ESL/ESOL Standards by Skill

Listening, Speaking, Pronunciation
Reading, Writing, Grammar

Content Standards by Skills

Learners in an Adult ESL/ESOL class often have different levels of proficiency. Some learners may have stronger oral/aural skills while others may excel in reading/writing. This section, ESL/ESOL Standards by Skills, has a sequenced list of skills from Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy to Advanced ESL/ESOL in each of the skill areas.

If learners in a Beginning level class have stronger literacy skills, the instructor can consult the Reading and Writing skills for the Intermediate level. Conversely, there might be some learners in a High Intermediate or Advanced class who are very proficient verbally, but who may not have had the opportunity to study formally ESL/ESOL. These students may need basic reading, writing and grammar skill development.

The skill areas included are the following:
- Listening Skills
- Speaking Skills
- Pronunciation
- Reading Skills
- Writing Skills
- Grammar

LISTENING SKILLS

LEVELS	LISTENING SKILLS[*]

Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy	*Beginning Literacy ESL/ESOL learners may demonstrate listening comprehension non-verbally*
	
	    Recognize letters of the alphabet
	    Recognize cardinal and ordinal numbers
	    Recognize/respond to basic survival vocabulary, greetings, and polite expressions (e.g. thank you, please, you're welcome)
	    Respond to very simple questions in familiar contexts (e.g., personal information)
	    Follow simple one-step directions
	    Respond to simple requests for repetition (e.g. nod head, use body language, use the phrase I don't understand)

Low Beginning ESL/ESOL	*Low Beginning ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	
	    Recognize letters of words when spelled or dictated
	    Recognize/respond to greetings and polite expressions in routine and familiar settings
	    Recognize/respond to simple questions/statements in familiar contexts (e.g., weather, family, employment)
	    Follow one-step directions in a familiar context to complete a simple task
	    Identify simple expressions indicating lack of understanding
	    Recognize/respond to requests for repetition
	    Recognize/respond to personal information questions

High Beginning ESL/ESOL	*High Beginning ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	
	    Listen for key vocabulary words in contextualized conversations
	    Recognize common words when spelled or dictated
	    Recognize/respond to alternative forms of basic questions in familiar contexts
	    Follow simple multi-step directions and instructions
	    Identify simple expressions indicating lack of understanding

Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	
	    Respond to statements, questions and commands using some expanded vocabulary
	    Respond to simple social conversation in familiar contexts (e.g., shopping, employment, school)
	    Follow simple two-step directions and instructions with some detail
	    Identify simple information from a conversation or in familiar contexts (i.e., listen with a purpose)
	    Use context clues to get main ideas and to identify details
	    Respond to simple requests for clarification
	    Distinguish language use in informal versus simple formal situations (i.e., pay attention to register)

High Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*High Intermediate ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	
	    Interpret statements, questions and commands in a variety of familiar situations
	    Follow multi-step directions to a specific location
	    Follow multi-step instructions on how to do something
	    Interpret information from a conversation and in a variety of contexts (e.g., in person, on telephone, over announcement)
	    Identify key information/details in a description
	    Respond to requests for clarification and elaboration
	    Understand more complex structures
	    Distinguish between facts and opinions in conversation
	    Recognize/respond to some common idioms

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[*] Respond/Recognize -- especially at the beginning levels, learners may demonstrate listening comprehension non-verbally. For example, extending one's hand and smiling in response to greetings or pointing to a picture/word to demonstrate understanding

LEVELS	LISTENING SKILLS[*]
Advanced ESL/ESOL	*Advanced ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	Respond to topics beyond immediate survival needs (e.g., news and events in the workplace or community)
	Follow detailed multi-step directions and instructions in familiar situations
	Respond to requests for clarification, elaboration, opinion, etc.
	Identify details in a description (e.g., of a person, place or an event)
	Obtain detailed information in a variety of contexts (e.g., from conversation or broadcast)
	Recognize/respond appropriately to social cues in conversation in familiar contexts
	Recognize/respond to conversational openers/closures and polite expressions as used by native speakers (e.g., "I have to get going….", "I'd rather not…", "How about going to…")
	Recognize/respond to idiomatic expressions in familiar situations

