

Part 1: Become Your Own English Teacher

Module 2

Knowing Your Starting Point

Minimum Pathway (short version of the cycle): Choose one idea or goal → Complete one short activity → Reflect briefly → Decide on one next step

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. Identify your approximate CEFR level for each of the seven areas of English.
 2. Compare your self-assessment with information from placement and diagnostic tests.
 3. Identify your strengths and areas where you need more practice.
 4. Choose a CEFR "I Can" objective that is appropriate for your current level.
 5. Choose a short-term learning goal that supports a longer-term goal.
 6. Create a simple personal starting profile for your English learning.
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Why Is It Useful to Know Your Starting Point?

Before you begin your personal English learning program, it is useful to understand where you are now.

You do not need to know your exact level.

Your goal is to develop an approximate starting point that can help you decide what to learn next.

Your English may not be at the same level in every area.

For example, you might be:

- B1 in reading,
- A2/B1 in listening,
- B1 in speaking,
- A2 in writing,
- B1 in vocabulary,
- A2/B1 in grammar, and
- B1 in pronunciation.

This is completely normal.

Your starting point is not a permanent label. It is information that helps you make better learning decisions.

Step 1 — Check Your General English Level

There are several ways to discover your approximate level. Start simply; you do not need to complete every possible assessment.

You will use three kinds of information:

- A. Reflect — What do I think I can do?
- B. Measure — What does a placement test tell me?
- C. Look more closely — What do grammar and vocabulary diagnostics tell me?

No single test can tell you everything about your English.

The purpose is to put several pieces of information together.

No internet, or little data? Part A works on paper. You can do Parts B and C later on Wi-Fi, or skip them. Your own self-assessment is enough to start.

A. Reflect: CEFR Self-Assessment

The CEFR provides "I Can" statements that describe what learners can do at different levels.

Use the CEFR Self-Assessment Grid to think about your abilities in:

- listening,
- reading,
- spoken interaction,
- spoken production,
- writing.

Ask yourself:

What can I do in English now?

Do not choose a level because you want to be at that level.

Choose the level that most closely describes what you can actually do.

A1+ Learners

If you are between A1 and A2, you may sometimes see A1+ resources in this course.

A1+ means that you are beginning to move beyond A1 but are not yet comfortably at A2.

That's OK.

You can begin your independent learning program with simple activities and gradually move toward A2.

CEFR Self-Assessment Grid

Use the CEFR Self-Assessment Grid in the Resource Library. You can print it, or copy it into your notebook.

Record your approximate level for each skill in your CEFR Progress Record.

B. Measure: One General Placement Test

EF SET — A Free General English Placement Test

EF SET offers free tests that estimate your English level using the CEFR. The 50-minute test measures reading and listening. The 90-minute test also measures writing and speaking.

You can use it as a more substantial starting assessment.

Across the two tests, EF SET measures:

- reading,
- listening,
- writing,
- speaking.

The results provide a CEFR level and score.

The test can give you useful information about your general English level, but it does not tell you everything about your English.

For example, your results may not fully explain:

- why you made particular mistakes;
- which learning strategies would work best for you;
- what you should study next; or
- how well you can perform a specific workplace task.

Use EF SET as one source of information, not as a permanent label.

Optional: A Second General Check

You can also use:

Cambridge Test Your English

This is a short online test that can give you an additional indication of your general English level.

It is useful as a quick second check.

Remember that a short test is an indication of your level, not a complete assessment of all your English abilities.

You do not need to decide that one test is correct and another is wrong.

Instead, ask:

What does all of this information tell me?

Step 2 — If You Are Learning English for Work or Business

If your main reason for learning English is work, business, or professional communication, you may choose one additional workplace assessment to learn more about your workplace English.

Option A — Cambridge Test Your English – Business

This test shows which Cambridge business exam may suit you. It is for learners at B1 and above.

Option B — Cambridge English Skills Test Business

This is a more comprehensive workplace assessment.

It measures the four main language skills:

- reading,
- listening,
- writing,
- speaking.

It is designed specifically for workplace English and covers A1–C1.

It can provide more detailed information than a short placement test.

It is intended primarily for internal assessment and training purposes rather than external certification.

Which workplace assessment should I use?

You do not need to take both workplace tests. Choose one only if it will help you understand your workplace learning needs.

Choose the assessment that matches:

- your learning goal; and
- the amount of information you need.

If you want a quick starting point, choose the shorter test.

If you want a more comprehensive picture of your workplace English, choose the Cambridge English Skills Test Business.

