telc
LANGUAGE TESTS

HANDBOOK
ENGLISH

A2·B1

Contents

1 Background Information

1.1 Dual-level Examination

This chapter will explain how language skills are assessed over the two CEFR levels A2 and B1 and why it is important to develop this kind of evaluation carefully. While it might seem a simple solution just to award A2 for test takers who are slightly below B1, this is not how *telc English A2·B1* was constructed. The test developers made an extra effort by carefully defining two cut-off scores, one for A2 and one for B1, instead of the one cut-off score typical for single-level examinations.

telc's aims when developing this test were to

- provide test takers with a valid certificate either at level A2 or at level B1,

- achieve this within a manageable time frame for the actual examination, i.e. with as few test items as possible,

- give test takers a profile of their abilities as well as certifying the overall level achieved.

In order to fulfil the second aim, the subtests Listening and Reading are counted together for the final result of the test. Thus 45 items can be taken into account when determining whether a test taker has reached level A2 or B1 in the receptive skills. Each subtest seen by itself (with only 20 or 25 items respectively) would not provide the necessary amount of information about the test taker's ability. Therefore, if the results for Listening and Reading were to be reported separately, these subtests would have to include twice as many items. Considerations of time versus cost as well as practicability led to the decision to combine the two subtests.

This means that *telc English A2·B1* has three parts which are evaluated separately:

- Listening / Reading

- Writing

- Speaking

The level achieved for each of these parts can be either "B1", "A2" or "below A2". The methods used for this evaluation are explained below.

The A2·B1 test cannot measure a test taker's ability below the CEFR level A2, so no distinction is made between A1 and below A1.

Listening / Reading

In this part test takers are awarded one point for each item. The result is graded as follows:

- 33–45 points: B1

- 20–32 points: A2

- 0–19 points: below A2

How were these cut-off scores defined? In the process of test development, different qualitative and quantitative methods were applied.

influenced by factors like L1, country of origin, gender, age and ethnic origin.

14. Item-level data (e. g. for computing the difficulty, discrimination, reliability and standard errors of measurement of the examination) is collected from an adequate sample of candidates and analysed.

Communication with stakeholders

15. The examination administration system communicates the results of the examinations to candidates and to examination centres (e. g. schools) promptly and clearly.

16. You provide information to stakeholders on the appropriate context, purpose and use of the examination, on its content, and on the overall reliability of the results of the examination.

17. You provide suitable information to stakeholders to help them interpret results and use them appropriately.

1.5 Relevant CEFR Scales

The CEFR provides essential information about the skills needed to successfully complete the examination *telc English A2·B1*. The scales in the following chart are incorporated into the *telc English A2·B1* examination, although the amount and intensity of their use varies.
Since the examination covers levels A2 and B1, descriptors for both levels A2 and B1 have been listed below. The plus levels (A2+ and B1+), have also been included, provided that descriptors were available. The CEFR also includes descriptors which are not relevant for this examination and these have been omitted from this chart.

GLOBAL SCALE

Independent User	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, leisure, school, 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 and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	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.

LISTENING

	OVERALL LISTENING COMPREHENSION
B1	Can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent. Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc., including short narratives.
A2	Can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated. Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment) provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.

	UNDERSTANDING CONVERSATION BETWEEN NATIVE SPEAKERS
B1	Can generally follow the main points of extended discussion around him/her, provided speech is clearly articulated in standard dialect.
A2	Can generally identify the topic of discussion around him/her which is conducted slowly and clearly.

	LISTENING TO ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS
B1	Can understand simple technical information, such as operating instructions for everyday equipment. Can follow detailed directions.
A2	Can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements. Can understand simple directions relating to how to get from X to Y, by foot or public transport.

	LISTENING TO AUDIO MEDIA AND RECORDINGS
B1	Can understand the information content of the majority of recorded or broadcast audio material on topics of personal interest delivered in clear standard speech. Can understand the main points of radio news bulletins and simpler recorded material about familiar subjects delivered relatively slowly and clearly.
A2	Can understand and extract the essential information from short recorded passages dealing with predictable everyday matters which are delivered slowly and clearly.

