

Kaplan Test of English: Independent CEFR referencing

CEFR Levels and Global Descriptors	Recommended threshold score
<p>C2</p> <p>Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.</p>	<p>535-700</p>
<p>C1</p> <p>Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</p>	<p>500-534</p>
<p>B2</p> <p>Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</p>	<p>425-499</p>
<p>B1</p> <p>Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</p>	<p>350-424</p>
<p>A2</p> <p>Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</p>	<p>275-349</p>
<p>A1</p> <p>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</p>	<p>225-274</p>

Ecctis' independent review of Kaplan Test of English against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has found it provides a sound assessment of English language competency at CEFR A1 to C2 in listening, reading, grammar, writing, and speaking.

Context and Scope

Ecctis has been commissioned to carry out an independent evaluation and benchmarking of Kaplan Test of English, an English language test developed by Kaplan. Kaplan Test of English is a multi-level, computer-adaptive English language test available for test-takers to take online via a laptop, computer, or mobile device. The test is primarily intended to provide a robust assessment of English language proficiency for those entering into English-medium of instruction higher education or employment.

Kaplan Test of English offers assessment in listening, reading, grammar, speaking, and writing. Test-takers are able to select some or all of these components for their individual testing sessions as follows:

- Main Flight Skills: includes assessment in listening and reading.
- Main Flight Extra: includes assessment in listening, reading, and grammar.
- Productive Skills: includes assessment in writing and speaking.

Ecctis reviewed the Kaplan International Test of English which has been recently rebranded to KTE (Kaplan Test of English). Kaplan Testing Services (KTS) has confirmed that this rebranding does not introduce any alterations to the test's design or delivery; all facets remain unchanged.

Grading, marking, moderation, results

Upon completion of Kaplan Test of English, a test-taker will receive feedback on skills demonstrated and recommendations on how to develop further alongside their results. Test-takers are provided with an overall score for the Main Flight sections of Kaplan Test of English, as well as individual scores for each component. Overall and individual scores are reported on a scale from 0-700. The writing and speaking sections of Kaplan Test of English are marked by Kaplan Test of English Graders, whereas reading, listening, and grammar are machine-marked. All graders are regularly reviewed and monitored.

Methodology

This study employed Ecctis' established methodology for the benchmarking of English language proficiency tests, informed by the Council of Europe 2009 Manual¹ and the 2020 Companion Volume.² This encompassed a desk-based review of Kaplan Test of English test specifications, assessment development procedures, test items, marked test-taker samples, and relevant mark schemes. Analyses of test items were presented to an internal panel for peer review of the CEFR level findings made.

In order to undertake the evaluation, a number of documents were reviewed, including quality assurance documentation, examiner training documentation, grading criteria, and anonymised test-taker samples. The results shown in this document stem from a follow-up review undertaken in November 2023. The follow-up review was prompted by Kaplan actioning recommendations from an initial review in July. The test items used to inform the results of Ecctis' CEFR referencing study were collected by Kaplan and submitted to Ecctis between April 2023 and October 2023.

¹ Council of Europe (2009) *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) – A Manual*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680667a2d>.

² Council of Europe (2020) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume*.

Overall, the quality assurance processes reviewed by Ecctis were sufficient to support the CEFR comparability findings detailed in the key findings of this report.

Key Findings

Overall, Ecctis' review of test construct, individual assessment tasks, input texts, marked test-taker samples, and mark schemes found Kaplan Test of English to provide a sound assessment of English language competency in listening, reading, grammar, writing, and speaking at CEFR levels A1 to C2.

Listening

Kaplan Test of English Level	0-224	225-274	275-349	350-424	425-499	500-534	535-700
Listening	Sub-A1	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2

The listening section of Kaplan Test of English is untimed and comprises of multiple-choice and cloze text questions. Test-takers are expected to utilise a wide range of oral comprehension strategies, such as listening for key information, inferring conclusions based on tone, listening for opinions and attitudes, and vocabulary knowledge. The input audio texts depict a range of authentic themes, such as lectures covering complex topics, news reports, interviews, and instructional and information announcements. The input audio texts are appropriate for the intended test-taker demographic and are suitable for test-takers between CEFR levels A1-C2.

