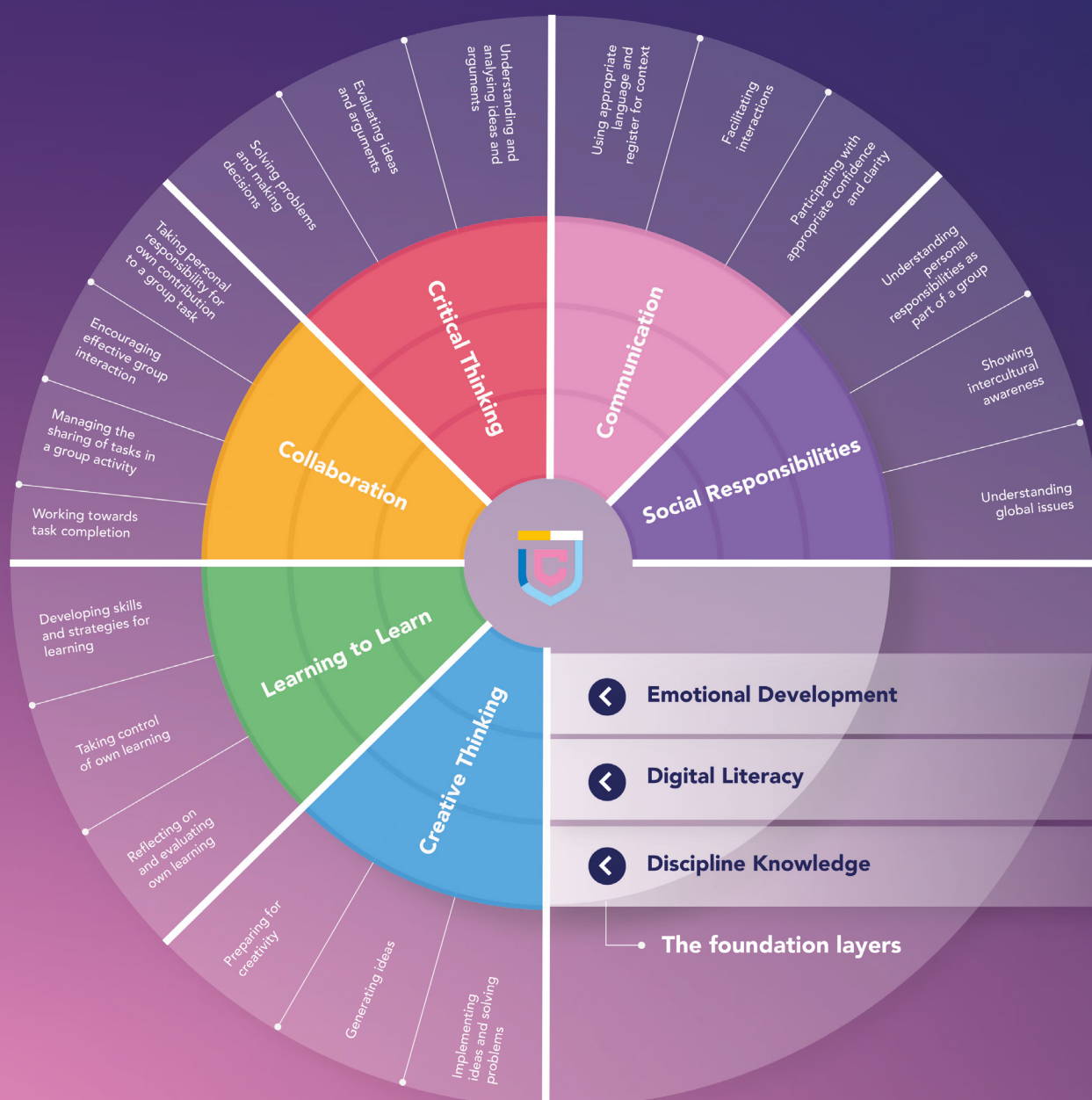
Cambridge Life Competencies

A framework to develop skills for life

Hear from our experts

- Critical Thinking
  - Understanding and analysing ideas and arguments
  - Evaluating ideas and arguments
  - Solving problems and making decisions
- Communication
  - Using appropriate language and register for context
  - Facilitating interactions
  - Participating with appropriate confidence and clarity
- Collaboration
  - Taking personal responsibility for own contribution to a group task
  - Encouraging effective group interaction
  - Managing the sharing of tasks in a group activity
  - Working towards task completion
- Social Responsibilities
  - Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a group
  - Showing intercultural awareness
  - Understanding global issues
- Learning to Learn
  - Developing skills and strategies for learning
  - Taking control of own learning
  - Reflecting on and evaluating own learning
- Creative Thinking
  - Preparing for creativity
  - Generating ideas
  - Implementing ideas and solving problems

Emotional Development

Digital Literacy

Discipline Knowledge

- **The foundation layers**

What is the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework?

