For more information about National Geographic Learning Online Placement, visit https://eltngl.com/sites/onlineplacement.

Q: **Who developed the National Geographic Learning Online Placement Test?**

A: National Geographic Learning gathered a wide range of internal and external assessment specialists (including customers, our own editorial teams, a specialized assessment R&D partner, and an assessment consultant) to advise on and develop the placement test.

National Geographic Learning's assessment partner is LT123, a highly experienced and expert consultancy group focused on English language assessment, learning, and training materials. LT123 has worked with leading publishers, exam boards, and universities worldwide. Additionally, assessment consultant Anne Katz, Ph.D. engaged with our R&D team throughout development to ensure best practices in test design were followed. Finally, an expert panel of customers from around the world provided critical input into the design of the test, score report, and support materials.

Q: **How many questions are in the National Geographic Learning Online Placement Test database?**

A: The Online Placement Test database includes a broad range of questions, all of which reflect real-world contexts and themes. They have all undergone rigorous user testing to ensure validity. A third-party validation report documenting the efficacy of the test items and the ability of the test to accurately place students into one of 14 CEFR-linked ability bands is available on the Companion Site. The database of test items will be updated, refined, and expanded over time and in response to market feedback.

Q: **How does the test work?**

A: The Online Placement Test is a multi-stage adaptive test.

- After students answer an initial set of questions that assess their lexico-grammatical (vocabulary and grammar) knowledge, they are routed into one of two modules in the second stage.
- In the second stage, students undergo an initial assessment of reading and listening skills. Their responses determine which level of questions they see in the third stage.
- In the third stage, reading and listening skills are assessed by a narrower set of items in order to achieve a precise indication of the students' level of ability in these two skills. The students' overall language ability is calculated using the outcomes from all three stages to place them in one of 14 CEFR-linked bands.
- Finally, students complete a speaking task, which can be used by institutions for further evaluation of their level of ability.

Q: **With how many students – and where in the world – has field testing been conducted?**

A: Rigorous field testing has been conducted with thousands of representative examinees from all over the world. Students from Bahrain, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Japan, Mexico, Oman, Peru, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, the United States, and Vietnam participated in field testing.

Q: **Is the Online Placement Test available in American English, British English, or both?**

A: Test content has been written to be accessible to learners of both American and British English. Reading and listening texts are set in international contexts and speakers in the recordings have a wide range of easily comprehensible accents.

Q: **Does the test assess speaking?**

A: Although speaking is not assessed directly in the test, all students are required to complete three recorded speaking tasks which are assigned according to their performance in the language use, reading, and listening questions. The recordings are made available to the school assessment team and/or teachers, along with guidance on how to evaluate a student's performance against CEFR speaking descriptors. As an additional option, institutions may invite students to complete an interview, either in person or through video-conferencing software.

Q: **How should the three speaking responses be reviewed and evaluated?**

A: Guidelines and assessment criteria for reviewing the speaking responses are available on the Companion Site. Guidelines offer suggestions for how to apply the criteria and which criteria are more relevant for each of the different speaking samples (personal information, reasons for studying, picture description). Listening to a student's speech sample increases the reliability of the test, as the speaking performance provides more data about the student. Where a decision on a borderline candidate is needed, listening to their speech sample is the best way to help make that decision.

Q: **What guidelines are provided for schools that wish to conduct optional student interviews as part of the placement process?**

A: Guidelines on how to carry out optional interviews with individual students are available on the Companion Site. These include guidance on how to set up and carry out the optional interviews and sample tasks at each CEFR ability level (A1-C1).

Q: **Why does the test include 14 level bands? How can programs with fewer than 14 ability levels take advantage of this finely-leveled system?**

A: The CEFR bands have been sub-divided between A1 and B2 in order to give a more precise indication of a student's performance. This reflects the 'plus levels' which are used in the CEFR descriptor scales and which allow users to apply practical cut-off points to suit their specific situation. Depending on the number of classes and students, a school could place students in classes based on one, two, or more sub-levels. For example, a school with six ability levels between A1 and B2 might place students as follows:

Level 1: Pre-A1, A1.1   Level 4: A2.3, B1.1

Level 2: A1.2, A1.3   Level 5: B1.2, B1.3

Level 3: A2.1, A2.2   Level 6: B2.1, B2.2, B2.3

This finely-leveled system allows for greater autonomy for programs and more precise placement.

