



# EPT

English Placement Test

A Brief Introduction for  
Teachers And Students



إحضار إثبات الشخصية شرط أساسي لدخول الاختبار



1. Background	4
2. EPT Formation Map	5
3. EPT Components and Questions	5
4. CEFR Levels and Distribution	5
5. Cut-Scores and Score Interpretation	7
6. How is EPT developed?	7
7. Statistical Criteria	8
8. Review Committee Decisions	8
9. EPT Reliability and Validity	8
10. EPT Sample Items	9

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## 1. Background

The National Center for Assessment sees it as an important part of its mission to provide services that are of assistance to academic institutions. When a need is identified, either by the Center itself or by institutions of higher learning, the task of designing and implementing professional standardized tools of assessment is taken on by the Center. Thus it was that the Center was initially approached by university preparation programs to provide an assessment tool that would facilitate placing students in appropriate class levels for their English language skills at the time of testing. Not surprisingly, the real need was solid discrimination at the lower levels of proficiency.

Considering the needs of the programs and after consulting with professionals in both the field of measurement and assessment as well as experienced teachers in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the Center has designed an instrument that will perform the task needed. This instrument is the English Placement Test (EPT). It was devised by a committee composed of professional EFL teachers with several years of experience in the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia and measurement specialists from the Center's Department of Testing and Measurement. After review of literature was made by the steering committee, it was decided to use the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a guiding manual for item writers and reviewers in the formation process of EPT with the intention to follow necessary steps to formally link EPT to the Framework. The CEFR and its various descriptors are not a curriculum but a point of reference for developing learning, teaching and assessment. Throughout the CEFR and the research related to it, the importance of interpreting the framework to local contexts is iterated. For this purpose, local experts on CEFR were consulted and training activities, including a five-day workshop with top level international CEFR linkage experts, were conducted. Linking exams to the CEFR is a highly complex process in need of continuous evaluation and improvement. Hence, producing the EPT is only a first small step in the Center's efforts to formally link its language tests to the CEFR.

## 2. EPT Formation Map

Section	Component	No. of questions	Weight of total	Time allowed
1	Structure (ST)	40	50%	35 min
2	Reading Comprehension (RC)	20	25%	30 min
3	Compositional Analysis (CA)	20	25%	25 min
Total		80	100	90 min

## 3. EPT Components and Questions

All EPT items are four-option multiple-choice. Below is a brief description of each component:

EPT Component	Focus
Structure (ST)	Correct standard use of grammar
Reading Comprehension (RC)	Reading and understanding short texts
Compositional Analysis (CA)	Various aspects of writing mechanics such as punctuation, co- and subordination, word order, and paragraph formation.

## 4. CEFR Levels and Distribution

The EPT CEFR distribution reflects the need to discriminate between students mainly at A2 and B1 levels.

CEFR Level	Percentage of total
A1	10%
A2	45%
B1	40%
B2	5%



Please note that as part of future EPT development, user institutions will have access to test forms with tailored CEFR level distributions to more closely meet their individual placement needs.

The table below provides a brief description of each EPT CEFR level taken from the CEFR *Global Scale*:

CEFR Level	Descriptor
B2	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 Independent disadvantages of various options.
B1	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 and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
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.
A1	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.



For the purpose of guiding item writers and reviewers, CEFR sub-scales relevant to the test components were used. These include, but are not limited to, Grammatical Accuracy, Overall Reading Comprehension, and Overall Written Production. In addition to the sub-scales, several other sources were drawn upon, in particular the CEFR “toolkit” as well Reference Level Descriptions and high quality English textbooks.

### **5. Cut-Scores and Score Interpretation**

A person’s communicative ability may not be at the same level for each communicative skill (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) as learners have diverse profiles. EPT scores are therefore reported both through an overall score and as sub-scores for each component as is demanded by best CEFR practice. There are no general cut-score for the test. However, the Center works together with test users to facilitate accurate interpretation of test scores and to assist in setting appropriate cut-scores based on local placement needs. This assistance also extends to other assessment related consultation services such as local documentation and reporting of scores.

### **6. How is EPT developed?**

#### **• Selecting Item Writers**

The Center selects item writers either directly or by way of its contact persons in academic and educational institutions; item writers must be nominated by persons who have direct contact with the Center and who know the code of ethics the Center goes by.

#### **• Training of Item Writers**

The Center will then gather the selected item writers for a workshop. The first part of the workshop will be given intensive orientation on how to write items of the multiple choice type meeting the CEFR criteria as indicated for the EPT. The item writers are then divided into groups for hands-on experience in item writing. They then receive guidance and feedback from experienced item writers and specialists in measurement.

#### **• Actual writing of items**

Finally, each participant is asked to write between 100 and 150 actual items and submit them to the Department of Testing and Measurement. Each and every item submitted is prepared for professional review by the Department of Testing and Measurement. Each item writer is assigned a coded number as well as every item submitted.



### • Reviewing Committees

With anonymity of the item writer assured, each item is reviewed by a committee focused on producing the EPT. This committee usually consists of three members: (1) a field specialist, (2) a specialist in measurement and (3) a neutral person who may be an advocate for the test-taker, the parents of the test-taker, or the society at large. The Reviewing Committee scrutinizes each item for the following: content, domain, bias towards sex or region, difficulty, creativity, suitability of each item's stem and/or choices. Beyond that, the EPT committee decides if the designated CEFR level is accurate and reflects the criteria for that level descriptor (A1, A2, B1, B2) while closely following adequate procedures and consulting the sources mentioned above as necessary.

