

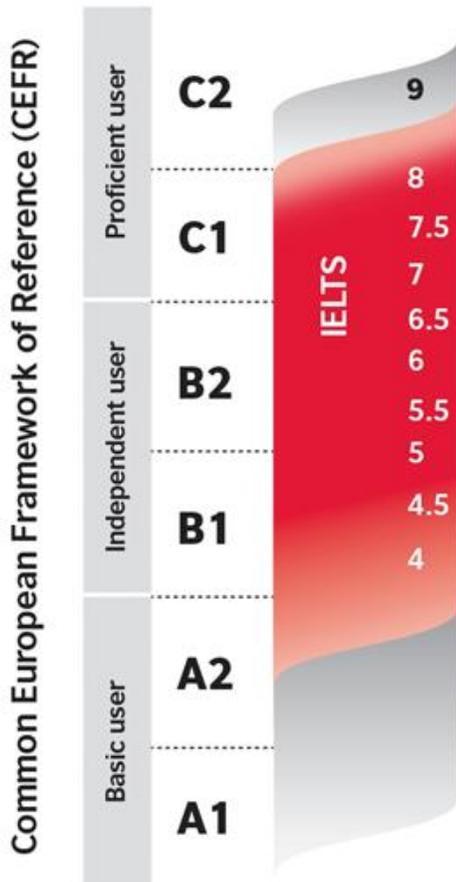
Comparing IELTS and the Common European Framework

The relationship of IELTS with the other tests and with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is complex; IELTS is designed to stretch across a broad proficiency continuum. When comparing tests and test scores for admissions, it is important to understand that there are differences in test purposes, measurement scales, test formats, test delivery modes and test taker populations. For a discussion on comparing test scores see Taylor, L., Issues in Comparability, *Research Notes 15*, http://www.cambridgeesol.org/rs_notes/rs_nts15.pdf.

Since the late 1990s, Cambridge ESOL has conducted a number of research projects to explore how IELTS band scores align with the Common European Framework levels, a common scale that has been adopted worldwide. In 2000, research was performed as part of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) Can-Do Project including accumulating can-do responses by IELTS test takers over a one-year timeframe. Test takers' IELTS scores were then matched to grades. (See Figure 2 below for CEFR descriptors/can-do statements at different levels.)

Figure 1 illustrates how IELTS band scores align with the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference. Note that the IELTS scores referred to are the overall, mean band scores reported on the Test Report Form, and not the band scores for individual modules.

Figure 1



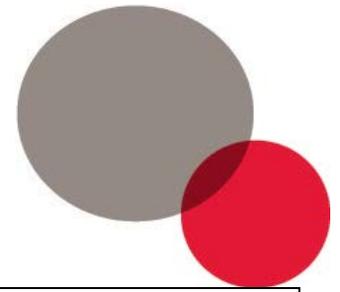


Figure 2 The Common European Framework Can-do Statements

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/default_en.asp

C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read • can summarize information from different spoken or written sources; reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation; • can express themselves spontaneously, fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning, even in more complex situations • can show great flexibility in differing linguistic forms • has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms • can maintain constant grammatical control • can interact with ease and skill, with natural referencing, turn-taking, etc. • can use a full variety of organizational patterns and cohesive devices
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning • can express themselves fluently and spontaneously with much obvious searching for expressions • can use language flexibly, for social, academic and professional purposes • can produce clear, well-structured, detailed texts, on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns and cohesive devices • has a good command of a broad range of language allowing themselves to express themselves clearly and appropriately • can consistently maintain a high level of grammatical accuracy • can interact skillfully by selecting a suitable phrase from a range of discourse in order to contribute appropriately
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can understand the main ideas of a complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their own field of specialization • can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes interaction with native speakers possible without strain for either party • can produce a clear detailed text on a wide range of subjects • can explain a viewpoint giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options • can give clear descriptions • can express viewpoints without conspicuous hesitation, sometimes using complex forms • does not make errors which cause misunderstanding and can correct most of their own errors • can speak reasonably fluently, with few noticeably long pauses • can initiate discourse, take turns • can help discussion, confirming comprehension, inviting contributions, etc. • can use a limited number of cohesive devices to give their spoken and written contributions coherence.
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters encountered at school, work, leisure, etc • can deal with most situations likely to arise while traveling • can produce simple connected texts on familiar topics • can describe experiences and events, plans, hopes and ambitions • can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans • has enough language to get by in everyday situations • can express themselves reasonably accurately • can initiate and deal with familiar everyday interactions • can link ideas into connected linear sequences
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to immediately relevant areas • can communicate in simple and routine tasks, requiring a simple exchange of information on familiar and routine matters • can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters of personal interest • can use basic sentence patterns with memorized phrases • can use simple structures correctly, but makes systematic basic errors • can make themselves understood in short turns, despite long breaks or pauses • can respond to questions but is rarely able to keep conversation going by themselves • can link ideas together in a simple way

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