2 Test Specifications

2.1 Overview of the Test Format

telc English A2·B1 consists of four subtests:

Subtest	Time
Listening	25 minutes
Reading	45 minutes
Writing	30 minutes
Speaking	approx. 16 minutes

The subtests are divided into parts, as follows:

Written Examination

Subtest Listening	
Part 1	Understanding voice mail messages: ▪ 4 multiple-choice items ▪ Listening for detail
Part 2	Understanding short public announcements: ▪ 5 multiple-choice items ▪ Listening for gist and listening for detail
Part 3	Understanding everyday conversations: ▪ 4 true / false items and 4 multiple-choice items ▪ Listening for gist and listening for detail
Part 4	Understanding different opinions about a topic: ▪ 3 matching items ▪ Listening for gist

2.2 Listening

Listening, Part 1

In the first part of this subtest, the candidates should demonstrate their ability to understand important details in voice mail messages spoken at a normal speed in a widely used standard variety of English.

Possible situations of language use reproduced by the task are:

- Listening to a message on an answering machine

- Understanding recorded messages on the telephone, e.g. messages from an official institution, a service provider or a doctor's office, etc.

Structure	Instructions Example Audio texts Items
Objective	To assess the candidate's ability to understand specific information in voice mail messages
Intended operations	Listening for detail
Type of task	Multiple-choice items with three options
Number of items	Four (items 1–4)
Channel	Text: spoken Instructions and items: written
Type of text	Monologues: voice mail messages, both in personal and work-related contexts
Nature of information	Everyday situations requiring some kind of concrete action by the listener
Speakers	Number of speakers: one per voice mail message
Text length	55–65 words per voice mail message
Test items	▪ The candidate will hear four voice mail messages. ▪ Each message is played once. ▪ For each message, there is one multiple-choice question with three options. The task is to choose the correct statement for each message. Only one option is correct.
Topics	See *Inventory T – Topics*
Lexical range	See *Inventory V – Vocabulary*
Level	Vocabulary and grammar of the audio texts should be mostly at level A2. The language of the items should not exceed level A2.
Weighting	1 point per item (0 for incorrect response)

Sample Task

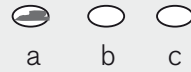*You will hear four voice mail messages.*

Which answer fits best: a, b or c? You will hear each message once.

Mark your answers for items 1–4 on the answer sheet.

Example

Matthew asks you to

a call him on Monday.
b come to his office on Tuesday.
c meet with him on Friday.

a   b   c

Audioscript

Hi, it's Matthew.

I'm really sorry, but I can't make it to our meeting on Friday. Could you call me at the office on Monday morning, so we can set up another time? I've got a very busy week coming up, but I could meet you on Tuesday either at 10:30 in the morning or at 4:00 in the afternoon.

Thanks.

3 Inventories

3.1 Inventory T – Topics

This list of topic areas is primarily designed for item writers and test constructors. For classroom work and test preparation, this list of topics will merely form a "common-core" basis and will need to be further developed and extended to meet the individual needs and interests of the learners.

All the topics in this inventory may be used for test purposes. When selecting texts and test items, the editing team takes care to include only such materials that are likely to reflect the learner's range of experience. Candidates are not required to have specialised knowledge in any of the topic areas, and they are not tested on their general knowledge of history, geography, politics, etc.

Topic	Sub-topic
Personal information	▪ Name ▪ Address and telephone number ▪ Age, date, and place of birth ▪ Nationality ▪ Physical appearance ▪ Likes and dislikes
Friends and family	▪ Personal relationships ▪ Social networks ▪ Family occasions
House and home	▪ Type, size and location of home ▪ House, room and garden ▪ Furniture and household equipment ▪ Pets ▪ Rent and other expenses
Food and drink	▪ Meals, dishes, beverages, snacks ▪ Places to eat and drink ▪ Communicating with waiters
Shopping	▪ Shops, stores, (super)markets ▪ Prices, sizes, quantities, measurements ▪ Internet shopping ▪ Buying and selling things ▪ Communicating with shop personnel

3.2 Inventory G – Grammar

The work on the compilation of the inventory of grammatical forms was based on a combination of a review of the existing literature on grammatical progression, a review of the practical application of progression theories to the development of language tests by examination boards in the UK, and finally through empirical research based on the judgements of expert teachers. This work, which began in 2008, has informed a number of recent developments in the area of English language assessment over the past three years, most notably the International Language Assessment (ILA) a placement test system designed for use by the British Council's international teaching centres, and the EQUALS/British Council Core Inventory for General English (North et al, 2010 – available at *http://www.teachingenglish. org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Z243 %20E&E %20EQUALS %20BROCHURErevised6.pdf*).