### 7. Statistical Criteria

Items are evaluated statistically using both Classical Test Theory (CTT) and Item Response Theory (IRT) models. Items are included if their CTT difficulty is reasonable (average difficulty for the total test is around 0.5) and their discrimination is around 0.3. They also have to meet the criteria of the IRT three-parameter model:

- good discrimination (above 0.50),
- coverage of the ability spectrum,
- low guessing parameter value.

### 8. Reviewing Committee decisions

The Committee then decides whether to accept each item as submitted, modify the item, change the CEFR level descriptor and/or reject the item. This decision is based on charts constructed by the Department of Testing and Measurements and on their verbal instructions and reminders, keeping in mind the unique requirements of the EPT. All items are then stored and a battery is in place.

### 9. EPT Reliability and Validity

EPT reliability for the first version is 0.93, which indicates that it is highly reliable. Based on a sample group of 286 students from the Yanbu' Industrial College, initial validity was calculated for the relationship between the EPT score and the center's Standardized Test of English Proficiency (STEP). The findings show that EPT correlated at 0.79 with STEP which indicates significant correlation. Furthermore, the study was repeated with another sample group of 313 students from Saudi ARAMCO. Again, the findings show that EPT correlated at 0.87 with STEP. From these studies one can comfortably conclude that EPT enjoys a significant degree of convergent validity and that it measures the same traits that STEP measures making it highly feasible for institutions to use STEP as an exit exam from their intensive English programs.

## 10. EPT Sample Items

Structure (ST)	A1
----------------	----

1. **A:** \_\_\_\_\_ you tired?

**B:** No, I'm not.

A Is

B Are

C Does

D Do

Structure (ST)	A2
----------------	----

2. **A:** How old are you?

**B:** I'm 22.

**A:** So, you're \_\_\_\_\_ than me. I'm 21.

A older

B the older

C oldest

D the oldest

Structure (ST)	B1
----------------	----

3. **A:** 'I'll go out to dinner with my family tonight.'

**B:** 'What did he say?'

**C:** 'He said that he \_\_\_\_\_ out to dinner with his family.'

A goes

B going

C would go

D should go



Structure (ST)

B2

4. The family \_\_\_\_\_ in their new home long when the bathroom began to flood.

- |   |                      |   |                     |
|---|----------------------|---|---------------------|
| A | have not been living | B | had not been living |
| C | aren't living        | D | weren't living      |

Reading Comprehension (RC)

A1

Read the text and answer question 5.



5. Number '21' means \_\_\_\_\_.

- |   |      |   |       |
|---|------|---|-------|
| A | age  | B | date  |
| C | time | D | money |



Reading Comprehension (RC)

A2

Read the text and answer question 6.

A: Good evening, sir.

B: Hello, I have booked a room. My name's Khalid Ahmad.

A: Are you staying for three nights?

B: Yes, that's right.

A: Can I have your passport, please?

B: Just a moment. Here you are.

A: Could you sign here, please? Are you paying cash or by credit card?

B: Cash.

A: Here's your key. It's room 425, on the fourth floor.

B: Thank you

6. Khalid Ahmad \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A arrived alone                | B <b>DOESN'T</b> have a booking    |
| C is paying by cash and credit | D <b>DOESN'T</b> have his passport |

Reading Comprehension (RC)

B1

Read the text and answer question 7.

The financial crisis experienced throughout the world in the 1930s is known as the Great Depression. It lasted ten years and began when stock prices began to fall fast in America. Many industries, including banks, closed. The problems spread to Europe because of the close business connections between the two continents since the end of World War One.

7. The Great Depression is the name of \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| A | problems with the world financial system.  |
| B | the connection between America and Europe. |
| C | problems with the American stock market.   |
| D | problems with American banks.              |



Reading Comprehension (RC)

B2

Read the text and answer question 8.

Whales are the largest animals on earth. Since they are so large, they spend almost all of their time searching for food.

8. From the information in the passage above, the only statement that can be inferred to be **TRUE** is:

- A Whales are bigger than elephants.
- B Most of the time whales are sleeping.
- C Sometimes whales **DON'T** get enough food.
- D Whales are big because they eat too much.

Compositional Analysis

A1

9. I usually drink tea or coffee in the morning, \_\_\_\_\_ today I'm drinking orange juice.

- A or
- B but
- C and
- D because

Compositional Analysis

A2

10. Choose the sentence with the **RIGHT CAPITAL LETTERS**.

- A sara told her brother muhammad to study.
- B sara told her brother Muhammad to study.
- C Sara told her brother Muhammad to study.
- D Sara told her brother muhammad to study.



Compositional Analysis

B1

11. Choose the BEST WAY to make the sentences into a paragraph.

- (1) Prince Abdulaziz has won many racing competitions since then.
- (2) He has always enjoyed sports and began racing cars from a very young age.
- (3) Prince Abdulaziz Bin Turki is one of Saudi Arabia's most famous sportsmen.
- (4) So, he went to the BMW racing school in Bahrain in 2005.

A (1), (3), (2), (4)

B (3), (2), (4), (1)

C (3), (4), (2), (1)

D (1), (4), (3), (2)

Compositional Analysis

B2

12. The curtains were not only too long \_\_\_\_\_ also too wide.

A for

B or

C but

D yet



## Answer Key

Question no.	Answer
1	B
2	A
3	C
4	B
5	A
6	A
7	A
8	A
9	B
10	C
11	B
12	C



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To be an international reference in the field of measurement and evaluation.

## The Center's **Mission**

To provide comprehensive and integrated solutions that scientifically measure and evaluate knowledge, skills and aptitude with the purpose of achieving fairness, maintaining quality and satisfying development needs.

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