

**A CEFR Reference Guide for
Assessment Tasks**

Reading & Listening

**Brian North, Eurocentres Foundation / Eaqals
Ángeles Ortega. Ministerio de Educación, España**

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DOMAIN	CONTEXT	TASK	ACTIVITIES	TEXTS
Personal Public Occupational Educational	<i>The real world location(s) where the activity would take place</i>	<i>The real world task – not a classroom pedagogic task. What the person would really do in the real world.</i>	<i>Communicative language activities: the names of descriptor scales in CEFR Chapter 4 – or similar categories</i>	<i>The text types (genres) involved for reception– see below. The discourse types involved for interaction and production</i>

TEXT TYPES					
Reading for Orientation	A1 Sign Notice Menu Plan/map Poster Leaflet Advert Timetable	A2 Sign Notice Menu Plan/map Poster Leaflet Advert Timetable Reference Web page Catalogue Brochure	B1 Adverts Timetables Reference Web page Catalogue Brochure Guide	B2 Guide Factual text from list below, e.g. - factual report - official document - instructions - warnings	C1/C2 Guide Factual text from list below, e.g. - factual report - official document - instructions - warnings
Reading for Information and Argument	Message Form Invoice Description Narrative	Message Form Invoice Description Narrative News summary Article	Description Narrative Anecdote Blog Fiction (simplified) Film synopsis News summary Article Factual text/ report Official document Argumentative text	Narrative Blog Fiction Film synopsis Literature Article Factual report Official document Technical text (e.g. contract) Highly specialised source Argumentative text Review Editorial Commentary	Anecdote Fiction Literature Article Factual report Official documents Technical text (e.g. contract) Highly specialised source Argumentative text Review Editorial Commentary
Instructions	Directions Recipes	Directions Instructions Regulations Warnings	Directions Instructions Regulations Warnings Conditions	Instructions Manuals Regulations Warnings Conditions	Instructions Manuals Regulations Conditions
Correspondence	Postcard	SMS, Twitter Email Postcard Formal letters Personal letters	SMS, Twitter Email Formal letters Personal letters Readers letters	SMS, Twitter Email Formal letters Personal letters Readers letters	Personal letters Literary, personal descriptions
Listening and Viewing	A1 Dialogue Directions Messages Announcements	A2 Dialogue Multilogue Directions Messages Announcements Talks Presentations News Interviews	B1 Dialogue Multilogue Discussions/debates Directions Messages Announcements Instructions/warnings Talks Presentations News Interviews Reports Documentaries Talk show Film	B2 Dialogue Multilogue Discussions/debates Technical discussions Announcements Instructions/warnings Lectures Presentations Interviews Reports Documentaries Current affairs Talk show Film Play	C1/2 Dialogue Multilogue Discussions/debates Technical discussions Current affairs Talk show Film Play

CAN DO

Taken or adapted from the CEFR, a validated European Language Portfolio, Council of Europe descriptor banks on www.coe.int/portfolio. Adaptations follow the CEFR/ELP style of being concrete, specific, brief, positive – and including provisos.

Several descriptors may be treated with one task.

RECEPTION MICRO-ACTIVITIES

	RECOGNISE	PROCESS WITH ACCOMPANYING TEXT	DISTINGUISH	UNDERSTAND
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> familiar names, words and very basic phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> figures / numbers an image a sign/symbol timetable calendar contact details town map 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>info about people</i> <i>times, locations</i> <i>simple messages</i> <i>basic information</i>
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> specific information in lists, reference works changes in topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> figures / numbers diagrams (equipment) organograms map or plan 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an idea of the overall meaning well-signalled main points essential / most important information Specifically required information
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> useful information <i>relevant facts and information</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> diagrams (object, machine, organism) tables pie charts etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> main point / relevant facts and information from specific details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> main points / most important information Relevant factual information an explicitly signalled line of argument main conclusions specific details
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> which part(s) of the text(s) is relevant to the purpose a change of direction, style or emphasis different formulation of the same ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> charts graphs diagrams (flow charts, classifications, contrasts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> main points from relevant supporting detail/arguments/examples such supporting arguments and more precise information from a digression <i>aspects reported as facts from those reported as opinion</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> main ideas essentials/essential meaning explicitly stated points of view, opinions and complex lines of argument <i>expressed, specific attitudes</i> specific details mood and tone explicitly expressed in the text
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> which part(s) of the text(s) is relevant to the purpose highlighting of the most important points variation of style for effect register shifts what will come next. <i>the social, political or historical background of a literary text</i> irony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complex, specialised diagrams, charts and graphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> main point from supporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arguments sub-themes details examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attitude, mood, intentions implicit meanings, ideas and connections implied as well as stated opinions implied, indirect and ambiguous relationships use of humour implicit cultural references
C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> subtle distinctions of style <i>hidden value judgements</i> understatement irony and sarcasm 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implied attitudes nuances and finer shades of meaning and differentiation implied opinions implied, indirect and ambiguous relationships <i>metaphors, symbols, connotations, and their function within the text</i> <i>very colloquial style</i> use of humour <i>plays on words, puns</i> <i>satire and its function</i>

