

The ALTE Framework

A Common European Level System

International Non Governmental Organisation (INGO) with
participatory status in the Council of Europe

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and
Social Council of the United Nations

ALTE: Association of Language Testers in Europe

- ALTE is an association of providers of foreign language examinations, founded in 1990. In 2003 it was awarded International Non Governmental Organisation status with the Council of Europe and in 2006 ALTE was granted by the UN Committee on NGO's the title of NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC)
- It includes many of the world's leading language assessment bodies
- ALTE currently has 31 members, representing the testing of 26 languages
- ALTE members provide standard examinations and computer-based language tests

The ALTE Framework

- covers 6 levels of language proficiency, which are aligned with the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of reference for languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*
- allows straightforward comparison of the levels of examinations in a wide range of languages
- is supported by an extensive programme of research and validation

The ALTE levels

ALTE examinations are placed at one of 6 levels. The levels are described by a series of Can-do statements which

- define levels of ability in terms of what language users can typically do at each level of the ALTE Framework
- make it easier for users to understand what each level means in relation to what language users actually do

Council of Europe Levels	Description
C2 (ALTE 5)	The capacity to deal with material which is academic or cognitively demanding, and to use language to good effect at a level of performance which may in certain respects be more advanced than that of an average native speaker. <i>Example: CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text, reading almost as quickly as a native speaker.</i>
C1 (ALTE 4)	The ability to communicate with the emphasis on how well it is done, in terms of appropriacy, sensitivity and the capacity to deal with unfamiliar topics. <i>Example: CAN deal with hostile questioning confidently. CAN get and hold onto his/her turn to speak.</i>
B2 (ALTE 3)	The capacity to achieve most goals and express oneself on a range of topics. <i>Example: CAN show visitors around and give a detailed description of a place.</i>
B1 (ALTE 2)	The ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with non-routine information. <i>Example: CAN ask to open an account at a bank, provided that the procedure is straightforward.</i>
A2 (ALTE 1)	An ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts. <i>Example: CAN take part in a routine conversation on simple predictable topics.</i>
A1 (ALTE Breakthrough)	A basic ability to communicate and exchange information in a simple way. <i>Example: CAN ask simple questions about a menu and understand simple answers.</i>

The Can-do statements

The Can-do system comprises approximately 400 statements, sub-divided into 40 categories, which describe what typical language users can do:

- in a particular language
- at a particular level
- in one of the skill areas (Listening/Speaking, Writing, Reading)

The Can-do statements exist in 13 languages:

Catalan	French	Portuguese
Danish	German	Spanish
Dutch	Greek	Swedish
English	Italian	
Finnish	Norwegian	

Developing the ALTE level and Can-do system

The ALTE Can-do statement were originally developed with the help of LINGUA funding (94-03/1629/uk111)

The statements were developed through a rigorous process involving leading experts on language assessment and applied linguistics.

Data was collected from 10,000 language learners throughout Europe.

Research has taken place showing the relationship of the ALTE levels to the Common European Framework.

The four tables below illustrate:

1. Typical general ability at each level and in the skill areas
2. Typical ability in the Social & Tourist context at each level and in the skill areas
3. Typical ability in the Work context at each level and in the skill areas
4. Typical ability in the Study context at each level and in the skill areas

1.

Overall general ability			
LEVELS	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
C2 (ALTE 5)	CAN advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understanding colloquial references and dealing confidently with hostile questions.	CAN understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts.	CAN write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and accuracy.
C1 (ALTE 4)	CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work or keep up a casual conversation with a good degree of fluency, coping with abstract expressions.	CAN read quickly enough to cope with an academic course, to read the media for information or to understand non-standard correspondence.	CAN prepare/draft professional correspondence, take reasonably accurate notes in meetings or write an essay which shows an ability to communicate.
B2 (ALTE 3)	CAN follow or give a talk on a familiar topic or keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics.	CAN scan texts for relevant information, and understand detailed instructions or advice.	CAN make notes while someone is talking or write a letter including non-standard requests.
B1 (ALTE 2)	CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area, and understand instructions or public announcements.	CAN understand routine information and articles, and the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area.	CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.
A2 (ALTE 1)	CAN express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context.	CAN understand straightforward information within a known area, such as on products and signs and simple textbooks or reports on familiar matters.	CAN complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information.
A1 (ALTE Breakthrough)	CAN understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic.	CAN understand basic notices, instructions or information.	CAN complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places.

