

Accredited by



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SPANISH-AMERICAN INSTITUTE

A Not-For-Profit, Equal Educational Opportunity Language School

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Serving International Students In New York City Since 1955

ESL-Plus Course of Study Interpretation of Placement Scale with Proficiency Descriptors Modified October 2017 Interpretation of Scale

When students come to the Spanish-American Institute, they are given an ESL Placement Test, CELSA2. Based on their scores, they are placed into the following levels:

- Level One
- Level Two
- Level Three
- Level Four
- Level Five
- Level Six

The descriptors below indicate the skills or abilities students possess at each of those levels, based on their placement.

In order to progress to the next level, students must demonstrate proficiency of the skills (Student Learning Outcomes) for each course. You can demonstrate your skills by earning a 70% or higher in our course assessments.

Proficiency Descriptors

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Table 1 Proficiency Descriptors: Low Beginning/ Level One

| Level | Proficiency Descriptors for entrance: | Interpretation of Achievement Scale Students who complete this level can... |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Low Beginning/ Level One</p> | <p>Can understand only isolated words or very simple learned phrases. Individual has no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language. May be able to recognize and copy letters, numbers and a few words (e.g. own name). May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language. Individual may have difficulty using a writing instrument. Individual functions minimally or not at all in English and can communicate only through gestures or a few isolated words. May recognize only common words, signs or symbols (e.g., name, stop sign, product logos). Can handle only very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English. May have no knowledge or use of computers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State simple descriptions of people, places, routines, likes and dislikes. • Respond appropriately to simple questions regarding personal information, present activities, past activities and home, family, work and hobbies. • Recognize and identify key ideas in a short passage relating to self, home, family, work, and hobbies. • Write simple sentences and compound sentences relating to self, home, family, work, hobbies and present and past activities. |

Table 2 Proficiency Descriptors: High Beginning/Level Two

| Level | Proficiency Descriptors for entrance: | Interpretation of Achievement Scale Students who complete this level can... |
|---|--|--|
| <p>High Beginning/Level Two</p> | <p>Individual can understand basic greetings, simple phrases and commands. Can understand simple questions related to personal information, spoken slowly and with repetition. Understands a limited number of words related to immediate needs and can respond with simple learned phrases to some common questions related to routine survival situations. Speaks slowly and with difficulty. Demonstrates little or no control over grammar. Individual can read numbers and letters and some common sight words. May be able to sound out simple words. Can read and write some familiar words and phrases, but has a limited understanding of connected prose in English. Can write basic personal information (e.g., name, address, telephone number) and can complete simple forms that elicit this information.</p> <p>Individual functions with difficulty in social situations and in situations related to immediate needs. Can provide limited personal information on simple forms, and can read very simple common forms of print found in the home and environment, such as product names. Can handle routine entry level jobs that require very simple written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated. May have limited knowledge and experience with computers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express simple statements and questions in the present, past and future time frame related to basic needs and common activities, using previously learned phrases. • Communicate needs and activities using appropriate time frame and vocabulary. • Employ simple clarification requests to determine meaning of question or statement. • Recognize words that signal differences between present, past and future. • Respond appropriately using present, past and future on familiar topics. • Interpret short paragraphs on familiar topics. • Identify sequence of events in short readings. • Examine authentic documents to locate specific information. • Produce a paragraph on a familiar topic. |

Table 3 Proficiency Descriptors: Low Intermediate/ Level Three

| Level | Proficiency Descriptors for entrance: | Interpretation of Achievement Scale Students who complete this level can... |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Low Intermediate/Level Three</p> | <p>Individual can understand common words, simple phrases, and sentences containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with some repetition. Individual can respond to simple questions about personal everyday activities, and can express immediate needs, using simple learned phrases or short sentences. Shows limited control of grammar. Individual can read most sight words, and many other common words. Can read familiar phrases and simple sentences but has a limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading. Individual can write some simple sentences with limited vocabulary. Meaning may be unclear. Writing shows very little control of basic grammar, capitalization and punctuation and has many spelling errors.</p> <p>Individual can function in some situations related to immediate needs and in familiar social situations. Can provide basic personal information on simple forms and recognizes simple common forms of print found in the home, workplace and community. Can handle routine entry level jobs requiring basic written or oral English communication and in which job tasks can be demonstrated. May have limited knowledge or experience using computers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize main ideas and details in conversations and short lectures. • Communicate needs, activities and events using appropriate time frame and vocabulary. • Employ clarification strategies. • Apply linguistic, socio-cultural and other background knowledge and strategies to understand the intent of a speaker and to respond appropriately. • Speak so others can understand by recalling and using limited vocabulary including words related to common, everyday topics, personal experience, know and use basic grammar and sentence structure and appropriate level of formality. • Interpret short paragraphs on familiar topics. • Predict meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary with contextual clues. • Identify sequence of events in short readings. • Examine authentic documents to locate specific information. • Convey ideas in a paragraph with detailed information. |

