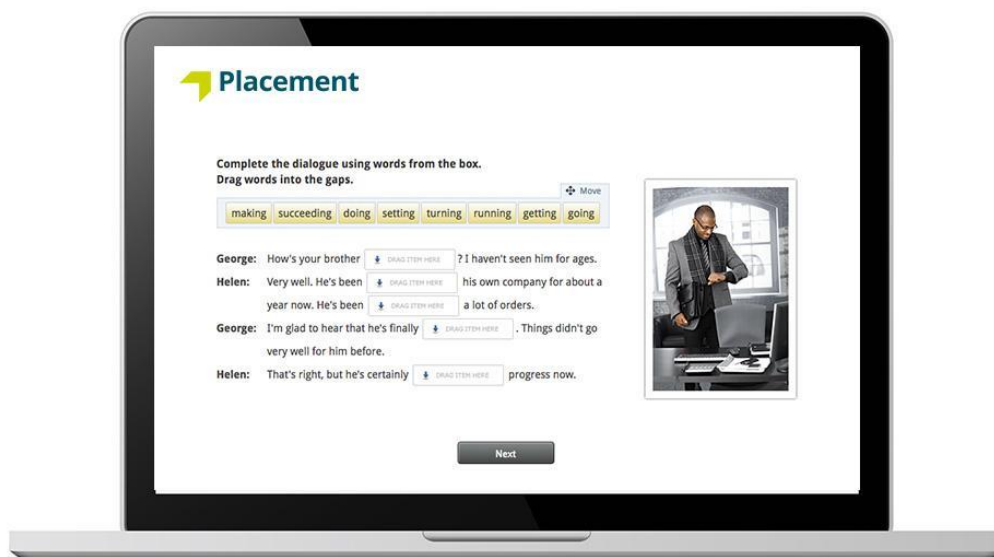


# Placement

## Test Information Booklet

V1 – 09/06/2016



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# Introduction

## **Placement: An Overview**

Placement is a fully online adaptive test of English language proficiency for prospective students to quickly determine their pre-course English language competency on the Global Scale of English (GSE).

## **The Purpose of Test**

The test is used at the start of an English course to understand a student's level of English proficiency. The test provides a GSE score based on the students' responses to different questions across multiple skills (Reading, Writing, Listening plus the enabling skills Grammar and Vocabulary). The score allows the placement of students on a course quickly and accurately.

## **Who is it for?**

The test is designed for adult learners who are 16 or older. It is not junior or Primary focussed. Placement can be used before any adult or upper secondary course. The adaptive design of the test makes it more efficient in terms of covering a range of ability and keeping the total test time short.

## **Why take an integrated skills test?**

A number of the questions on the test are integrated skills questions. These questions test more than one skill at the same time.

Using integrated skills questions means that Placement is a better test of a learner's English. In real life and in the classroom learners use more than one skill to complete communicative tasks. To order something in a restaurant we need to listen and speak, to take notes in a classroom we need to listen and write. Integrated skills questions test how well learners can use the skills they have learnt and practised in the classroom and used in real life.

# Test Validation

## Test Design

Placement is designed specifically to measure language proficiency. It employs a part adaptive method. Part of the test uses an adaptive algorithm which takes a learner's answers to a previous question to select the most suitable question to present next. Placement selects these items from a large item bank making each learner's experience different.

The adaptive nature of the test allows Placement to quickly and accurately estimate a learner's English proficiency. This estimate is then used to choose further questions which are fine-tuned to the learner's level allowing a very accurate measure of their proficiency.

## Test Development

The questions in Placement have been developed by international teams of writers who are very experienced in writing assessment questions. Teams are based in the UK, Australia, the USA and Hong Kong. All questions have been tagged with a Global Scale of English (GSE) level and linked to a 'can do' statement.

Once written, all questions are reviewed by the teams in the different countries. Comments and suggestions for improvement are stored with the test questions on a secure database. The questions then go through a further review by an expert panel and decisions are made on the quality of the questions; which to keep and which to reject. All questions are then thoroughly checked by Pearson staff and images and high quality recordings are added to complete the questions before they go forward to be calibrated in a large scale field test.

After the field testing, further checks are made on item quality based on the measurement characteristics of the questions. Questions are eliminated from the item pool if they are too easy or too difficult, if weaker learners get them right but stronger learners get them wrong, or if they show any bias. These checks then result in a bank of the best quality questions. Questions are selected from this bank to go into the final tests.

