

# Simple Guide for Language Proficiency Interviews

This guide helps native speakers interview language learners to figure out their level based on the **CEFR** (the standard scale from A1/Beginner to C2/Mastery). Think of this as a "stress test" for their language skills—start easy, push until they struggle, then end on a high note.

## 1. How the Interview Should Flow

The interview follows a simple path: start easy, get harder, then finish with something comfortable.

### Phase 1: The Warm-up (Mandatory Questions)

- **Goal:** Make the learner feel comfortable and lower their stress.
- **CRITICAL RULE: USE BABY-SIMPLE LANGUAGE.** \* Do **not** use complex words, idioms, or long sentences.
  - If you use language that is harder than the level you are testing, the learner will "crash" before the interview even begins.
  - Think of this as setting a low-bitrate connection—keep it clear and basic.
- **What to ask:** You **must always** ask these three things using this exact simple phrasing:
  1. "What is your name?"
  2. "Where is your hometown?" (Wait for answer) "Tell me about it."
  3. "What are your hobbies?" or "What do you do for fun?"
- **Time:** 1 minute.

### Phase 2: The Level Check

- **Goal:** See if they can handle the basics of their suspected level.
- **Strategy:** Ask questions that require more than a one-word answer.
- **Rule:** Use language that matches their level. If they are a beginner, don't ask "What are the socio-economic implications of your career?" ask "Do you like your job? Why?"
- **Time:** \* **Beginners (B1 and below):** 2 minutes.
  - **Advanced (B2 and above):** 3–4 minutes.

### Phase 3: Pushing to the Limit (The "Ceiling" Test)

- **Goal:** Find the point where the learner starts to struggle.
- **Strategy:** Gradually make the questions harder. Only use "big words" here to see if they understand them. Stop when they clearly can't find the words or their grammar falls apart.
- **Time:** \* **Beginners (B1 and below):** 1–2 minutes.
  - **Advanced (B2 and above):** 3–4 minutes.

## Phase 4: Ending the Interview

- **Goal:** End on a positive note so they feel good about the experience.
- **Strategy:** Ask one last very easy question about their weekend or say "It was great talking to you!"
- **Time:** 30–60 seconds.

## 2. Timing Rules

Learner Level	Total Time	Why?
B1 and Below	Max 5 Minutes	Beginners get tired quickly. Keep it short and simple.
B2 and Above	8–10 Minutes	Advanced learners need more time to show off complex grammar.

## 3. How to Grade the Learner

Level	Can they speak smoothly?	Do they know enough words?	Is the grammar okay?	Can they keep the conversation going?
A1-A2 (Beginner)	Very slow; long pauses.	Only knows basic words (family, food, shopping).	Makes lots of mistakes even in simple sentences.	Can only answer; can't really "chat."
B1-B2 (Intermediate)	Generally smooth; B2 has very few pauses.	Can talk about most topics and some slang.	Good at simple stuff; B2 handles hard grammar well.	Can start and finish a conversation easily.
C1-C2 (Advanced)	Fast and natural.	Knows almost every word, including deep or technical ones.	Very few mistakes; sounds like a native.	Can talk about anything (science, politics, feelings).

## 4. Question Bank (Ideas for your Interview)

### Beginner (A1-A2) – Simple & Direct

- "Where do you live? Is it a house or an apartment?"
- "Tell me about your family."
- "What did you do yesterday?" (Checks **Past Tense**)

### Intermediate (B1-B2) – Opinions & Plans

- "Tell me about a vacation you liked. What happened?"
- "Is it better to work from home or in an office? Why?"
- "If you won a lot of money tomorrow, what would you do?" (Checks **"What if" logic**)

### Advanced (C1-C2) – Deep & Complex

- "How is social media changing how people talk?"
- "If you were the leader of your country, what would you change?"
- "Is it more important to protect nature or make money for the country?"

## 5. Tips for the Interviewer

### The "Simplicity First" Rule

- **NEVER** use a difficult word when a simple one works. (e.g., Use "Start" instead of "Commence," or "Hard" instead of "Formidable").
- In coding terms, don't use a Double when an Int is all you need. Keep the overhead low.

### Let Them Talk

- Don't do all the talking. You are the "interviewer," not a friend at a cafe.
- Use small sounds like "Mm-hmm" or "I see" to keep them going.
- **Don't correct them.** If they make a mistake, just keep going.

### What to do if they are silent

- **The 5-Second Rule:** Wait 5 seconds before helping. They might just be thinking.
- **Try again:** If they don't understand, ask the same question using even easier words.
- **Move on:** If they still don't get it, go back to an easier topic to help them relax.

### Spotting the "Break Point"

Look for:

1. They start using their native language because they forgot the word.
2. They start using very "baby-ish" sentences (e.g., "Me go store.")
3. They look very stressed or completely stop talking.