The absence of an empirically supported understanding of the details of grammatical progression in the research literature suggested that we should look instead to the practical application of progression in the materials and tests currently in use in the area. We were fortunate enough to receive support in this endeavour from City & Guilds of London, who had commissioned such a list in 2007 and who now made it available to CLARe researchers. This list was reviewed in light of current practice and a total of over 120 individual grammatical forms were identified and exemplified under sixteen headings. Using this document as a base, we then devised an online questionnaire, which was given to a group of twelve expert informants (senior teachers, each with many years of experience behind them) who were asked to identify the CEFR level or levels at which these forms should be taught. The results of this part of the study were analysed using multi-faceted Rasch analysis (using the FACETS programme) in order to empirically validate the judgements and the predictability of the judgements of the individual items. While it was found that some items could not be accurately modelled, suggesting that there was significant disagreement among the judges with regard to the items, the consistency of the judgements was remarkably high, with all those involved showing excellent 'fit' statistics. This work resulted in a final list of forms, which was then again reviewed by an external expert, who commented additionally on the examples offered, making a number of valuable suggestions.

As a result of this work, researchers at CLARe have been able to devise more empirically supported tests of grammar, and also to advise examination boards on those aspects of grammar which are most likely to appear at the different CEFR levels. This work is, of course, continuing. And, as we gather data from research projects and tests, the list will at some stage in the future be updated. However, the inventories that follow are based on the most up-to-date research undertaken at CLARe and mark a significant advancement in the application of grammatical progression to tests of this nature.

3.2.1   Inventory G I – The Grammar of Spoken and Written Discourse

4   Sentence Position

   A Theme

   B Tails

5   Cohesion

   A Reference

   B Ellipsis

   C Substitution

1   Expressing Time

A Point of time

1) Time of Day

Can I have an alarm call at 6.15, please?
I'll get back to you before **eleven thirty.**

2) Dates

The school is closed between the second of April and the twentieth.
The delivery should arrive on **23rd December.**
Can we book the cottage from **24th September to 31st September?**

3) Adverbials

a) Adverbs

She leaves for Edinburgh **tomorrow**.
She has **just** got back from holiday.
He needs to go home **now.**
I need to talk to him **afterwards.**

b) Adverbial phrases

He was in the café **yesterday evening.**
The swimming pool is closing down **this Friday.**
Did you have a good time **last night?**

c) Time clauses

By the time I arrived, all the bargains had gone.
When she gets here, can you show her to her room?
Can you put out the rubbish **before we go?**

B Duration

a) Adverbial phrases

He won't get out of hospital **for another two weeks**.
The office will not be open **until the start of next week.**
He has to revise for his exams **during the holidays.**

b) Time clauses

We won't get any peace **until the football season is over.**
Let's have a drink **while we're waiting for her.**
It's not over **till the fat lady sings.**

c) Other forms

He's just finished his **twelve hours'** shift.

C Frequency

a) Adverbs

I **never** go on holiday without my fishing gear.
Sometimes you need a licence to fish but not **always.**
Very often, I just take the day off and head for the nearest lake.

b) Adverbial phrases

Every couple of months I like to have a weekend in the countryside.
For about the fifth year in a row, the swallows have arrived in early April.
Every day before I go to work, I go jogging along the beach.

10   Sentence Patterns

A Subject – Verb

1) Pronoun subject   I cried.

2) Noun subject   Dogs were barking.

3) Infinitive subject   To stay would help.

4) Gerund subject   Talking helps.

5) 'There' as subject   There are. (e.g. in response to a question)

B Subject – Complement

1) 'To be'   He is Spanish.

2) 'Sounds / feels / …'   The sunshine feels fantastic.

C Subject – Verb –   I like oranges.
Direct Object   They love animals.

D Subject – Verb – Direct Object + Indirect Object

1) Two pronouns   Jane gave him it.

2) Two nouns   John gave the dog a bone.

3) Noun and pronoun   Mary gave him the book.
(indirect object)

4) Noun and pronoun   Susan fed it to the dog.
(direct object)

E Subject – Verb – Infinitive

1) With 'to'   He loves to travel.

2) Without 'to'   I must go.

F Subject – Verb +   Andrew loves cooking.
"-ing" Form

G Subject – Verb +   He knows what happened to your brother.
that / wh- Clause   She says that the best person won the competition.

H Subject – Verb +   He explained why.
wh- Phrases   She knew how.

3.3 Inventory V — Vocabulary

The development and validation of the vocabulary wordlists was undertaken by CLARe researchers in order to bring the existing lists up-to-date and to support these lists with a systematic rationale.