Table 4 Proficiency Descriptors: High Intermediate/Level Four

| Level | Proficiency Descriptors for entrance: | Interpretation of Achievement Scale Students who complete this level can... |
|--|---|---|
| <p>High Intermediate/ Level Four</p> | <p>Individual expresses basic survival needs and participates in some routine social conversations, although with some difficulty. Understands simple learned phrases easily and some new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with repetition. Asks and responds to questions in familiar contexts. Has some control of basic grammar. Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing familiar vocabulary. Individual can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations but may lack variety in sentence structure, clarity and focus of writing. Shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and spelling. Uses some punctuation consistently (e.g., periods, commas, question marks, capitalization, etc.) Individual can interpret simple directions, schedules, signs, and maps, etc. Completes simple forms but needs support on some documents that are not simplified. Can handle routine entry level jobs that involve some written or oral English communication but in which job tasks can be clarified orally or through demonstration. Individual may be able to use simple computer programs and can perform a sequence of routine tasks given directions (e.g., fax machine, computer).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State detailed descriptions of events, activities and personal experiences. • Identify main ideas and some details of extended conversations and broadcasts. • Employ clarification strategies. • Speak so others can understand to recall and use high-frequency vocabulary, display control of basic grammar and a variety of sentence types. • Read with understanding to decode and recognize most everyday and some unfamiliar words. • Identify sequence of events in extensive readings. • Examine and analyze authentic documents to locate specific information. • Determine the purpose and audience for communicating in writing. • Convey ideas in a short essay with detailed information. • Identify and modify sentences for time frame errors and mechanics, such as spelling, punctuation and capitalization. |

Table 5 Proficiency Descriptors: Low Advanced/Level Five

| Level | Proficiency Descriptors for entrance: | Interpretation of Achievement Scale Students who complete this level can... |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Low Advanced/ Level Five</p> | <p>Individual participates in conversation in familiar social situations. Communicates basic needs with some help and clarification. Understands learned phrases and new phrases containing familiar vocabulary. Attempts to use new language but may be hesitant and rely on descriptions and concrete terms. May have inconsistent control of more complex grammar.</p> <p>Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, logical order). Can use word analysis skills and context clues to determine meaning with texts on familiar subjects. Individual can write simple paragraphs with main idea and supporting details on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures. Can self- and peer-edit for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Individual can meet basic survival and social demands, and can follow some simple oral and written instructions. Has some ability to communicate on the telephone on familiar subjects. Can write messages and notes related to basic needs and complete basic medical forms and job applications. Can handle jobs that involve basic oral instructions and written communication in tasks that can be clarified orally. Individual can work with or learn basic computer software, such as word processing, and can follow simple instructions for using technology.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State detailed descriptions of events, activities and experiences. • Identify main ideas and details of extended conversations, lectures and broadcasts. • Apply linguistic, socio-cultural and other background knowledge and strategies to understand fully the literal and implied intent of the speaker. • Employ clarification strategies. • Respond timely and appropriately using present, past and future and modal forms on social, and professional topics. • Interpret short paragraphs on social, professional and school topics. • Speak so others can understand to recall and use sufficient wide-ranging vocabulary as well as control of basic grammar and a variety of sentence types. • Predict meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary with contextual clues. • Identify sequence of events in extensive readings and lectures. • Examine and analyze authentic documents to locate specific detailed information. • Convey ideas in an essay. • Identify and modify written work for structural errors and mechanics, such as spelling, punctuation and capitalization. |

Table 6 Proficiency Descriptors: High Advanced/Level Six

| Level | Proficiency Descriptors for entrance: | Interpretation of Achievement Scale Students who complete this level can... |
|---|---|---|
| <p>High Advanced/ Level Six</p> | <p>Individual can understand and communicate in a variety of contexts related to daily life and work. Can understand and participate in conversation on a variety of everyday subjects, including some unfamiliar vocabulary, but may need repetition or rewording. Can clarify own or others' meaning by rewording. Can understand the main points of simple discussions and informational communication in familiar contexts. Shows some ability to go beyond learned patterns and construct new sentences. Shows control of basic grammar but has difficulty using more complex structures. Has some basic fluency of speech.</p> <p>Individual can read moderately complex text related to life roles and descriptions and narratives from authentic materials on familiar subjects. Uses context and word analysis skills to understand vocabulary, and uses multiple strategies to understand unfamiliar texts. Can make inferences, predictions, and compare and contrast information in familiar texts. Individual can write multi-paragraph text (e.g., organizes and develops ideas with clear introduction, body, and conclusion), using some complex grammar and a variety of sentence structures. Makes some grammar and spelling errors. Uses a range of vocabulary.</p> <p>Individual can function independently to meet most survival needs and to use English in routine social and work situations. Can communicate on the telephone on familiar subjects. Understands radio and television on familiar topics. Can interpret routine charts, tables and graphs and can complete forms and handle work demands that require non- technical oral and written instructions and routine interaction with the public. Individual can use common software, learn new basic applications, and select the correct basic technology in familiar situations.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State detailed descriptions of events, activities and experiences with both fluency and clarity. • Identify main ideas, and supporting details of extended conversations, lectures and broadcasts. • Employ discourse connectors. • Use advanced strategies to repair gaps in understanding, to ask questions to deepen comprehension and to give feedback appropriate to the situation. • Respond timely and appropriately using a wide variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary. • Interpret readings on social, professional and school topics. • Predict content in readings. • Identify events and activities in extensive readings and lectures. • Examine, analyze and synthesize authentic documents to locate specific detailed information. • Convey ideas in an organized essay with a clear thesis, supporting ideas and details. • Identify and modify written work for organizational and grammatical errors and mechanics, such as spelling, punctuation and capitalization. |