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework has been created in response to educators who have asked for a way to understand how life skills, or 21st century skills, can be integrated into English language programmes. It is made up of six **Competencies** that describe how these essential skills develop and vary across different stages of education, as learners grow and change.

|	
CREATIVE THINKING	Learners actively participate in creative activities, generate new ideas and use them to solve problems.
CRITICAL THINKING	Learners identify patterns and relationships, evaluate ideas and use these skills to solve problems.
LEARNING TO LEARN	Learners develop practical skills to support and take control of their learning and reflect on their own progress.
COMMUNICATION	Learners choose the most appropriate language to use in different situations, manage conversations effectively and express themselves clearly and confidently.
COLLABORATION	Learners work well together in groups through actively taking part in group activities, listening to others, sharing tasks and finding solutions to problems.
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES	Learners recognise and describe different roles and responsibilities in a variety of groups and understand cultural and global issues.
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Learners describe and manage emotions and develop positive relationships with others.

The Learning Journey

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports learners at all stages of their learning journey, from very young pre-primary learners right through to adults in education and at work. The framework maps out how learner behaviours typically found within each competency can change and develop as learners encounter new situations and circumstances in their lives, both within and beyond the classroom.

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework allows us to support learners throughout their education and into the careers of the future.

Pre-Primary

Primary

Secondary

Higher Education

At Work

Understanding the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is made up of six **Competencies** – Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Learning to Learn, Communication, Collaboration and Social Responsibilities. Each broad competency is broken down into **Core Areas** that describe these competencies in more detail. These are then analysed further into **Components** that, along with example Can Do Statements, describe the observable behaviours that learners are likely to be able to demonstrate by the end of each stage of learning, if they have had the opportunity to develop in these areas.

Competency
Core areas
Components
Example Can Do Statements
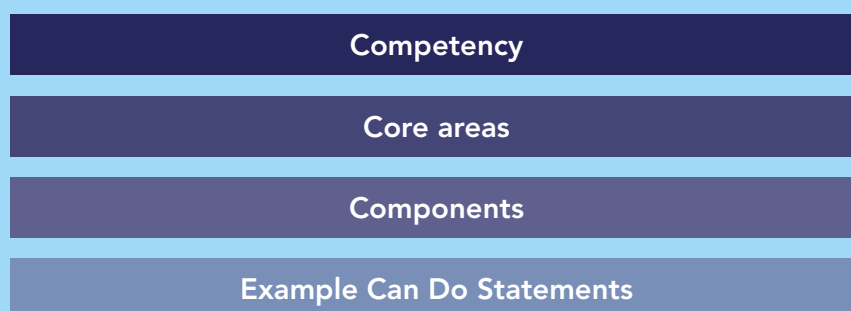
Linked to the competencies are the three foundation layers of the framework – Emotional Development, Digital Literacy and Discipline Knowledge. Development of skills in these foundation layers underpins all other competencies.

Along with this structured breakdown, we provide **example language** that learners may use to express the actions and behaviours found in each of the Core Areas at each stage of learning. These have been informed by both our Functional Language Phrase Bank, a collection of spoken data from expert speakers of English from children to adults, and input from experienced ELT practitioners from around the world. See this example for one Core Area within Learning to Learn at the Primary stage:

COMPETENCY	CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
LEARNING TO LEARN	Reflecting on and evaluating own learning	Keeping track of progress	Shows awareness of own progress in learning English (e.g. by using progress checklists).	I've learnt how to…
		Evaluating learning and progress	Reflects on what they did well in a lesson.	I'm getting better at…
		Using feedback to improve learning	Listens and responds positively to feedback, and understands why a correction was given.	