2. Social & Tourist

ALTE Social & Tourist typical abilities			
LEVELS	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
C2 (ALTE 5)	CAN talk about complex or sensitive issues without awkwardness.	CAN (when looking for accommodation) understand a tenancy agreement in detail, for example technical details and the main legal implications.	CAN write letters on any subject with good expression and accuracy.
C1 (ALTE 4)	CAN keep up conversations of a casual nature for an extended period of time and discuss abstract/cultural topics with a good degree of fluency and range of expression.	CAN understand complex opinions/arguments as expressed in serious newspapers.	CAN write letters on most subjects. Such difficulties as the reader may experience are likely to be at the level of vocabulary.
B2 (ALTE 3)	CAN keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics, such as personal and professional experiences, events currently in the news.	CAN understand detailed information, for example a wide range of culinary terms and abbreviations in accommodation advertisements.	CAN write to a hotel to ask about the availability of services, for example facilities for the disabled or the provision of a special diet.
B1 (ALTE 2)	CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way and pick up nuances of meaning/opinion.	CAN understand factual articles in newspapers, routine letters from hotels and letters expressing personal opinions.	CAN write letters on a limited range of predictable topics related to personal experience and express opinions in predictable language.
A2 (ALTE 1)	CAN express likes and dislikes in familiar contexts using simple language such as 'I (don't) like...'	CAN understand straightforward information, for example labels on food, standard menus, road signs and messages on automatic cash machines.	CAN complete most forms related to personal information.
A1 (ALTE Breakthrough)	CAN ask simple questions of a factual nature and understand answers expressed in simple language.	CAN understand simple notices and information, for example in airports, on store guides and on menus. CAN understand simple instructions on medicines and simple directions to places.	CAN leave a very simple message for a host family or write short simple 'thank you' notes.

3. Work

ALTE Work typical abilities			
LEVELS	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
C2 (ALTE 5)	CAN advise on/handle complex delicate or contentious issues, such as legal or financial matters, to the extent that he/she has the necessary specialist knowledge.	CAN understand reports and articles likely to be encountered during his/her work, including complex ideas expressed in complex language.	CAN make full and accurate notes and continue to participate in a meeting or seminar.
C1 (ALTE 4)	CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work and argue for or against a case.	CAN understand correspondence expressed in non-standard language.	CAN handle a wide range of routine and non-routine situations in which professional services are requested from colleagues or external contacts.
B2 (ALTE 3)	CAN take and pass on most messages that are likely to require attention during a normal working day.	CAN understand most correspondence, reports and factual product literature he/she is likely to come across.	CAN deal with all routine requests for goods or services.
B1 (ALTE 2)	CAN offer advice to clients within own job area on simple matters.	CAN understand the general meaning of non-routine letters and theoretical articles within own work area.	CAN make reasonably accurate notes at a meeting or seminar where the subject matter is familiar and predictable.
A2 (ALTE 1)	CAN state simple requirements within own job area, such as 'I want to order 25 of...'	CAN understand most short reports or manuals of a predictable nature within his/her own area of expertise, provided enough time is given.	CAN write a short, comprehensible note of request to a colleague or a known contact in another company.
A1 (ALTE Breakthrough)	CAN take and pass on simple messages of a routine kind, such as 'Friday meeting 10 a.m.'	CAN understand short reports or product descriptions on familiar matters, if these are expressed in simple language and the contents are predictable.	CAN write a simple routine request to a colleague, such as 'Can I have 20X please?'

4. Study

ALTE Study typical abilities			
LEVELS	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
C2 (ALTE 5)	CAN understand jokes, colloquial asides and cultural allusions.	CAN access all sources of information quickly and reliably.	CAN make accurate and complete notes during the course of a lecture, seminar or tutorial.
C1 (ALTE 4)	CAN follow abstract argumentation, for example the balancing of alternatives and the drawing of a conclusion.	CAN read quickly enough to cope with the demands of an academic course.	CAN write an essay which shows ability to communicate, giving few difficulties for the reader.
B2 (ALTE 3)	CAN give a clear presentation on a familiar topic, and answer predictable or factual questions.	CAN scan texts for relevant information and grasp main point of text.	CAN make simple notes that will be of reasonable use for essay or revision purposes.
B1 (ALTE 2)	CAN understand instructions on classes and assignments given by a teacher or lecturer.	CAN understand basic instructions and messages, for example computer library catalogues, with some help.	CAN write down some information at a lecture, if this is more or less dictated.
A2 (ALTE 1)	CAN express simple opinions using expressions such as 'I don't agree'.	CAN understand the general meaning of a simplified text book or article, reading very slowly.	CAN write a very short simple narrative or description, such as 'My last holiday'.
A1 (ALTE Breakthrough)	CAN understand basic instructions on class times, dates and room numbers, and on assignments to be carried out.	CAN read basic notices and instructions.	CAN copy times, dates and places from notices on classroom board or notice board.