TEXT FEATURES

These will be features that are mentioned or implied in the CAN DO descriptors selected. Texts may be stated in the descriptors to be lengthy or short, simple or complex, well structured, etc. Areas mentioned include:

- genre
- linguistic level
- type of topics
- text functions (narrative, informational, argument, suasion etc. – see under Pragmatic competences)
- length
- organisation
- register (especially B2-C2)
- support (especially A1-B1i)
- spoken delivery

COMPETENCES

STRATEGIC	<p>Use CEFR Section 4.5 as a guide, Strategies is techniques that are consciously adopted to cope with the performance situation. For all communicative language activities they generally involve aspects of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - planning - execution – including hypothesis formation - monitoring - evaluation - repair or repetition 				
PRAGMATIC	Functional	<p>For English, consult British Council/EAQUALS Core Inventory. For other languages consult Reference Levels For Reception consider the following text functions</p>			
	A1 Information Description	A2 Information Description Narration	B1 Information Description Narration Emotional Contrast, Evaluation	B2 Information Description Narration Emotional Contrast, Evaluation Argument	C1/2 Emotional Contrast, Evaluation Argument Enquiry/ Exposition Suasion
	Discourse	<p>The way discourse and text is organised. For English, consult British Council/EAQUALS Core Inventory</p>			
LINGUISTIC	Grammatical Lexical Orthographical	<p>For English, consult British Council/EAQUALS Core Inventory For other languages consult Reference Levels</p>			

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The general description (GD) is like a very, very detailed “Can Do” descriptor summarizing all the most important information about the task. It should summarise all of the information in the other boxes in this section.

It is a good idea to:

- produce a draft GD
- flesh out the full task specification (below)
- revise the draft GD into the final version

A GD should cover:

- text, its source and its main features
- the information in the rubric
- The type and number of items
- The conditions (time, played twice etc.)

SOURCE

Be as explicit as possible. Include web addresses, dates etc.

With videos/audios – download the file to ensure it doesn’t disappear, using a programme like that on <http://youtubedownload.altervista.org/>.

TEXT FEATURES

Authenticity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authentic - With very minor adaptation (e.g. removing non-standard expressions/numbers) - Edited for length, but maintaining authentic language, layout and genre structure - Simplified, but maintaining key authentic language, layout and genre structure - Simplified considerably, but maintaining genre structure - Simulated, following genre structure 		
Length:	Reading for Orientation	Reading for Detail	
<i>Longer texts are not more difficult, they are in fact often easier – but they take more time</i>	Source text	Target Info item	Text (very approx.)
	A1	Max 1 A4 page; 4-6 info items	50-100 words
	A2	1-2 A4 pages; 5-10 info items	50-200 words
	B1	2-3 A4 pages; 8-12 info items	150-300 words
	B2	2-3 A4 pages; 8-12 info items	200-400 words
C1	Either one long text 2000-3000 words or as B2		up to 1200 words
Visual Support:	Layout, Headings and sub-headings Titles, paragraphs Images/photos		
Complexity	Things that make texts easier (A1/A2 - B1)	Things that make texts difficult (B2/C1)	
<i>There are different types of complexity:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complexity of language code - Complexity of topic, content - Cognitive complexity in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o the text o the task 	High frequency, concrete vocabulary; international words Direct use of everyday, literal, basic meanings Simpler, shorter, single clause sentences Explanation, instruction, description, narration	Low frequency, obscure or idiomatic vocabulary/meanings Sophisticated use of adjectives, synonyms, similes Longer sentences with subordinate clauses Exposition, argumentation, persuasion, justification	
	<i>There is no direct relationship between single factors and level; it is the interaction that creates the difficulty.</i>	Direct, factual text Straightforward, linear text Uni-dimensional argument building up to one point Concrete topics Explicit information Limited number of information points	Discursive, analytical text Number of arguments presented and contrasted Complexity of argument, synthesis Abstract topics Implicit information Lots of information points competing for attention
	Information in same order as the questions Information points are easy to spot Information in same wording as the questions Answer is near the beginning of text Redundancy, point addressed different ways Explanation. elaboration of what is being said Clear signposting with advanced organisers Overt, clear signalling with explicit use of linkers/markers	Information not in same order text / questions Information is difficult to find Need for inferences Answer is buried in text Density of information or argument Less overt structuring Coherence through lexical cohesion not explicit markers	

TASK RUBRIC

Write really clear instructions

Do not assume someone will be there to explain instructions.