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[*] Respond/Recognize -- especially at the beginning levels, learners can demonstrate listening comprehension non-verbally. For example, extending one's hand and smiling in response to greetings or pointing to a picture/word to demonstrate understanding

SPEAKING SKILLS

LEVELS	SPEAKING SKILLS

Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy	*Beginning Literacy ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. .*
	     Identify individual letters
	     Use cardinal and ordinal numbers (e.g., begin to distinguish difference)
	     Greet others
	     Use basic vocabulary for social interaction
	     Ask simple questions in short phrases
	     Produce simple statements
	     Express lack of understanding
	     Respond to simple questions in a familiar situation
	     Ask for repetition (e.g., "What?" or "Today?")

Low Beginning ESL/ESOL	*Low Beginning ESL/ESOL learners will be able to demonstrate the following. . .*
	     Spell some familiar words
	     Use numbers appropriately to provide personal information
	     Produce and respond to common greetings, introductions, and polite expressions
	     Produce simple statements in routine and familiar situations
	     Use the telephone to make an emergency call
	     Respond to simple questions in familiar situations demonstrating some control of grammar

High Beginning ESL/ESOL	*High Beginning ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	     Ask simple questions to satisfy survival needs
	     Spell some sight words
	     Answers simple questions on everyday activities with some detail
	     Participates in short conversations on everyday activities using appropriate conversation skills and monitoring for listener comprehension
	     Give simple one-step instructions and directions
	     Expresses likes and dislikes
	     Express lack of understanding (e.g. speak slower, please rephrase, I don't understand)
	     Use the telephone to make an appointment

Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .* • Produce simple statements, questions, and commands using familiar vocabulary • Participate in routine social conversations in familiar contexts (e.g., shopping, employment, school) • Give simple two-step directions o • Retell a simple story • Use simple expressions of satisfaction/dissatisfaction and agreement/disagreement • Use simple expressions to express opinion • Express lack of understanding and ask for repetition or clarification Use appropriate language in both informal and simple formal situations

High Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*High Intermediate ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	     Produce statements, questions, and commands (i.e., interact) in less familiar contexts with some detail
	     Ask and answer questions – using complete sentences when appropriate
	     Give directions to a specific location
	     Provide two and three step instructions with detail on how to do something
	     Request information and express needs (e.g., in person or by phone)
	     Express satisfaction/dissatisfaction and agreement/disagreement
	     Provide simple descriptions (e.g., describe a person, place or event)
	     Express opinions and provide factual information

LEVELS	SPEAKING SKILLS
Advanced ESL/ESOL	*Advanced ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .* Participate in discussions on topics beyond immediate survival needs (e.g., local news) Explain concepts/ideas in organized manner using examples or details Tell anecdotal stories as a part of conversation Give detailed, multi-step directions and instructions in familiar settings Clarify utterances by rewording or repeating in order to be understood by the general public Select and report pertinent information (e.g., regarding an accident, change in procedure, etc.) Request specific information in person or by phone Use a variety of sentence patterns, new vocabulary, and high-frequency idioms in spontaneous conversation Participate in social interactions using the appropriate degree of formality Negotiate a solution/compromise Use persuasion in conversation

