



## Kev's English Podcast: Episode 9: How to assess your English Level...

Hello, in this episode I talk about assessment and how to find out what you can really do in English. I talk about the various exam options and give some ideas for how you can assess yourself.

My links..

If you want lessons, click here <https://www.italki.com/en/teacher/1078268>

If you want to see my videos, click here <https://www.youtube.com/@TheEnglishNative>

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Hello and welcome to Kev's English Podcast, Real English, every week.

Hello there, welcome to Kev's English Podcast, episode number nine. So this episode is kind of a follow-on from something I was talking about last week and indeed in previous weeks and I was thinking about this particular topic about assessment, means of assessment, of assessing your level in English because I'm about to start teaching a group class in person, something which I haven't done for quite a few years now so it should be quite interesting to say the least.

So in designing the curriculum what I had to do first was to assess the participants and then think about goals, outcomes, materials and the usual curriculum design criteria. So I'll talk about assessment first. So we need to describe your level of English.

Precision is essential. Everyday terms like beginner and fluent don't necessarily mean the same things to everyone. Similarly saying I'm B1 or B2 or intermediate or upper intermediate might not convey this information accurately either and it's perfectly possible to be like for example C1 advanced in reading but only B1 intermediate in speaking, you know because you've got listening, reading, writing, speaking.

Production and mediation. These are the usual terms that we use or usual criteria that we use to assess someone's ability. So while these terms are fine in general use in a professional setting or indeed in academia they don't make the cut so we need to differentiate between certifying your English level for yourself where accuracy may not be so important and for someone else such as a potential employer for instance.

So if you think about getting a certificate or some kind of proof of level we need to think about

exams. So there are many. Some of the most recognised you may have heard about you may even be taking them are the IELTS test, International English Language Testing System for university entrance and immigration purposes like if you want to go to uni in the UK or Australia say or if you want to emigrate to Canada for example.

IELTS test from the British Council or the IDP or TOEFL. The test of English as a foreign language that's mainly for America but other countries recognise it too these days and there's others PTE, Pearson Test of English mainly for Australia. OET, Occupational English Test for medical professionals.

I have quite a few students who are taking that and you know then you've got the Cambridge exams from the University of Cambridge the CPE, the Proficiency, the CAE, Advanced, FCE. They have quite a few and we've got some Business English exams also so there's quite a lot of choices there. Now the other thing is IELTS and TOEFL they only give you, although they're pretty popular and well known, they only give you a score with a two-year expiry date whereas the Cambridge exams are a certification.

It lasts a lifetime. You can stick it up on your office wall if you wish but many of these standardised tests are academic and the effort involved in taking them is prohibitive and possibly expensive especially if you want to assess yourself every year or two. Now what I want to talk about now, fortunately, there's another way which is what I was using in part with my new group of students for next week.

So I sent them my own grammar test but that's over tests, you know, one particular aspect. So what you can do is take a free English test. Now there's quite a few of these available on the internet.

There's English First, the EF Standard English Test, EF-SET. It's currently the only standardised test that measures all skills beginner to proficient in alignment with the CEFR which is a Common European Framework of Reference. That is A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 from beginner to proficient, advanced.

Okay so when you see anything A1, A2, B1, B2 etc that's a CEFR, Common European Framework of Reference. That's been around for 20 odd years now to standardise what A1, A2, B1, B2 actually means. You can download this if you just go and google CEFR.

You'll find the site or sites, they have a few, and you can download the self-assessment which I'll talk about in a minute. Anyway so back to the EF Standard English Test, EF-SET. It's like 50 minutes, it gives you a precise score, you can even get a certificate to put on your profile on LinkedIn say.

It's about two hours and it's considerably cheaper than taking TOEFL or IELTS test. There's other online exams too. The British Council, so if you go to [britishcouncil.org](http://britishcouncil.org) you'll find it there.

English Score, now that's an Android app. You download the app and it's about 40 minutes and will give you a score. Also University of Cambridge, if you go to [cambridgeenglish.org](http://cambridgeenglish.org) you can find some different examinations there for example.

So I recommend that you check those out. So you've got the EF Standard English Test, so if you search for in capitals EF-SET you'll find it. And if you go to the [britishcouncil.org](http://britishcouncil.org) you can find the installation for their app [cambridgeenglish.org](http://cambridgeenglish.org). So the Cambridge English exam.

Now the other thing is these exams, the British Council and Cambridge English are very

approximate. Okay so it'll give you some indication whether it's not perfect. Now there's another way which I mentioned.

Self-assessment using the CEFR grid. So these are from the Council of Europe. It's official self-assessment and you download one in your native language or in English and it's a series of can-do statements.

I can understand this, I can talk about that, I can do this, I can do that etc. If you take a look at it that will give you some good ideas there and you've got listening, reading, writing, production, mediation. So you can download that and that you know and go through the grid and self-assess.

Now you can try an online version if you wish. If you go to [tools.ecml.at](http://tools.ecml.at) you'll find it there as well. So you can either just google CEFR self-assessment and you should find several pages that will direct you.

Okay so I would do kind of both. I would take a test and I'll try self-assessment but the thing is and this is the the crux of the matter, what a lot of these tests do not tell you is what to improve, know how to do it. For that you will need a teacher, someone who can point you down the right path, interpret the score, give you correct feedback and guide you.

So what exams I keep saying to my IELTS students, I get quite a lot of them on italki and they're constantly testing. You're doing all these mock tests, test, test, test, test, test and what I say to them is that well testing is fine but it just gives you a score. It doesn't tell you why that was the answer.

You need to know what you did right, what you got wrong, why you got it wrong and what can you do to make it right. So you need some feedback, someone to give you some suggestions, direct you some to some resources or some sites, you know. So that's what I would recommend.

So you can do some online exams. There's quite a few. There's the ones I mentioned on just simply free English online level test.

You'll get hundreds of pages, all right, so you can try those but most of them will just give you URA1, URB2. It won't actually break it down and tell you what you did right or what you did wrong. So it's only useful for some extent and if you try the academic exams such as Alex TOEFL or the Cambridge ones again.

Now the Cambridge ones are different from the Alex and the TOEFL. They actually break it down but still it's not as precise as to why or what or where why you got the incorrect answers. So still tests are useful.

Self-assessment is useful also but I would use them in conjunction with some professional teacher who knows grammar, linguistics, the vocabulary. I can help you out and say right this is your current score, okay, this indicates that you may be B1 or B2 etc but if you want to improve which I would imagine you do otherwise you wouldn't be listening to this now or taking any English lessons. So if you want to improve testing that's just a starting point, that's the first step.

It's like this new course I mentioned self-assessment. I sent them the self-assessment grid, I sent them my own grammar test, that's just the start. That's just to find out what they know now and what their lack of knowledge is and what they need to do and then during the however long the course will take, we haven't decided that yet, then hopefully they will improve.

So self-assessment and testing, interesting, interesting thing. I would definitely try it but bear in

mind what I said. So I hope that helps, I'll see you next time.

If you want, if you are listening to this online talkie, if you want to send me a message, if you've got any questions, feel free to check out my teacher profile, send me a message and I'll be glad to help. Okay so thanks for that and see you next time for Kevin's English Podcast episode 10.