Generally use only one item type per text. See the next two pages on item types and on tips and hints regarding item types. If the item type is unfamiliar, give an illustrative example

Make sure conditions are included (e.g. number of times heard, time, dictionaries)

ITEM TYPE & NUMBER (Listening & Reading)

RECOGNITION

Type	Some sub-types	Advantages	Disadvantages
Multiple choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - missing word - correct explanation - correct end to sentence 	<p>Good for connectors. Good for vocabulary, all levels Can be used (listening and computer-based reading) to select speaker's/writer's next words and so train coherence, cohesion and recognition of "cues."</p>	<p>Encourages guessing and test-taking strategies. Come from intelligence tests and tend to test verbal reasoning. Very difficult to write good items. Correct answer often apparent without considering text. Backwash on learning is not positive</p>
True/false	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - True/false - True/false/not given 	<p>Good for class tests – especially discussion afterwards, finding the place in the text. Easy to construct.</p>	<p>Not good for formal tests because of 50% chance of guessing. Including "not given" in order to avoid this can cause learners to lose time checking.</p>
Ordering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Words - Sentences - Paragraphs 	<p>Good for connectors, cohesion.</p>	<p>Can require a long time to complete in relation to the mark(s) awarded. More than one order may be possible.</p>
Matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - headings to paragraphs; - descriptions to pictures - descriptions to adverts - descriptions to points on a map, diagram 	<p>Very creative item type</p>	<p>Last match is free unless the number of the objects being matched is not identical. Again, a lot of work can be involved to get the mark(s).</p>

SHORT RESPONSE

Type	Some sub-types	Advantages	Disadvantages
Information transfer – complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete gaps in table - complete or draw diagram - complete gaps in a schematic "contents table" - label or draw flow chart 	<p>Excellent for comprehension at low levels for writing simple information into a form or table "Contents table" technique good for lectures etc. Especially good for sequences, processes and classification.</p>	<p>Easily introduces unnecessary cognitive complexity Learner may understand the text but not the task. Difficult to find texts for B1 and above without cognitive processing becoming complex. Not suitable for noting arguments or for inferring</p>
Modified Cloze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - modified - modified with multiple choice 	<p>Modified cloze can be very reliable tests. Easy to produce from course material.</p>	<p>Difficult to define what is tested. Text selection is difficult – encourages manipulation of text. Performance varies significantly with text/topic, especial with systematic.</p>
Gapped summary of a text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - missing word - missing word with multiple choice - missing word with list to match to gaps 		<p>Difficult to define what is tested. Tend to be simplistic (the required words are in the text) or frustrating (the required words are not in the text and the learner can think of paraphrases, but not the word).</p>

GUIDED RESPONSE

Type	Some sub-types	Advantages	Disadvantages
Short question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - almost closed question demanding specific piece of information - question requiring an interpretation, or inference 	<p>Good for skimming /scanning/ search reading Good for inferring at higher levels.</p>	<p>Formulation may give away the answer. Problematic for listening: learners have to write and listen at once and may not have time to finish one question before the information for the next comes.</p>
Open question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - question prompt for a longer free response – "mini essay" - very open: What were the speaker's 3 main points? 	<p>Good for focusing on main points rather than picky detail Good for inferring at higher levels.</p>	<p>Mixing skills At B1 and below learners may not have enough written fluency to answer</p>

ITEM WRITING TIPS (Reading & Listening)

