

### How many lessons do you need ?

A typical language course lasts around 38 weeks from early to mid-September to the end of June the following year. Students need between 80 and 100 hours of tuition in order to move from one level to another (see the level table). This figure is very general, of course, and students vary enormously in their capacity to understand, retain and use new language.

Ideally speaking from a pedagogical point of view, students need to have a couple of lessons a week (not on adjacent days) of about 90 minutes each. This gives them three hours a week and over the 38 week period (given that they might have to miss a few lessons because of illness or travel) they have enough time to progress comfortably from one level to the next.

If they are studying for an exam, these three hours a week will give them the necessary input/practice time to finish a course and pass an exam without too much pressure and stress at the last moment. With this time, students can feel their progress, they gain in confidence and this leads to further success with the language. Colleagues will often comment on their increased fluency.

Companies are often unable to give students three hours a week of courses (financial and time constraints are the most obvious reasons). Thus students are sometimes expected to progress quickly in the language with as little as one hour of input from a teacher and little or no additional practice time outside of class. This often makes it impossible for them to reach their goal in the limited time given.

### How many students in a group ?

The number of participants in the group also plays a crucial role in the learning process. A group course of four or six students being preferable to a larger group of eight, ten or even more. The fewer the number of participants, the more time each student has to express himself/herself, ask questions, etc. Schools with large classes will find that the number drops significantly as students become discouraged with their progress and frustrated with not being able to express themselves at length and drop out.

### Are you in the right group ?

Testing procedures at the beginning (and during and at the end) of the course are vital. Students will make less progress if they are in a group with others who are much more or less advanced than they. The more advanced students will feel they are wasting their time, the less advanced students will feel frustrated and pressurised. There are many different types of test that can be given at the end of a course in order to evaluate accurately the progress of the student. BULATS and the TOEIC are just two of these.

### Are you motivated ?

Many factors influence a student's potential for learning: age, motivation, background, leisure time, etc. Students who take every opportunity to listen to, read and speak the target language between lessons will make faster progress than students who make less effort. Simply doing or not doing homework also makes a great difference. Homework often allows the student to consolidate what was introduced or practised in the lesson.

## Levels ? What does it mean ?

Language competence can be divided into roughly six levels and these are given different names by different associations (1, 2, 3 ... A1, A2, B1 ...), but most language schools recognise and work around these levels, whatever name they give them.

Below is a rough summary of the six different levels, the starting level of the student and what they can achieve after, ideally, a course of 80 to 100 hours. The suggested exams are all for students studying English who wish to take a Cambridge exam, either general or business.

Levels		Abilities	End of course exam
<b>0</b>	Beginner & False beginner	Beginners have no previous knowledge of the language. False-beginners have had some basic training, either of short duration or a long time ago (these students will learn faster than the true beginners). At the end of the course, all these students should be able to take part in a very simple, factual talk, and complete simple forms of a familiar nature with numbers and letters.	
<b>1</b>	Elementary	These students are consolidating the basic structures and widening their vocabulary. At the end of their course, they should be able to understand short, basic reports and write simple, factual notes or letters. They will be able to state simple requirements at work.	KET (Key English Test)
<b>2</b>	Pre-intermediate	These students are building on what they already know and becoming more at ease in the language. They can communicate in the language on a simple, professional level (using predictable, familiar vocabulary), can express opinions in a simple way and can understand instructions. In a meeting, they should be able to make simple notes.	PET (Preliminary English Test) or BEC (Business English Certificate) Preliminary level
<b>3</b>	Intermediate	At this level, students can take and pass on most types of messages, can follow or give a talk on a work-related topic and can deal with routine requests for goods or services (either by mail or on the phone). They are reasonably at ease when speaking the language although they will still make grammatical and lexical mistakes.	BEC Vantage or FCE (First Certificate in English)
<b>4</b>	Upper -intermediate	At the end of their course, students should be able to follow and facilitate meetings, contributing effectively and arguing for or against a case. They will be able to handle a wide range of different situations on the phone, by mail or in person. They will be able to read quickly and understand more complicated work-related documents.	CAE (Cambridge Advanced Exam) The better students should be able to pass the BEC Higher (which is harder than the CAE, but not quite as difficult as the Proficiency.)
<b>5</b>	Advanced	These students are very much at ease in the language. They can deal confidently with complex documents, sensitive telephone calls, and hostile meetings. These students should be as effective in the work place as a native speaker.	BEC Higher or CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English)