Q: **How has the accuracy of placement into 14 level bands been verified?**

A: Extensive research and validation work have been carried out to make sure that candidates are accurately placed into the appropriate CEFR level. Test items were written by assessment specialists to target specific CEFR sub-levels and each item's level was verified by a panel of expert judges. Additionally, statistical analyses have been carried out on the results of extensive field testing to make sure that each candidate is placed into the correct CEFR level. Our validation analyses also report on the validity of the items, including questions around gender and cultural bias in the content, and the accuracy of the placement algorithm.

Q: **What security measures have you incorporated into the exam?**

A: The test design reduces security risks. As students are routed to a bucket of questions most appropriate to their level, they receive different sets of questions. Questions are selected from a large bank of items, meaning that there are multiple possible buckets at each stage. Supervision guidelines are supplied on the Companion Site and centers are encouraged to adhere to the directives contained in those guidelines. The recorded speaking task can also be used to check students' identity.

Q: **How does the test differentiate between C1 and C2 students and place them accurately?**

A: The test has been designed and written to contain items up to C1 level. A top-scoring student on the Online Placement Test is at C1 level, and as such they may be able to perform beyond C1. In order to establish whether a student can perform at C2 level, they would need to carry out tasks which are designed and written at that level.

Q: **Who receives the score reports – students, teachers, administrators, or all the above?**

A: The score report has been designed with teachers and administrators as the primary audience. It is intended to provide them with specific information about a students performance and ability. The score report is supported by additional documentation which helps teachers to interpret a student's results. This ensures the most suitable learning pathway for each student. Some institutions may also wish to provide students with score reports. For more information about the student facing report, please go to **learn.nglelt.com**, sign in to your teacher account, and open Gradebook Preferences.

Q: **Why is writing not assessed in the National Geographic Learning Online Placement Test?**

A: The aim of the Online Placement Test is to provide an objectively-marked test that can accurately place students in the most appropriate language course for their level. Testing the three language areas of language knowledge and use, reading, and listening allows for a short, accessible and semi-adaptive test with immediate results. The assessment of writing requires time and trained examiners, which would significantly extend the test time and delay the delivery of test results.

Q:

Why is a raw score not reported, only a CEFR band?

A:

The Online Placement Test is a multi-stage adaptive test. This means each student completes a set of tasks which best match their level of English. Raw scores, such as 32/40, are not meaningful to report, as students of varying ability may arrive at that score, but each student would have completed items of different levels of difficulty. Instead of raw scores, statistical analyses are used to estimate students' ability and arrive at their CEFR band.

Q:

Which institutions participated in user testing, and in which countries?

A:

The test was validated through trialing with thousands of students from around the world. We would like to acknowledge the following institutions for their participation in our validation/ calibration study and thank them for their contributions:

Country	Institution	Consultant
Bahrain	University of Bahrain	Abubaker Alhitty
Canada	ILSC Language Schools	Cheryl House
Chile	Universidad Mayor	Margarita Valle
China	Meten International English Group	Louis Liu
Colombia	Fundación Universitaria Compensar	Diana Rocío Gómez Páez
Colombia	Universidad de La Sabana	Ivonne González
Costa Rica	Centro Cultural Costarricense Norte Americano	Lilly Sevilla
Costa Rica	Tecnológico de Costa Rica	Laura Masis Vega
Japan	Konan University	Keiko Yoshida
Japan	Waseda University	Yasunari Harada
Mexico	Instituto Politécnico Nacional	Alejandro Menendez
Mexico	The Anglo Mexican Foundation	Junuen Mondragon
Mexico	Universidad Valle de México	Alejandra P. Barrera
Oman	A'Sharqiyah University	Safaa Marnaoui
Oman	Modern College of Business & Science	Moez Lamti
Peru	Universidad Católica San Pablo	Delia Arias Alvarez
Romania	Asociatia Vaslui Institute for Lifelong Learning	Loredana Adam
Romania	Flying Colours	Laura Plocon
Ukraine	PLS Klever Club	Natalia Gaidei
Ukraine	PLS Progress	Alla Pysanka
United States	Approach International Language Center	Ghazal Kalia
United States	FLS International Boston Commons	Rachel Kadish
United States	FELT NYC	Caroline McKinnon
United States	International School of Advanced Learning	Sasha Bogdanovskaya
United States	Language On Schools	Richard McDorman
United States	Long Island University Brooklyn Campus	Noga La'or
United States	Salem State University	Shawn Wolfe
Vietnam	Van Lang University	Pham Thi Nhu Y