

## Language Exchange Proficiency Self-Assessment

The Harvard Language Exchange Repository resources provide conversation itineraries inspired by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Standards.<sup>1</sup> Both frameworks describe what individuals can do in terms of real-world receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. Take this short survey, below, to determine the most appropriate level for you to target as you consult Repository resources during conversation.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

From each category below, select the option below that best describes you. Then, tally your responses and interpret your level according to the guide at the end of the questionnaire.

### Listening as information gathering

- a. I can glean information from sentence-length speech, often relying on contextual or extralinguistic support.  
→ *Thanks to the woman's gesturing and directions, I can understand that the concert hall is three blocks south and across the river.*
- b. I can confidently understand everyday speech in personal and social context, with some gaps due to vocabulary or sentence structure.  
→ *I get the impression that my host family has mixed feelings about attending the jazz concert, given recent allegations against the lead singer, even if I don't recognize the legal terms being used.*
- c. I can understand conventional narrative and descriptive texts, including main facts and supporting details in expanded descriptions of persons, places, things, and events.  
→ *I can listen to a podcast unpacking the recent series of controversies in the contemporary jazz club scene, later on relaying in detail to a friend the details of what happened.*

### Listening as interpretation and meaning making

- a. I can recognize basic phrases that change how I understand myself, my family, and immediate concrete surroundings.  
→ *While I don't understand every word, I can tell that the customs agent needs to speak with my boyfriend at greater length about his visa.*
- b. I can draw meaning from and make decisions around matters regularly encountered in everyday work, leisure, media, and current affairs.  
→ *Based on the security concerns I hear the customs agent sharing, I deduce that it would be helpful to locate my boyfriend's driver's license as a supporting document.*
- c. I can understand extended speech even when not clearly structured, or when relationships are implied as opposed to signaled explicitly.  
→ *I understand that Customs briefly detained my boyfriend out of an abundance of caution, as he shares the last name of a current wanted fugitive who was last seen in Madrid, where we had recently vacationed.*

### Meeting my needs or addressing situations in conversation

- a. I can interact to meet my basic needs related to routine everyday activities, using simple sentences and questions.  
→ *I can tell the flight attendant that I was supposed to receive a seat with extra leg room.*
- b. I can interact to meet my needs in more diverse situations, sometimes involving a complication, using connected sentences and questions across time frames.  
→ *I can let the flight attendant know that I originally paid for a seat with extra leg room, but then had to switch flights, mixing up my seat reservation. I can request that she help get me a refund.*
- c. I can interact and negotiate to resolve an unexpected complication in a situation that is generally unfamiliar.  
→ *I can explain that being re-seated at the last minute in the emergency exit row won't work, since I don't feel comfortable potentially needing to assist other passengers because of my sprained ankle.*

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<sup>1</sup> For a study on the correspondences between ACTFL and CEFR ratings, see "Assigning CEFR Ratings to ACTFL Assessments,"

[https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/reports/Assigning\\_CEFR\\_Ratings\\_To\\_ACTFL\\_Assessments.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/reports/Assigning_CEFR_Ratings_To_ACTFL_Assessments.pdf).

### Expressing, reacting to, and supporting preferences and opinions in conversation

- a. I can express, ask about, and react to preferences, feelings, or opinions, using simple sentences and questions to stay on topic.  
→ *I can communicate my preference for plant-based menu options to a friend who's treating me to lunch and ask if she's on board with this plan.*
- b. I can explain preferences, opinions, and emotions, providing advice on familiar concrete topics using connected sentences and questions across time frames.  
→ *On the way to lunch, I can explain my choice to become vegan, based on my past experience working at a dairy farm, and how what I witnessed there made me feel about animal rights.*
- c. I can support and sometimes debate opinions on a variety of complex concrete topics, often addressing hypothetical or abstract issues.  
→ *I can walk through the pros and cons of plant-based meat alternatives and their impact on the environment, describing the changes that would result if everyone ate meatless at least once per week.*

### Presenting information to narrate about my life, experiences, and events

- a. I can present personal information about my life and activities, using simple sentences.  
→ *I can tell the librarian that I'm a university student researching breast cancer.*
- b. I can tell stories about school and community events and personal experiences, using short paragraphs, across time frames.  
→ *Upon being asked, I can tell the librarian that my research interests are inspired by growing up in a multigenerational home where two of my aunts were diagnosed with breast cancer.*
- c. I can give complex detailed narrations beyond the concrete, often addressing abstract experiences or hypothetical issues.  
→ *I can explain how I often wonder about what my aunts' course of treatment would have looked like, if they had been seeking medical care today, instead of ten years ago.*

### Presenting information to inform, describe, or explain

- a. I can present on familiar and everyday topics, using simple sentences.  
→ *While on a Zoom call, I can tell my parents that the weather here in Delhi has been hot and dry.*
- b. I can give detailed presentations on a variety of concrete topics I'm familiar with, using short paragraphs, across time frames.  
→ *I can explain how there are advisories in place against spending too much time outdoors, due to increased air pollution from nearby crop burning in Punjab.*
- c. I can deliver cohesively present on complex concrete topics related to community interests and some specialized fields, including related hypotheticals.  
→ *I can share about some of the recent protest and activism efforts from local groups, lobbying for stricter agricultural policy that, if enacted, would limit farmers' legal crop-burning period each year.*

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Mostly a : Novice  
(ACTFL Novice High; CEFR A1)

Mostly b : Intermediate  
(ACTFL Intermediate High; CEFR B1)

Mostly c : Advanced  
(ACTFL Advanced Mid; CEFR C1)