The listening items sampled in Kaplan Test of English targeted a wide range of CEFR oral comprehension competencies, and included: overall oral comprehension, understanding as a member of a live audience, understanding audio (or signed) media recordings, understanding announcements and instructions, understanding an interlocutor, understanding conversations between other people, information exchange, conversation, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, and identifying cues and inferring.

Reading

Kaplan Test of English Level	0-224	225-274	275-349	350-424	425-499	500-534	535-700
Reading	Sub-A1	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2

The reading section of Kaplan Test of English is untimed and comprises of multiple-choice and cloze text questions. Test-takers are expected to utilise a wide range of reading comprehension strategies, such as reading for key information, reading for main ideas and conclusions, reading for implicitly stated information, and vocabulary knowledge. The reading input texts depict a range of authentic themes, such as personal, academic, and professional emails and letters, articles reviewing simple and complex topics, blog posts, and advertisements. The reading input texts are appropriate for the target test-taker demographic and are suitable for test-takers between CEFR levels A1-C2.

The reading items sampled in Kaplan Test of English targeted a wide range of CEFR reading comprehension competencies and included: overall reading comprehension, reading for orientation, reading for information and argument, reading correspondence, identifying cues and inferring, vocabulary range, and grammatical accuracy.

Grammar

Kaplan Test of English Level	0-224	225-274	275-349	350-424	425-499	500-534	535-700
Grammar	Sub-A1	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2

The grammar section of Kaplan Test of English is untimed and comprises of multiple-choice and cloze text questions. Test-takers are required to demonstrate an understanding of a range of different grammatical and vocabulary forms.

The grammar items sampled in Kaplan Test of English targeted a range of CEFR linguistic competencies and included: general linguistic range, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary range.

Writing

Kaplan Test of English Level	0-224	225-274	275-349	350-424	425-499	500-534	535-700
Writing	Sub-A1	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2

The writing section of Kaplan Test of English lasts 25-40 minutes and includes a minimum of one writing task which requires test-takers to respond in either correspondence or essay form to a question. There are four levels of writing tasks available (Pre [A1], A, B, and C) and test-takers are assigned a task which reflects their measured CEFR level during the Main Flight stage of Kaplan Test of English. The writing test is marked against criteria which assess accuracy of language, coherence and cohesion, and overall quality of the response.

The writing items sampled in Kaplan Test of English targeted a range of CEFR written production skills and included: overall written production, correspondence, reports and essays, and general linguistic range.

The grading criteria for Kaplan Test of English cover seven CEFR bands (Pre [A1] through to C2). The writing grading criteria sampled in Kaplan Test of English marking documentation targeted a range of CEFR written and linguistic competencies, which included: general linguistic range, vocabulary control, vocabulary range, correspondence, thematic development, orthographic control, reports and essays, overall written interaction, coherence and cohesion, and propositional precision. The grading criteria was found to target CEFR levels within these scales ranging from Pre A1 to C2. From the test samples reviewed, the writing tasks accurately assess levels A1-C2.

Speaking

Kaplan Test of English Level	0-224	225-274	275-349	350-424	425-499	500-534	535-700
Speaking	Sub-A1	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2

The speaking section of Kaplan Test of English lasts 10-15 minutes and includes three to five speaking tasks such as introductions, information exchange, picture comparison, responding to follow-up questions, and

sustained monologue. There are four levels of writing tasks available (Pre [A1], A, B, and C) and test-takers are assigned a group of tasks which reflects their measured CEFR level during the Main Flight stage of Kaplan Test of English. The speaking test is marked against a criterion which assess accuracy of language, fluency, and overall quality of the response.

The speaking items sampled in Kaplan Test of English targeted a range of CEFR oral production skills and included: overall oral production, addressing audiences, sustained monologue: describing experience, and general linguistic range.

The grading criteria for Kaplan Test of English cover seven CEFR bands (Pre [A1] through to C2). The speaking grading criteria sampled in Kaplan Test of English marking documentation targeted a range of CEFR oral and linguistic competencies, which included: general linguistic range, vocabulary control, vocabulary range, coherence and cohesion, overall phonological control, fluency, overall oral production, sustained monologue: describing experience, sustained monologue: putting in a case, and propositional precision. The grading criteria was found to target CEFR levels within these scales ranging from Pre A1 to C2. From the test samples reviewed, the speaking tasks accurately assess levels A1-C2.