PRONUNCIATION SKILLS

Levels	PRONUNCIATION SKILLS
Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy	*The Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy learner will recognize and practice:* Chunks (words that often go together) and linking the words together [It's a ___ .//itza ___//] Letter-sound associations (phonemes) One- and two-syllable word patterns Syllable stress in numbers, days, months, etc. [THIRty verus thirTEEN]
Low Beginning ESL/ESOL	*The Low Beginning ESL/ESOL learner will:* Recognize/Reproduce chunks (words that often go together) and linking the words together [It's a ___. = Itza___.] Recognize/Reproduce letter-sound associations (phonemes) Recognize/Reproduce intonation for yes/no questions Recognize/Reproduce Intonation for Wh-questions
High Beginning ESL/ESOL	*The High Beginning ESL/ESOL learner will:* Recognize/Reproduce syllable stress of new vocabulary Recognize/Reproduce s-ending sounds: /s/, /z/ and /Iz/ Use intonation for yes/no questions Recognize/Reproduce pronunciation of chunks (words that often go together) and linking the words together
Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*The Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL learner will:* • Contrast/Produce phonemes needed to enhance comprehensibility (e.g., based on learners' needs -- /l/ vs /r/ or /th/ vs /t/) • Contrast/Produce stress of multi-syllabic words • Contrast/Produce short and long vowel sounds (based on learners' needs) • Recognize/Reproduce schwa sound used in unstressed syllables • Recognize/Reproduce s-ending sounds: /s/, /z/ and /Iz/ • Recognize/Reproduce past "-ed" ending sounds: /t/, /d/ and /Id/ • Recognize/Reproduce shift in meaning when using different emphases in sentence stress Contrast/Produce intonation difference for questions and sentences
High Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*The High Intermediate ESL/ESOL learner will:* Contrast/Produce phonemes needed to enhance comprehensibility (e.g., based on learners' needs -- /l/ vs. /r/ or /th/ vs. /t/) Contrast/Produce stress of multi-syllabic words Contrast/Produce short and long vowel sounds (based on learners' needs) Recognize/Reproduce schwa sound used in unstressed syllables Recognize shift in meanings when using different emphases in sentence stress Articulating word endings Produce intonation differences for questions and sentences Phrase words into "thought groups or chunks" and pause between the phrases
Advanced ESL/ESOL	*The Advanced ESL/ESOL learner will:* Produce stress of multi-syllabic words, using learned rules to guess stress of new words Phrase words into thought groups and pause between the phrases Demonstrate conversation management techniques, such as interrupting and "turn-taking"

READING SKILLS

LEVELS	READING SKILLS
Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy	*Beginning Literacy ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .* Identify upper and lower case letters of the English alphabet and numbers 0-100 Apply sound/symbol relationships to decode letters of the alphabet, consonant blends, and familiar short words Recognize personal information words in print (e.g., first/last name, address, telephone number, SSN, date of birth, sex, marital status) Recognize simple words and phrases related to immediate needs Read learned sentences Interpret simple signs and symbols in environment Read dates and analog/digital clock times Identify U.S. coins and currency and values Read prices Follow simple one-step directions and instructions that include pictures or modeling.
Low Beginning ESL/ESOL	*Low Beginning ESL/ESOL learners will be able to demonstrate the following. . .* Apply sound/symbol relationships to decode familiar words (e.g., high frequency words for life skills) Read cursive and printed materials Interpret words and symbols on everyday signs Scan for specific information on familiar documents (e.g., utility bill, pay stub). Follow some simple written instructions that include pictures or diagrams (e.g., food preparation, simplified prescriptions, care labels) Follow simple geographical directions on a simple map Read some common sight words Read simple sentences on a familiar topic.
High Beginning ESL/ESOL	*High Beginning ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .* Recognize alternate forms of basic information words on a personal information form (e.g., today's date/current date, birth date/date of birth, sex/gender). Read schedules and simple charts Follow simple written multi-step instructions (e.g., food preparation, simplified prescriptions, care labels) Read compound and complex sentences following punctuation cues Read short simplified paragraphs on a single topic with familiar vocabulary (e.g., a description of a person, place, or activity) Recognize base words, synonyms and antonyms Identify patterns and categorize words Read compound words and identify base word Use prediction as a reading strategy
Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .* Apply sound/symbol relationships to decode new words in context Apply simple context clues to determine the meaning of new words Recognize most standard words on a personal information form Locate a word, number or item in alphabetical or numerical order (e.g., phone book, dictionary) Comprehend simple and compound sentences in authentic materials Identify main idea, chronological order, and simple transitions in texts on familiar subjects Recognize prefixes, suffixes, homonyms, transition words, words with multiple meanings and some idioms Read and understand multi-paragraph selections from a variety of genres Read to compare and contrast information on familiar subjects