When the original wordlists were analysed, the CLARe team found that they essentially reflected the four thousand (or 4K) most frequently occurring words in the British National Corpus (BNC), though there were a number of anomalies. The methodological approach taken to the development of the new wordlists included both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The first phase of the development project was to review each word from a quantitative perspective (in terms of frequency) and also from a qualitative perspective (with feedback from expert reviewers, both at CLARe and telc). The resulting wordlist is based primarily on the BNC 4K list, though there have been additions from outside the 4K range, including words such as: delicious, departure, inquiries, pepper, vacation, fluent, immigrant, luggage, garlic, pullover, multimedia and laptop.

When the final list of words was agreed on, the task was to exemplify the meaning or meanings to be associated with each word. This work was done through the creation of sentence-length contextualisation sentences through a combination of corpus (BNC) driven searches and expert-judgement based writing. The completed versions of the wordlists with exemplifications were then double checked for accuracy and consistency by experts from both CLARe and telc. As a result of this research activity, we are satisfied that the wordlists represented here are up-to-date and coherent.

We are confident that the methodology employed in the development of the wordlists presented here has resulted in a very focused and empirically supported list that can drive the telc examinations over the coming years. Of course, work in this area never ceases and in the future we will be looking to build on the most recent work on formulaic language to look beyond the traditional single word approach upon which all current major wordlists have been developed.

A

a, an	They have a nice house with a big garden.
	Would you like an apple or an orange?
able	My sister might be able to help you.
unable	They were unable to come due to the bad weather.
disabled	I think the government should do more for disabled people.
about	The park is about two miles from here.
	What are they talking about?
	How about some pasta for lunch?
above	John and Karen's flat is just above ours.
abroad	We're going abroad for our holiday again next year.
absence	Nobody noticed his absence.
absent	He was absent from the dinner.
absolutely	You're absolutely right!
abuse	The police officer abused his position of power.
	How serious is alcohol abuse among young people?
academy	She studied at a music academy.
accelerate	The car accelerates very quickly.
accent	She speaks English with a Spanish accent.
accept	They do not accept credit cards.
acceptable	Mistakes like that are just not acceptable.
access	You now have full access to all the information.
	Backstage access for the concert is restricted.
accident	He wasn't injured in the car accident.
accommodate	The room can accommodate up to 85 people.
accommodation	What was the accommodation like on your last holiday?
accompany	The dog always accompanies my grandmother, no matter where she goes.
according	According to the weather report, it's going to be sunny and dry tomorrow.
account	Where do you have your bank account?
accountant	To be an accountant you must be good with numbers.
accurate	His description of the painting was very accurate.
accuse	Nobody has accused her of stealing the money.
ache	I woke up this morning with a terrible toothache.
achieve	He has achieved his childhood dream.
across	The bookstore is just across the street.
act	Our neighbour has been acting strangely recently.
action	I like action films.
active	My father-in-law leads a very active life.
activity	Our club offers a number of spare-time activities for people of all ages.
actor	He is the most talented actor in the film.
actress	Do you know her? She's a famous actress.
actual	The actual cause of the disease is still unknown.
actually	Actually, I'd rather spend the day at home.
ad	I'm running an ad in the paper and I have to stay near the phone.
advert	The weekend papers are usually full of adverts.
advertisement	I am writing in response to your advertisement for a receptionist.
advertise	He advertised in the Sunday paper.
adapt	The book has been adapted into a film.
	They managed to adapt very easily to their new home.
add	They want to add another member to the swimming team.
addiction	Drug addiction is a serious problem nowadays.
addicted	I think she's addicted to her work – she's a workaholic.
additional	Ask your partner two additional questions.
address	I've included her address and phone number in case you need to contact her.
adequate	Are the parking facilities adequate for 50 cars?

HANDBOOK
ENGLISH A2·B1

telc English A2·B1 is a standardised, dual-level examination which measures general language competence across two levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) using a task-based, communicative approach.

The *telc English A2·B1 Handbook* is designed for teachers who wish to prepare their learners for telc English examinations as well as for examiners, heads of language departments in schools and other ELT professionals.

The Handbook explains the structure and specifications of the examination, together with sample items and details of how the listening, reading, writing and speaking components are assessed alongside the relevant CEFR scales at levels A2 and B1. There are also inventories of topics, grammar and vocabulary that can be used to give those preparing to take the examination the best support possible.

For additional information regarding the telc English A2·B1 examinations for specific target audiences, please refer to the *telc English A2·B1 Business Handbook* and the telc *English A2·B1 School Handbook*.

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