This test is usually arranged through a school, employer, or test centre, and it may have a fee.

Step 3 — Look More Closely

This is the third kind of information (C above).

Placement tests give you useful information, but you may want to look more closely at particular areas.

Grammar

A grammar diagnostic can help you identify areas of grammar that you may need to practice. The Resource Library lists grammar diagnostics you can use.

For example, you may discover that you understand basic grammar well but need more practice with:

- verb tenses;
- articles;
- prepositions;
- conditionals; or
- sentence structure.

The purpose is not to get a perfect score.

The purpose is to discover what you may want to learn next.

Vocabulary

Your vocabulary size can also affect your ability to understand and communicate in English.

A vocabulary diagnostic can give you an estimate of the number of English words you know.

VocabularySize.com is one resource you can use for this purpose.

Again, the result is an estimate.

It is useful because it gives you another piece of information about your starting point.

Your Personal Starting Profile

Now bring the information together.

Record your approximate starting level for each of the seven areas of English.

Area	Approximate Starting Level
Listening	_____
Reading	_____
Speaking	_____
Writing	_____
Vocabulary	_____
Grammar	_____
Pronunciation	_____

Your profile might look something like this:

Area	Example
Listening	A2/B1
Reading	B1
Speaking	B1
Writing	A2
Vocabulary	B1
Grammar	B1
Pronunciation	B1

This is only an example.

Your seven areas do not need to be at the same level.

Understanding Your Starting Point

Now compare the information you have collected.

Ask yourself:

What do I notice?

- Which skill is strongest?
- Which skill needs the most practice?
- Did my test result match my self-assessment?
- Was anything surprising?
- Did the grammar diagnostic tell me something new?
- Did the vocabulary diagnostic tell me something new?
- Which area would I most like to improve?

You do not need to decide that one result is "right" and another is "wrong."

Instead, think of the different assessments as pieces of information that help you understand your starting point.

General English or Workplace English?

Your first goal can be connected to:

General English

or

Workplace English

or both.

For example:

General English

I want to understand simple conversations about everyday topics.

Workplace English

I want to understand a short conversation between a customer and an employee.

The language skills may be similar, but the situations and purposes are different.

The Resource Library provides both General English CEFR Objectives and Workplace English Objectives.

Choose Your First CEFR "I Can" Objective

Now choose one "I Can" objective that is important to you.

Choose an objective that is:

- appropriate for your current level;
- useful for your personal goals;
- realistic;
- specific enough to practice; and
- meaningful to you.

For example:

I can understand the main idea of a short, clear conversation about everyday topics.

Write your objective:

My CEFR "I Can" Objective:

Why is this important to me?

My target date:

From a Long-Term Goal to a Short-Term Goal

Your long-term goal describes where you want to go.

A short-term goal is one step toward that larger goal.

For example:

Long-term goal:

I want to communicate confidently in English at work.

Short-term goal:

I can understand the main points of a short conversation with a customer.

When you achieve one short-term goal, you choose another.

You do not have to solve your entire English-learning program at once.

Start with one useful goal.

Your Starting Point Is a Beginning, Not a Label

Your English will change.

As you practice, you may discover that:

- your listening improves,
- your vocabulary grows,
- your speaking becomes easier,
- your writing becomes clearer,
- your grammar becomes more accurate, or
- your pronunciation becomes easier to understand.

Your starting profile should therefore be updated as you learn.

You may continue working on an A2 objective even after beginning some B1 work.

You may also use A1+ resources when A2 material is still too difficult.

The important question is not:

"What level am I?"

The more useful question is:

"What can I do now, and what do I want to be able to do next?"

Reflection

Before you finish this module, think about these questions:

1. What did I expect my English level to be?
2. What did the assessments tell me?

3. Did my self-assessment and test results agree?
 4. Which skill is strongest for me?
 5. Which skill needs the most practice?
 6. What did the grammar diagnostic tell me?
 7. What did the vocabulary diagnostic tell me?
 8. Is my learning goal General English, Workplace English, or both?
 9. What is one "I Can" objective that is important to me?
 10. What is one short-term goal I can begin working on?
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Your First Step

You now have an approximate picture of your starting point.

You have:

- reflected on your English,
- checked your level,
- looked more closely at grammar and vocabulary,
- identified strengths and areas for improvement,
- chosen an "I Can" objective, and
- begun thinking about your first learning goal.

You are ready to begin developing your JBK Personal Learning Program.

You do not need to know everything about your English before you begin.

You simply need enough information to choose your next useful step.