LEVELS	READING SKILLS

High Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*High Intermediate ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. .*
	    Determine meaning of new vocabulary using context clues and decoding skills
	    Read simple descriptions and narratives on authentic topics
	    Follow specific written directions/instructions to perform an activity
	    Skim for main idea and scan for detail in prose text and on documents
	    Interpret information in an authentic paragraph or text to answer a question
	    Identify main idea, supporting details and transitions in a paragraph or text
	    Identify fact and opinion in a text
	    Compare information presented in two or three different sources
	    Make inferences from familiar texts
	    Recognize common idioms
	    Identify a writer's purpose

Advanced ESL/ESOL	*Advanced ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	    Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words in text
	    Interpret factual materials (e.g., prose text, charts/graphs, and other visual presentations)
	    Read authentic materials on everyday subjects
	    Interpret and summarize descriptions and narratives on familiar topics
	    Take notes from texts/documents on unfamiliar topics
	    Vary reading strategies for understanding content on unfamiliar topics or technical information
	    Distinguish between literal and figurative language
	    Take notes while reading

WRITING SKILLS

LEVELS	WRITING SKILLS
Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy	*Beginning Literacy ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. .* *If needed,* develop fine motor skills to write legibly Write upper and lower case letters and numbers 0-100 Write basic personal information words (e.g., name, address, telephone number, etc.) Spell simple words Copy simple words/phrases related to everyday life Write dates and digital clock times. Write money amounts Write very simple learned sentences Use simple punctuation (e.g., period, comma, question mark)
Low Beginning ESL/ESOL	*Low Beginning ESL/ESOL learners will be able to demonstrate the following. . .* Write basic personal information (name, address, telephone number, employer, birth date, ID number etc.) Write familiar simple words and short phrases from dictation Complete short, simplified forms (e.g., check, job application, registration form) Address an envelope Write lists (e.g., shopping) and personal schedules Write some simple phrases and simple sentences related to familiar situations Use some simple basic punctuation (e.g., capitalization, periods, commas, question marks)
High Beginning ESL/ESOL	*High Beginning ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .* Write familiar simple sentences from dictation Complete basic forms to satisfy survival needs (e.g., job application, school registration form, basic medical form, library card etc.) Write simple sentences related to familiar situations Prepare a map or very simple directions to home/apartment Following a model, write a simple paragraph on a single topic Use simple basic punctuation (e.g., capitalization, periods, commas, question marks) Write simple notes and messages (e.g., note to a teacher about a sick child, thank-you for a gift, etc.) Spell words phonetically Use simple graphic organizers
Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .* Write simple sentences from dictation Write some compound and complex sentences Complete more complex forms Write out simple instructions with some detail Write simple directions with some detail to a familiar location Write short notes (e.g., to school, neighbor, coworker) Compose simple letters (e.g., requests and offers). Write a descriptive paragraph with some detail on a familiar topic that includes a beginning, middle and end (e.g., special place, tradition, event, etc.) Apply basic capitalization, spelling and punctuation rules when writing Take notes on familiar material transmitted orally Use pre writing and editing strategies Demonstrate some control of spelling Use some idioms

LEVELS	WRITING SKILLS

High Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*High Intermediate ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	    Take detailed messages (e.g., phone message)
	    Take simple notes from authentic discourse
	    Complete authentic forms (e.g., job applications, insurance documents, medical history forms, etc.)
	    Draft, organize, write and edit a short paragraph using a topic sentence, supporting details and transitions
	    Write short letters of request /complaint

Advanced ESL/ESOL	*Advanced ESL/ESOL learners will be able to. . .*
	    Write complex sentences in paragraphs
	    Demonstrate the correct use of capitalization, punctuation and spelling (e.g., using reference materials to edit and revise)
	    Use pre-writing skills to organize and develop a paragraph
	    Write a detailed paragraph with topic sentence, supporting details, and conclusion
	    Describe a detailed procedure in writing
	    Summarize articles on familiar topics
	    Identify parts of a composition -- outlining content/sequence of paragraphs
	    Following a model, prepare a simple resume
	    Edit and revise drafts