By clearly defining these areas of development in a structured and detailed way, we can ensure that our teaching and learning materials take a systematic approach to delivering and developing these skills in our learners, as they progress. This means that teachers can be assured that our resources bring out the best in their students, without creating extra work.
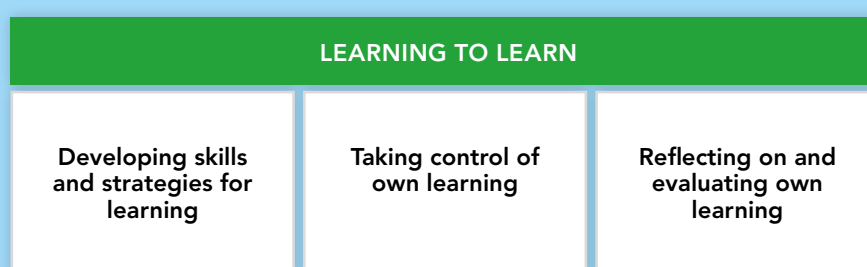
The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is an ongoing project, evolving through stages of validation and teacher feedback. Go to **cambridge.org/clcf** to see how you can get involved.

What is Learning to Learn?

The rate of change for what we need to know and be able to do at work is accelerating, and it is essential that we continue to learn new skills and knowledge throughout our working lives. Even within schools, developing effective learning skills underpins our students' success in all subjects, and is critical to building their autonomy and self-direction. Education and training needs to focus as much on the skills of learning as on the outputs of learning.

We have identified three **Core Areas** within Learning to Learn:

LEARNING TO LEARN		
Developing skills and strategies for learning	Taking control of own learning	Reflecting on and evaluating own learning

- **Developing skills and strategies for learning** includes important techniques such as making notes, storing and retrieving information as well as techniques for learning and remembering information. In an ELT context, learners also benefit from using strategies to help them understand and communicate in English. There are various methods for engaging in these techniques, and learners need to experiment and choose the one which best suits their own personal style, needs and resources.

- **Taking control of own learning** implies developing self-regulatory strategies, becoming autonomous, maintaining motivation, and staying focused on the task at hand in order to achieve the best results. To accomplish this, learners need to be clear about their learning goals.

- **Reflecting on and evaluating own learning** involves learners reflecting on their own learning in order to assess what worked for them and what did not. This reflection can inform decisions regarding whether to persevere with certain courses of action or to make changes. As a result, learners are able to identify and use effective learning techniques and strategies. In addition, learners who keep track of and evaluate their own progress in learning are more able to continuously improve, helping them succeed in reaching their learning goals.

Within these Core Areas we break things down further, defining the **Components** that make up each Core Area:

LEARNING TO LEARN	Developing skills and strategies for learning	Engaging in directed activities
		Using effective systems for finding, keeping and retrieving information
		Using effective strategies for learning and retaining information
		Using effective strategies for comprehension and production tasks
	Taking control of own learning	Setting goals and planning for learning
		Taking initiative to improve own learning
		Managing the learning environment
		Managing attitudes and emotions
	Reflecting on and evaluating own learning	Keeping track of progress
		Evaluating learning and progress
		Using feedback to improve learning

Learning to Learn
across the learning journey

Core Areas may be realised in different ways across the different stages of learning. In order to demonstrate this, each Core Area and Component is contextualised by an example Can Do Statement. This illustrates what kinds of behaviour students who are competent in this area might display by the end of each stage of learning. These example Can Do Statements can be used as a starting point in the development of a curriculum, programme or assessment system and will vary in their suitability for learners in different contexts. The example language is provided for teachers to consider what kind of language they could encourage their students to use in these kinds of tasks.

PRE-PRIMARY

CORE AREAS	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLE CAN DO STATEMENTS	EXAMPLE LANGUAGE
Developing skills and strategies for learning	Engaging in directed activities	Follows instructions and class routines.	Like this…?
	Using effective systems for finding, keeping and retrieving information	Asks simple questions to find out information.	What's this?
	Using effective strategies for learning and retaining information	Engages with memorising tasks.	There was a [ship / flower / hat].
	Using effective strategies for comprehension and production tasks	Uses pictures to help understand a story.	He looks happy.
Taking control of own learning	Setting goals and planning for learning	Chooses which activity to complete when given a choice.	I'm going to [read this book].
	Taking initiative to improve own learning	Asks the teacher for help.	What does … mean?
	Managing the learning environment	Organises learning equipment tidily so that it can be found when needed.	I usually put my [crayons / ruler / eraser] in here.
	Managing attitudes and emotions	Regulates affective reactions (e.g. disappointment, mood or conflicts with other children).	

Reflecting on and evaluating own learning	Keeping track of progress	Uses basic checklists to show what tasks they have completed.	Done!
	Evaluating learning and progress	Changes learning behaviour if it does not seem to have the desired effect (e.g. starts putting hand up to answer a question when they notice the teacher does not pick them to give an answer when they shout out).	Oops! It's wrong to shout!
	Using feedback to improve learning	Acts on language feedback from teachers or parents.	I'll try again.