## Field Testing

As part of the test development process, a large field test, conducted in two phases, was carried out to ascertain the appropriateness of the pool of items and to serve as a source for constructing individual test forms which would allow reliable predictions of

students' ability in English. A portion of the data collected was transcribed and rated which was used to train automated scoring systems.

Field test forms were created using a linking approach. That is, the forms were linked together with sets of items that appeared on all forms. Also, during the second phase of data collection, since most candidates took two tests, the field test forms were also linked through candidates.

Learners and L1 English speakers were recruited to participate in the field test. A total of 13,073 tests were submitted during the two field test phases. The demographic for Progress is upper secondary and young adult. The majority of participants were aged 16-35. Participants were from 96 countries. The countries with the largest number of participants included; Saudi Arabia, Poland, Panama, Ecuador, The Netherlands, Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Guatemala, Japan and Thailand. As an incentive to participate, students received a one year free access to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online (LDOCE). L1 English speakers were offered an Amazon voucher.

### **Validity Reliability**

Reliability is one aspect of validity - if a candidate took a test on multiple occasions, would that person get a similar score each time? During field testing, a large number of candidates took two tests in a short period of time. The two tests were made up of different items. Presumably, little or no learning occurred between these test administrations, so the correlation of the scores from these two tests should provide a good estimate of test reliability, known as test-retest reliability. The higher the observed correlation between the two test administrations, the more reliable the test scores are. In the observed field test data, after removing test data from candidates who either did not answer a sufficient number of items, or who got extreme scores outside of the normal GSE range, the test-retest correlation was .861 ( $n=2,141$ ). This observed correlation demonstrates a high level of consistency of measurement of Placement test administrations.

The psychometric analysis tool, called Winsteps, also yielded another measure of test reliability estimate as part of item calibration. The reliability estimate is 0.90 ( $n=11,908$ ). From these two estimates, it is clear that test reliability is high.

### **Automated Scoring Validation Process**

From the field test data, 300 candidates were randomly selected as the validation data set. A validation data set is a group of candidates whose data are segregated out prior to psychometric analysis in order to independently test how well automated scoring models work, once they are complete. Additionally, these candidates' data were not included in the psychometric item calibration, or in the scaling onto the GSE. If the test

scores for these candidates as calculated by both automated and human scoring models are highly correlated, this provides evidence that the automated scoring models will work as expected for other new candidates in the operational setting.

Once the automated scoring system was developed, the responses from the validation set were run through the same psychometric model to produce an Overall and six skill scores for each candidate. Those human and machine scores were then correlated to compare how similar those two kinds of scores are for each person. When candidates were identified as having extreme scores (i.e., well outside the reported score range of the GSE and not well estimated), or when they had fewer than five responses which were able to be scored in a particular skill area, their scores were excluded from the analyses. This reduced the n-count for the Overall score correlation to 288 candidates. The relationship between machine and human Overall scores was found to be a very strong one with a correlation of .97.

## **Conclusion**

Placement is a three-skill English language proficiency test that is delivered online and is scored completely automatically by automated scoring systems. The test consists of a computer adaptive part and a linear form part for an effective assessment of the learner's progress in English language proficiency. The validation analysis demonstrated that the test is highly reliable (i.e., the test-retest reliability of 0.861) and the scores from the automated scoring systems closely correspond to the scores from careful human raters (i.e., a correlation of 0.97 at the Overall score level).

## Test Coverage

The test covers all three language skills; reading, listening and writing as well as knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

Skills or Knowledge	Test Focus
Reading	To demonstrate reading skills, learners will be asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and understand the main points from signs, newspapers and magazines</li> <li>• understand the detail of short texts</li> <li>• understand the detail in longer texts</li> </ul>
Listening	To demonstrate listening skills, learners will be asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen for specific information in listening texts</li> <li>• show understanding of meaning in context and the detail of short dialogues</li> <li>• follow and understand short texts and show understanding by writing down or repeating accurately what was said</li> </ul>
Writing	To demonstrate writing skills, learners will be asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe a scene or picture accurately using appropriate vocabulary</li> </ul>
Grammar	To demonstrate knowledge of grammar, learners will be asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• choose the right word or phrase to make an accurate sentence</li> <li>• understand the difference between different grammatical tenses and other structures</li> <li>• put words in the right order to make grammatical sense</li> </ul>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To demonstrate knowledge of vocabulary, learners will be asked to:</li> <li>• produce words which relate to common themes and topics such as family, work and social situations</li> <li>• use appropriate words in different contexts</li> <li>• show an understanding of the different meaning of words and how they relate to other words</li> </ul>

# Test Questions

## What kinds of questions are in the test and what do they measure?

The test has a number of different question types. This gives learners a chance to demonstrate their English skills in different ways. There are questions where learners choose the correct option or where they write the answer into an open question. There are questions where the learner repeats or copies what has been said as well as questions where learners describe something. The questions are similar to the questions and tasks learners will have done in the classroom as part of their learning and so should be familiar.

