

Beginner (EF SET score 1-30)

English level A1 is the first level of English in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), a definition of different language levels written by the Council of Europe. In everyday speech, this level would be called “beginner”, and indeed, that is the official level descriptor in the CEFR, also used by EF SET. In practice it is possible to be at a pre-A1 level of English. A student who is just beginning to learn English, or who has no prior knowledge of English, is at a pre-A1 level.

What can you do with an A1 level in English?

An A1 level of English would be sufficient for very simple interactions, for example as a tourist in an English-speaking country. An A1 level would not be sufficient for other academic or professional purposes.

According to the official CEFR guidelines, someone at the A1 level in English:

1. Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.
2. Can introduce herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where she lives, people she knows, and things she has.
3. Can interact with other people in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

A1 level English skills in detail

The official can-do statements are broken down into smaller chunks for teaching purposes. This more detailed skill breakdown can help you assess your own English level, or help a teacher assess a student's level. For example, a student at the A1 level in English will be able to:

- introduce himself simply and use basic greetings.
- tell where he and others are from and give a basic description of his city.
- talk simply about family and colleagues, describing their appearance and personalities.
- discuss clothing at a basic level and ask sales clerks simple questions about it.
- talk about favorite foods and make simple orders for take-out food.
- talk about daily activities and arrange meetings with friends and colleagues.
- describe current weather conditions and suggest activities according to the weather forecast.
- talk in general terms about his health and describe common medical symptoms to a doctor.
- describe the location of his home and give simple directions.
- talk about his hobbies and interests and make plans for fun activities with friends or colleagues.
- complete basic transactions at a hotel, including checking in and checking out.
- discuss common products, make basic purchases and return faulty items.

Although progress will depend on the type of course and the individual student, students can expect to reach the A1 level in English with 60 to 80 hours of instruction.