ITEM TYPE	Do's	Don'ts
Multiple choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write items to assess target competences - Make items independent from each other - Write items on relevant/salient info in text - Base distractors on hypotheses that are reasonable, but wrong in relation to this text - Write items following order of info in text - Write questions on one issue only - Formulate the question as simply as possible - Make options short - Make sure only one option is correct - Devise plausible distractors - Place options in alphabetical order - Space items to allow time for response - Place items on the whole text at the end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write tricky items - Write items that can be solved without the text - Write options with same wording as in text - Make correct option obvious (e.g. longer than distractors) - Write options with mistakes or awkward wording - Write items that demand high cognitive load at lower levels - Use difficult vocabulary unnecessarily - Write ambiguous stems/questions/options - Use negative stems/questions - Leave blanks for completion at beginning or middle of stem
True / False	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write a minimum/maximum of 5/10 sentences - Make it very clear that reference is the text - Base false statements on hypotheses that are reasonable, but wrong in relation to this text - Only write one central idea per sentence - Ask for reference in text (line number(s)) - Include <i>Not given</i> to minimise guessing - Use words like <i>could</i>, <i>may</i>, <i>can</i>, <i>might</i> with great care - Also be careful with numbers / quantitative language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write exactly the same number (50/50) of false / true sentences - Include <i>Not given</i> in listening tasks - Write long / complex sentences - Write sentences allowing for various correct responses - Mix false / true arguments in one sentence - Write sentences with (double) negatives
Ordering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure only one ordering is possible - Use Q&A/ sentence ordering for lower levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use long paragraphs to order at levels below B2
Matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write a minimum/maximum of 4/10 items - Use a different number of items / options or use options more than once - Make items as short as possible, specially in listening tasks - Arrange items and options on a table / on one page - Present items (/options) in alphabetical order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write items with more than one possible match - Write nuanced items at levels below B2 - Use pictures that are not meaningful or culturally comprehensible
Info transfer / Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a very clear format, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very simple word table - authentic (form, agenda, diagram, flow chart) - Write very, very clear instructions - Require one word or 2-3 word answers if possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Require more than one piece of info per item - Make it complicated - Take it for granted that students can draw
Cloze / Gapped summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on the specific target competence (e. g. pragmatic: discourse markers) - Have gaps at fairly regular but not exact intervals - Make all gaps the same size - Provide a "bank" the words taken from the text and some distractors (especially lower levels) - Arrange words and distractors in the "bank" in alphabetical order and capitals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open a gap in the first two lines of text - Make items dependent on each other - Open more than one gap per sentence - Take any superfluous word from text - Take more than 3 words from text per gap - Provide different size/length answer gaps - Include irrelevant distractors in a "bank"
Short question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicate maximum no. of words expected - Maximum of 3-word answers for listening tasks - Make all answer spaces the same size - Watch out for disclosers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make items dependent on each other - Make listening questions on close passages in the text - Make listening questions on bad quality sound passages in the text below B2
Open question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicate maximum no. of words expected (maximum 2/4 lines at B1/B2) - Make questions on the text not on general knowledge or topic knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask students about their opinions on text contents (opinions cannot be judged <i>right/wrong</i>) - Use this item type to test listening at any level - deduct marks for grammar or spelling (if it is a reading test or a listening test)

ADVICE

1 Selecting texts:

Listening/Viewing:

- There is a clear context and an obvious reason for what is being said
- Characters are easy to distinguish (e.g. a man and a woman with audio)
- There are many features of natural language - but it is not content-free social chit-chat
- There are longer turns (short monologues) as well as short turns
- Main points/topics can easily be summarised (mind map the text yourself to check)
- There are coherent connections between the ideas

Reading

- Variety: either use a portfolio approach over time (different genre each week/month) or set a standard template with at least two different types of genre
- Include longer texts as well as short texts – at A2 and above
- Select text genres and topics suitable for learners concerned
- In terms of newspaper texts, be aware of the fundamental distinction between:
 - Transactional information, listings, etc. – suitable for Reading for Orientation (scanning for specific information)
 - News type texts (who, what, when, where, why); these can easily be edited.
 - Features type (highlighting a problem, an issue). These tend to be long and have a very idiosyncratic structure. Do not edit them.
 - Editorial, opinion column type
- Main points/topics can easily be summarised (mind map the text yourself to check)
- There are coherent connections between ideas

2 Selecting information to target (not reading/listening for orientation):

- Remain conscious of the micro-skills being assessed. Do not test linguistic points
- To answer questions, questions should require comprehension of the whole text
- Focus questions on the speaker/writer's three or four main points that listeners/readers were meant to understand. Do not test comprehension of minor details.
- Test serious misunderstandings - hypotheses that might be reasonable in relation to the topic but wrong given the information and views contained in this text
- Consider testing understanding of reference (what does "it" refer to in Line 4;)

3 Selecting item types

- Testing tasks should be close to good teaching tasks (Alderson 2000, Bachmann 2002)
- Don't just copy standardised tests that need to have machine marking. The teacher can handle very open question types.
- Use TF/NS or MCQ to test serious misunderstandings – false hypotheses
- Use more open question types to check understanding of the speaker/writer's three or four main points, e.g.: open questions, information transfer (including a kind of contents page/ outline of content – with gaps to be filled with information points), summary tasks (open or with a text with big gaps to be filled with information points)
- For the item type selected, see Item Types: Do's and Don't and Item Types: Advantages and Disadvantages for more details.