Because Placement is part adaptive, different learners will see different questions and may not be presented with all the questions described below.

## Vocabulary Questions

There are three vocabulary question types.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Fill in the table	This question asks the learner to complete a set of vocabulary items with appropriate words. The words are presented as a table of related words.	This question tests the vocabulary knowledge of the learner. It tests the words the learner knows and the accuracy of the form of the word. It tests the learner's knowledge of word families and related sets of words that they may have met in the classroom or when learning English.
Choose the Right Word or Phrase	This question asks the learner to choose the correct word to complete a number of sentences. The sentences are related by a similar theme.	This question tests the vocabulary knowledge of the learner in a written context. It tests the vocabulary the learner knows and whether they can understand the use of the vocabulary in the context of a sentence. It tests the range of



		vocabulary the learner knows.
Complete the Dialogue	This question asks the learner to select words from a word bank to complete a dialogue.	This question tests the vocabulary of the learner in a spoken context. It tests the vocabulary the learner knows and whether they can understand the use of the vocabulary in the context of a conversation. It tests the range of vocabulary the learner knows.

## Grammar Questions

There are four grammar question types.

Question	What do learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Choose the Right Word or Phrase	This question asks the learner to choose the correct word to complete a number of sentences. The sentences are related by a similar theme.	This question tests the knowledge of grammar of the learner. It tests the range of grammatical knowledge as well as the accuracy of grammar in a written context.
Choose the Right Word or Phrase. You may choose more than one	This question asks the learner to choose from a number of options. They may choose one or more than one answer. The sentences are related by the grammatical structure which is being tested.	This question tests the grammatical knowledge of the learner. It tests words which are related to each other in that they have similar meanings or grammatical uses. It tests grammatical knowledge in a written context.
Drag and Drop	This question asks the learner to re-order a sentence correctly.	This question tests the grammatical knowledge of the learner at sentence level. It tests word order, connectors and discourse markers. It tests grammatical knowledge in a written context.

Error Correction	This question asks the learner to select one of the available options to correct the mistake in the sentence.	This question tests knowledge of grammatical rules in use.
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## Reading Questions

There are four reading question types.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Choose the Right Picture	This question asks learners to read a short text and select the best picture to match with the text.	This question tests the global understanding of short messages, notes and short pieces of writing.
Choose the Right Word or Phrase	This question asks learners to read a short text and select the best word or phrase to complete the text.	This question tests the global understanding of short messages, notes and short pieces of writing.
Short Answer	This question asks the learner to read a longer text and answer questions on the text.	This question tests the reading comprehension of the learner. It tests specific information included in the text.
Drag and Drop	This question asks the learner to read a text and select the word or phrase that best completes each gap.	This question tests the global understanding of a sentence and short pieces of writing.

## Listening Questions

There is one listening question type which tests only listening.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Listen to the Conversation and Answer	This question asks the learner to listen to a short conversation and then answer a question about the conversation.	This question tests listening comprehension. It tests the accuracy of the listening comprehension of the learner.

## Integrated Skills Questions

There are two questions types which measure more than one skill at the same time. These are called Integrated Skills Questions.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Listen and then Write	This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence or short text and write what they have heard.	This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors.
Listen and Read	This question asks the learner to read a text and at the same time listen to the text. The learner has to find the differences between the written text and the spoken text.	This question tests reading and listening comprehension. It tests the ability to recognise individual words in a text.

# Score Reporting

## Score Reporting

The test provides scores on the Global Scale of English (GSE) in the range of 10 to 90.