Examinations in the ALTE Framework

Language	A1 ALTE BREAKTHROUGH	A2 ALTE LEVEL 1	B1 ALTE LEVEL 2	B2 ALTE LEVEL 3	C1 ALTE LEVEL 4	C2 ALTE LEVEL 5
Català		Certificat de nivell bàsic de català	Certificat de nivell elemental de català	Certificat de nivell intermedi de català	Certificat de nivell suficiència de català	Certificat de nivell superior de català
Dansk		Prøve i Dansk 1	Prøve i Dansk 2	Prøve i Dansk 3	Studieprøven	–
Deutsch	Start Deutsch 1	Start Deutsch 2	Zertifikat Deutsch (ZD)	–	Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)	Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP) Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS)
English		Key English Test (KET)	Preliminary English Test (PET)	First Certificate in English (FCE)	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
Español		–	Diploma de Español (Nivel Inicial)	Diploma de Español (Nivel Intermedio)	–	Diploma de Español (Nivel Superior)
Euskara		–	–	–	Euskararen Gaitasun Agiria (EGA)	–
Français		Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 1 (CEFP1) (AF)	Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 2 (CEFP2) (AF)	Diplôme de Langue Française (DL) (AF)	Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes (DS) (AF)	Diplôme de Hautes Etudes Françaises (DHEF) (AF)
	Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française DELF / A1 (CIEP)	Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française DELF / A2 (CIEP)	Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française DELF / B1 (CIEP)	Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française DELF / B2 (CIEP)	Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française DALF / C1 (CIEP)	Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française DALF / C2 (CIEP)
Ελληνικά		–	Βεβαίωση Ελληνομάθειας: Επίπεδο Βασικό Veveosi Elinomathias: Epipedo Vasiko	Βεβαίωση Ελληνομάθειας: Επίπεδο Επάρκειας Veveosi Elinomathias: Epipedo Eparkias	–	–
Italiano		Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 1 (CELI 1)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 2 (CELI 2)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 3 (CELI 3)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 4 (CELI 4)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 5 (CELI 5)
Lëtzebuergesch		Zertifikat Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (ZLaF)	Éischten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (1DLaF)	Zweten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (2DLaF)	–	Ieweschten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch (IDL)
Nederlands				Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I (NT2-I); (CITO)	Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II (NT2-II); (CITO)	–
		Profiel Toeristische en Informele Taalvaardigheid (PTIT); (CNaVT)	Profiel Maatschappelijke Taalvaardigheid (PMT); (CNaVT)	Profiel Professionele Taalvaardigheid (PPT); (CNaVT)	Profiel Academische Taalvaardigheid (PAT); (CNaVT)	
Norsk		–	Språkprøven i norsk for voksne innvandrere	–	Test i norsk for fremmedspråklige Høyere nivå	–
Português		Certificado Inicial de Português Língua Estrangeira (CIPLE)	Diploma Elementar de Português Língua Estrangeira (DEPLE)	Diploma Intermédio de Português Língua Estrangeira (DIPLE)	Diploma Avançado de Português Língua Estrangeira (DAPLE)	Diploma Universitário de Português Língua Estrangeira (DUPLÉ)
Suomi		Suomen kieli, perustaso 1	Suomen kieli, perustaso 2–3, keskitaso 3	Suomen kieli, keskitaso 4–5, ylin taso 5	Suomen kieli, ylin taso 6	Suomen kieli, ylin taso 7–8
Svenska		–	Sfi-provet	–	Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)	–

Examinations produced by other members and associate members of ALTE are in the course of being placed on the ALTE Framework. These are as follows:

Cymraeg	Defnyddio'r Gymraeg Defnyddio'r Gymraeg-Uwch	Lietuvių kalba	Praktines lietuviu kalbos egzaminas Valstybines lietuviu kalbos egzaminas	Русский	TORFL-1 (Test of Russian as Foreign Language) TORFL-2 (Advanced) TORFL-3 (Proficiency)
Eesti keele	Eesti keele algtaseme test Eesti keele kesktaseme test Eesti keele kõrgtaseme	Magyar	Bélepő szint Alapfok Középfok Felsőfok	Slovenščina	Izpit iz znanja slovenščine na osnovni ravni Izpit iz znanja slovenščine na srednji ravni Izpit iz znanja slovenščine na visoki ravni
Latviešu	Latvian Language Test for Applicants for Latvian Citizenship (LLTALC)	Polski	Poziom podstawowy - PL-B1 Poziom sredni ogólny - PL-B2 Poziom zaawansowany - PL-C2		

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WBT Weiterbildungs- Testsysteme GmbH

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Germany

Welsh Joint Education Committee

Cardiff
Wales

Xunta de Galicia

Santiago de Compostela
Spain

Associate Members

Russian Language Testing Consortium

Moscow & St Petersburg
Russian Federation

For further information:

A fuller description of the project has been published by Cambridge University Press as part of the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*.

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