Assessment scenario quality control checklist.

You can use this checklist:

- to remind yourself what kind of content there should be in each section
- to check and edit your first draft
- to guide a discussion of your draft with colleagues

	Overview of Objectives (Page 1)	
Scenario:	Are you analysing needs by deducing the implications of a real life scenario, or are you really just dressing up a nice task you have already thought of. If the latter, is it worth it?	
	The Real World Context: Top Section (Green)	
Domain: CEFR Section 4.1	If you put "educational," did you do so because your scenario does not actually have a real world context? "Educational" here means that the purpose of this language learning is education. This might be a secondary school subject through the second language or a university degree course taught in the second language.	
Context: CEFR Section 4.1/2.	If you cannot think of a physical context, other than school, maybe you do not have a real world scenario; maybe you have a pedagogic task? If the people involved are fellow language students	
Task: CEFR Section 4.3.	This is the real world action. What actions do they have to actually perform in reality? This should not be the pedagogic task you will get learners to do; that comes on Page 2 of the scenario (Implementation).	
Activity: CEFR Section 4.4.	This is the type of communicative language activity. It should be the title of a descriptor scale from CEFR Chapter 4. It might also be a communicative language activity for which there is not CEFR descriptor scale, e.g. blogging, internet chatting.	
Text: CEFR Section 4.6.	This is the input or product: monologue, dialogue – or a text-genre or other text artefact (e.g. postcard; c.v; questionnaire)	
	The CEFR descriptors: Left Section (Orange/yellow)	
Can do's: CEFR Section 4.4 or Portfolio	Have you selected Can Do's relevant for this scenario? Have you edited out any parts of those Can Do(s) that do not apply to this particular scenario? Have you checked whether other Can Do's are relevant? Have you looked at the CEFR as well as the Portfolio? Have you yourself got well-developed CEFR-based descriptors?	
<i>Reception</i> Micro-activities: (implied by the Can Do's)	See Micro-activities chart. Are there other micro-activities in your activities that are not listed? Have you placed your list of micro-activities in the right order?	
<i>Reception</i> Text features: (implied by the Can Do's)	See Text Features chart. Have you identified the features of the Texts that are in your "Text" section and which are mentioned in the descriptor(s)? Have you considered all the main aspects?	
<i>Interaction & Production</i> Criteria (CEFR Chapter 5)	Have you selected aspects of quality that are relevant for this scenario? Have you combined/split/renamed relevant CEFR categories in a way that makes sense in your teaching context? Would your learners understand them? Are you using a manageable number of categories in your criteria (4–5 max.).	
	Enabling competences Right Section (Blue)	
Strategic: CEFR Sections 4.4.1.3, 4.4.2.4, 4.4.3.5, 4.4.4.3 and 4.5.3,	Strategies are consciously adopted by the learner before or during the real world task in order to solve problems posed by it. These involve planning, execution, monitoring and repair. You shouldn't include micro-activities here.	
Pragmatic: CEFR Section 5.2.3.	Have you included the enabling content (functions, discourse aspects) relevant for this scenario at this level (see Core inventory for a list of suggestions). Have you checked that these points listed really do come up in the text(s) and/or really are necessary for the task(s).	
Socio-linguistic:	Have you included the enabling content (grammar, lexical, orthographic, phonological relevant for this scenario at this level (see Core inventory for a	

CEFR Section 5.2.2.	list of suggestions). Have you checked that these points listed really do come up in the text(s) and/or really are necessary for the task(s).	
Linguistic: CEFR Section 5.2.1.	Have you included the enabling content (grammar, lexical, orthographic, phonological relevant for this scenario at this level (see Core inventory for a list of suggestions). Have you checked that these points listed really do come up in the text(s) and/or really are necessary for the task(s).	
	Implementation (Page 2)	
General Description	Does this contain <i>all</i> the signification information from the detail below? Has the GD been revised as the final step after completing all other entries?	
Item types	Have the item types chosen been selected because they are particularly suitable for the micro-skills concerned?	
Information required	Is this the essential information, rather than little details? Is all the target information relevant – or have you forced a couple of extra questions with detail irrelevant to the situational purpose? With a listening test: - Does the information come in the same order as the questions? - Is target information spaced through the text so as to allow time to answer before the next question?	
Task Rubric	Is this written so clearly that learners <i>below this level</i> would not need to ask you any questions about it? Is it as clear as you can possibly make it? Does it include information about conditions and time?	
Marking scheme and correct answers	Are the marks weighted in relation to time spent on task and importance of the information? Have you trialled to check that these are the only possible answers?	