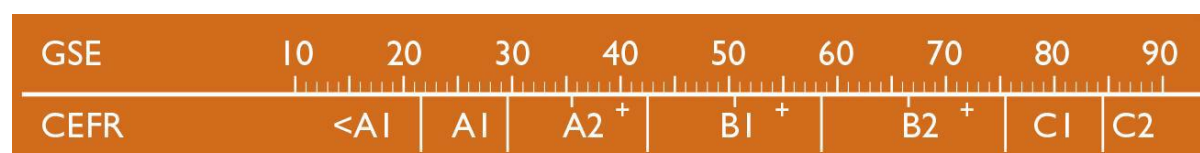
Results from Placement Profile are presented in colour coded bars. Reporting is designed primarily for the test administrators or teachers and can be done at both group and individual level. The test administrator or teacher should use the overall score to inform the placement of a student onto a course. The Placement Profile diagnostic dashboard provides further insight into a particular student's performance on the questions which focus on particular skills and these can be used for additional needs analysis and support any further advice given to students. If required, the report can be printed and given to the student as a record of their test performance.

## The Global Scale of English

The test result provides scores on the Global Scale of English which ranges from 10 to 90. The test also reports Common European Framework levels.

The Global Scale of English is a numeric, granular scale from 10 to 90 which measures English language proficiency. It enhances the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) by showing finer gradations of a learner's level within a CEFR band, and can therefore demonstrate smaller and more precise improvements in a learner's English level.

The Global Scale of English is currently used to report scores on the internationally recognised English language test, PTE Academic™. It is empirically aligned to the CEFR, as described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Council of Europe, 2001), and correlated to other test score scales such as TOEFL® iBT, TOEIC® and IELTS.



## Global Scale of English and the Common European Framework levels

In the following tables we define how the Global Scale of English is related to the CEFR levels. To give an impression of what the levels mean, i.e., what learners at particular levels can do, we use the summary descriptors published in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24).

Global Scale of English	Link to the CEFR levels
<p><b>GSE 10-21</b>  <b>Global assessment</b>  The range on the Global Scale of English from 10 to 21 covers the area of measurable proficiency below the A1 level of the CEFR. It includes the level which North (2000, p. 295) characterises as 'Tourist', corresponding to a range of 13-21 on the GSE, and a still lower ability which North (ibid.) labels 'Smattering'. Neither of these was included in the CEFR, because A1 was "considered the lowest level of generative language use" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 33) and 'Tourist' and 'Smattering' rely "purely on a very finite rehearsed, lexically organised repertoire of situation-specific phrases" (ibid.). A few descriptors in the range from 10 to 21 have however been included, representing the key steps in learners' progress towards A1.</p>	
<p><b>GSE 22-29</b>  <b>Global assessment</b>  The range on the Global Scale of English from 22 to 29 corresponds to the A1 level of the CEFR. The capabilities of learners at Level A1 have been summarised in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, Table 1, p. 24) as follows:</p>	<p>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.  Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has.  Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</p>
<p><b>GSE 30-35 and 36-42</b>  <b>Global assessment</b>  The interval on the Global Scale of English from 30 to 35 corresponds to the lower part of the A2 level of the CEFR, while the interval from 36 to 42 corresponds to the upper part of the A2 level, which is also sometimes referred to as the A2+ level.  The capabilities of learners at Level A2 have been summarised in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, Table 1, p. 24) as follows:</p>	<p>Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).  Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.  Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</p>

<p><b>GSE 36–42 and 43-58</b>  <b>Global assessment</b>  The interval on the Global Scale of English from 36 to 42 corresponds to the lower part of the B1 level of the CEFR, while the interval from 43 to 58 corresponds to the upper part of the B1 level, which is also sometimes referred to as the B1+ level.  The capabilities of learners at Level B1 have been summarised in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, Table 1, p. 24) as follows:</p>	<p>Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.  Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken.  Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest.  Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</p>
<p><b>GSE 59-66 and 67-75</b>  <b>Global assessment</b>  The interval on the Global Scale of English from 59 to 66 corresponds to the lower part of the B2 level of the CEFR, while the interval from 67 to 75 corresponds to the upper part of the B2 level, which is also sometimes referred to as the B2+ level.  The capabilities of learners at Level B2 have been summarised in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, Table 1, p. 24) as follows:</p>	<p>Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation.  Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.  Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and Independent disadvantages of various options.</p>
<p><b>GSE 76–84</b>  <b>Global assessment</b>  The interval on the Global Scale of English from 76 to 84 corresponds to the C1 level of the CEFR. The capabilities of learners at Level C1 have been summarised in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, Table 1, p. 24) as follows:</p>	<p>Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning.  Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.  Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes.  Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</p>