Learning to Learn
in the classroom

Learners need to develop Learning to Learn competencies in order to be able to learn independently, without constant guidance from the teacher. That is not to diminish the role of the teacher in the learning process. In fact, teachers play an essential role in the development of their students' independent learning skills.

Acquiring Learning to Learn competencies is not a straightforward process; it requires careful scaffolding and multiple opportunities for learners to use, train and develop these competencies. The teacher's role is to provide this mediation and, alongside teaching language, help learners acquire the age- and stage-appropriate skills that they need to learn outside the classroom.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might develop this competency in the classroom, and are not a definitive list.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Familiarisation
Familiarisation with the Core Areas, Components and Can Do Statements is helpful. Teachers could keep a copy of these to hand to refer to during planning. This way, as they look at their materials, they can identify which activities and features provide learners with opportunities to develop the skills described in the Learning to Learn competency. For example, the use of a template, such as the example below, could initially help learners develop effective vocabulary recording habits.

Word:	Word class:
Pronunciation:	Example sentence:
Definition:	
	Collocates:
Other words in Family:	

Monitoring

In addition to monitoring learners' linguistic progress, teachers should ensure that they also monitor the progress learners make with Learning to Learn skills development, as teachers will then be better placed to gauge the level of scaffolding required for learning to be effective.

Rate of development

Remember that learners will be developing these skills over the course of their lives and the skills that they develop at any given age or stage will be used and built upon at later stages. Just like with linguistic development, the development of these physical, cognitive and affective skills requires patience, scaffolding and opportunities for practice. The rate of development will also differ from learner to learner. It is important to thus provide each learner with the appropriate amount of support and scaffolding, depending on their rate of development.

PRIMARY

Classroom routines

Remember For learners at pre-primary to be able to begin their journey of developing Learning to Learn skills, they will benefit from the teacher introducing and maintaining a range of routines (through into primary):

- for starting a class, such as doing a chant;
- for carrying out activities, for example, electing learners to be in charge of handing out or collecting worksheets or other learning tools;
- for transitioning between activities by using certain cues.

It will take time for these routines to become fixed and consistency is vital. In terms of instructions, these need to be clear and include demonstrations, and learners will need the time and experience to build strong links between instructions and expectations. Growing familiarity with classroom task types and activities will help, as learners will become familiar with the routines that these tasks and activities require. Once learners are comfortable with a routine, they will be able to engage in activities without repeated instruction or explanation, thus developing learner autonomy.

Reflecting on learning

As part of the beginning of their journey to becoming more autonomous, young learners need to develop the reflective and evaluative skills required to monitor their progress in learning. Teachers can scaffold this development by providing simple tools such as a post-task self-feedback form in which learners evaluate their performance in a given task. Learning materials increasingly include these, but even if they are not included, it is possible for teachers to make one which can be adapted for use across a range of task types. Here is an example:

MY PROGRESS	
I followed all the instructions	☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺
I gave my opinion clearly	☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺
I asked my classmates for their opinions	☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺
I agreed and disagreed with my classmates politely	☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺
I helped my group to summarise the discussion to feed back to the whole class	☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

Developing familiarity with what is expected is important. The process of reflection and evaluation, and completing reflective tasks takes time to master and consistent use of such tasks over a period of time will help learners become more competent at assessing themselves in this way. With the example above, the first couple of times it is used, teachers would need to explain to or remind learners how to use it, i.e. if they think they have followed all the instructions, they then colour in all the smiley faces; if they think they have followed most of them, they then colour in four smiley faces, etc. Some of the sentences could be used across tasks, while others would change according to the task type. Once learners are accustomed to the procedure, they will need little prompting to carry out the task effectively. These kinds of tasks also provide the scope for learners to compare their performance over time for similar task types.

≫ *Over to you...*

1. Choose one of the example strategies in this section and try it out with your class.
   - Following the implementation of the strategy, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to develop their Learning to Learn skills.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could use these activities to develop your students' Learning to Learn skills.

Further Reading

For more information on this topic, please see:

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Pinard, L. (2016). Looking outwards: using learning materials to help learners harness out-of-class learning opportunities. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 10(2),* 133-143.

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Cambridge
Life Competencies

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You can find information about the other competencies in the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework at **cambridge.org/clcf**

✓ Creative Thinking

✓ Critical Thinking

✓ Learning to Learn

✓ Communication

✓ Collaboration

✓ Social Responsibilities

✓ Emotional Development