Pearson

Alignment of the ACTFL Performance Descriptors to the Global Scale of English – An Overview

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Global Scale of English

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About the GSE

Pearson developed the Global Scale of English (GSE) to provide instructors and learners with a more granular understanding of English language proficiency. It has been designed to build learners' confidence by revealing exactly where they are on their learning journey and setting personalised goals to help them progress.

The GSE is an ecosystem that underpins the Pearson English Journey:

- **GSE Scale:** a proficiency scale from 10 to 90, with clear statements for what a learner can achieve in speaking, listening, reading, and writing at any point on the scale.
- **GSE Learning Objectives:** descriptions of what learners can do at each level of proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- **Courseware:** all of Pearson's English language learning courseware is developed using the GSE Learning Objectives.
- **Assessment:** institutions can develop their own assessment materials using the GSE Learning Objectives and Assessment Frameworks or choose one of Pearson's digital assessments which report on the GSE.

The GSE is the result of many years of research with more than 6,000 teachers from over 50 countries. It serves as a standard against which English language courses and assessments worldwide can be benchmarked.

It has been psychometrically aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference or CEFR (see De Jong, Mayor, & Hayes, 2016). The GSE complements and extends the CEFR by adding an extra layer of detail to the CEFR levels and providing thousands of additional learning objectives. This extra information helps learners understand where they are now and offers a step-by-step guide to where they want to go next. Using the GSE, teachers can match a student to course materials to suit their exact level and learning goals.

CEFR level	GSE Scale
Below A1	10–21
A1	22–29
A2	30–35
A2+	36–42
B1	43–50
B1+	51–58
B2	59–66
B2+	67–75
C1	76–84
C2	85–90

Table 1: The relationship between the GSE Scale and the CEFR

To address the specific needs of learners studying English for different purposes, GSE Learning Objectives have been developed for five different learner audiences:

- **adult:** adults studying on a general English course
- **academic:** adults studying academic English
- **professional:** adults studying English for the workplace
- **young learner:** English language learners aged 6–14
- **pre-primary:** English language learners aged 3–5

For more information:

pearson.com/languages/why-pearson/the-global-scale-of-english

About ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) provides Performance Descriptors for Language Learners to support teachers in the implementation of impactful classroom instruction to elementary, secondary and postsecondary learners. It is a standard describing "what" learners are expected to do and "how well" by distributing can-do statements across a five-level progression continuum: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior and Distinguished.

These descriptors are grouped into three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal and presentational. Each mode starts with proficiency benchmarks defining what is expected for the five levels of progression within it. Then, performance indicators are provided for each of the five levels, further sub-divided into low, mid and high.

For more information about ACTFL and the Proficiency Descriptors for Language Learners, visit the ACTFL Educator Resources website.

How can I exchange information and ideas in conversations?

Proficiency Benchmark: Intermediate

I can participate in spontaneous spoken, written, or signed conversations on familiar topics, creating sentences and series of sentences to ask and answer a variety of questions.

Performance indicators

Low	Mid	High
I can request and provide information in conversations on familiar topics by creating simple sentences and asking appropriate follow-up questions.	I can exchange information in conversations on familiar topics and some researched topics, creating sentences and series of sentences and asking a variety of follow-up questions.	I can exchange information in conversations and some discussions on a variety of familiar and some concrete topics that I have researched, using connected sentences that may combine to form paragraphs and asking a variety of questions, often across various time frames.

Table 2: An excerpt from the ACTFL Interpersonal mode Intermediate level.

Alignment Methodology and Results

Each proficiency benchmark and performance indicator in the five ranges of performance and across the three modes of communication was aligned to one or more GSE Learning Objectives. In the Novice and Intermediate sections, GSE Young Learner Learning Objectives were used. The remaining three ranges, Advanced, Superior and Distinguished were aligned to Adult Learning Objectives.

The results of the alignment show progression across ranges, reflecting the advancement from the beginner level towards proficiency.

Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior	Distinguished
15–33	34–54	55–75	76–84	85–90

Table 3: Overall ACTFL-GSE alignment by range.

Sample Alignment

The following table is an excerpt from the ACTFL Interpersonal mode section, showing Intermediate descriptors under the sub-category 'How can I exchange information and ideas in conversations?', with the corresponding GSE Learning Objectives aligned.

Full alignment documentation is available on request via our website: [Educator sales enquiries | Pearson Languages]

How can I exchange information and ideas in conversations?			
Performace indicator		**GSE LO**	**GSE Value**
Low	I can request and provide information in conversations on familiar topics by creating simple sentences and asking appropriate follow-up questions.	Can talk about everyday activities using simple language.	34
		Can understand people's likes in informal conversations, if the speakers talk slowly and clearly.	36
		Can understand most of the concrete details in informal conversations on familiar everyday topics, if the speakers talk slowly and clearly.	37
		Can make basic inferences about simple information in a short conversation or passage.	39
		Can understand the meaning of short conversations or passages using information they already know.	39
		Can talk about topics relevant to them and their personal experiences in a simple way.	40

Table 4: An excerpt from ACFTL Interpersonal mode, Intermediate level showing GSE alignments.

Performace indicator		GSE LO	GSE Value
Low *(Cont.)*	I can request and provide information in conversations on familiar topics by creating simple sentences and asking appropriate follow-up questions.	Can pass on the main points of a short, simple everyday conversation, provided the speakers talk slowly and clearly.	40
		Can express their opinions on familiar topics, using simple language.	41
		Can understand some details in longer dialogues on familiar everyday topics, if guided by questions or prompts.	42
		Can understand some details in extended dialogues on familiar everyday topics.	46
Mid	I can exchange information in conversations on familiar topics and some researched topics, creating sentences and series of sentences and asking a variety of follow-up questions.	Can identify simple information in a short conversation or passage that isn't explicitly stated.	41
		Can identify ideas that are connected in a short conversation or passage.	42
		Can introduce new information in a simple conversation.	42
		Can understand simple conversations about things that have happened in the past.	42
		Can understand some details in longer dialogues on familiar everyday topics, if guided by questions or prompts.	42

Table 4: Continued.

Performace indicator		GSE LO	GSE Value
High	I can exchange information in conversations and some discussions on a variety of familiar and some concrete topics that I have researched, using connected sentences that may combine to form paragraphs and asking a variety of questions, often across various time frames.	Can give a short description with logically connected facts, given a model.	47
		Can make comments and ask questions to show that they are following a discussion, using simple language.	50
		Can understand some details in extended dialogues on a range of non-technical topics.	50
		Can recognise the use of common linking words/phrases to signal the speaker's return to the main topic (e.g. 'anyway', 'anyhow'), in simple narratives or conversations on familiar topics, with prompts.	50
		Can repeat the main points of a simple text or conversation, using different words to help someone else understand it.	51
		Can present findings from a research project in a simple way.	53
		Can take notes while researching a familiar topic.	53
		Can understand the details of extended conversations on familiar topics, if delivered in clear standard speech.	54

Table 4: Continued.

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