GRAMMAR SKILLS

LEVELS	GRAMMAR SKILLS
Beginning ESL/ESOL Literacy	*Students may use one word and very simple responses to demonstrate a beginning understanding of the following grammatical structures and patterns…* Subject pronouns Simple Wh- questions (e.g., Who, What, When, Where, Why, How) in present tense Simple Yes/No questions (e.g., Is/Are…..? or Do/Does……?) in present tense Affirmative and negative statements with the verbs "be" and "do" Singular/plural (e.g., nouns, this/these) Articles – "the, a/an". Simple structures -- "It's + day. // It's + time. // It's $5.00."
Low Beginning ESL/ESOL	*Students may use one word and very simple responses to demonstrate a beginning understanding of the following grammatical structures and patterns…* Simple WH questions and responses (affirm./neg.) Simple Yes/No questions and responses Affirmative and negative statements with "be, do, have" and other high frequency verbs Simple present continuous tense Simple past with high frequency verbs such as "be, do, have" Modal auxiliary verbs (e.g., can / have to + verb) Singular/plural (e.g., count/non-count) Simple Conjunctions (and, or, but) Simple prepositions of time and place (e.g., in, on, at, next to, on the right) Simple frequency adverbs (e.g., always, sometimes, never) Possessive Adjectives (e.g., my, your, her, our) Subject Pronouns
High Beginning ESL/ESOL	*Learners may use one word and very simple responses to demonstrate a beginning understanding of the following grammatical structures and patterns…* Present continuous tense Modal auxiliary verbs (e.g., can / have to + verb) Common irregular verbs Subject-Verb agreement Adjective + Noun There is/There are Contractions (e.g., I'm, she's, isn't, don't) Demonstrative adjectives (this/that, these/those) Singular/plural (e.g., count/non-count) Indefinite articles (some/any, much/many) Possessive adjectives (e.g., my, your, her, our) Conjunctions Simple frequency adverbs (e.g., always, sometimes, never)

GRAMMAR SKILLS CONTINUED

LEVELS	GRAMMAR SKILLS
Low Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*Begin to use grammar with some control for the beginning level structures/patterns plus the following…* 　　Simple past tense 　　Future tense ("will" + verb and "be going to + verb") 　　Present perfect tense in high frequency situations 　　Simple modals (e.g., can/could, may/might, shall/should, will/would, must) in affirm./negative 　　Simple expressions for giving advice**,** inviting, and expressing regret 　　Comparative and superlative adjectives 　　Adverbs (too, very, enough) 　　Verb + Infinitive (e.g., want to __, need to __) 　　Possessives (e.g., girl's , Tom's) 　　Object pronouns (e.g., mine, his, hers, theirs, ours) 　　Conjunctions (and/or, but, either/neither) 　　Polite expressions (e.g., would rather, would you mind)
High Intermediate ESL/ESOL	*Learners are gaining control of the intermediate level structures/ patterns plus the following…* 　　Past habitual with "used + infinitive" 　　Present perfect (contrast to other tenses and using "for, since, already, yet") 　　Past continuous (in contrast to simple past) 　　Modals (e.g., ought to, had better, would rather) 　　Tag questions 　　Conditionals (e.g., present real, present unreal and past unreal) 　　Simple adverbial clauses (e.g., before/after, if/then, because/since) 　　Passive voice 　　Reflexive pronouns (e.g., myself, yourself, herself) 　　Common phrasal verbs and idioms (e.g., get ___, put ___, take ___ etc.) 　　Commonly confused verbs (e.g., do/make, say/tell, bring/ take, learn/teach, go/come, etc.)
Advanced ESL/ESOL	*Demonstrate control for Intermediate levels **plus the following…*** 　　Present Perfect continuous 　　Perfect Modals (e.g. should have, would have) 　　Embedded statements and questions 　　Compound and complex sentences 　　Modals and expressions indicating wishes doubt, regret, obligation (pay attention to register) 　　Gerunds and infinitives 　　Connectives (e.g., because, even, though, etc.) 　　Transitional adverbs (therefore, however) 　　Adverbial clauses 　　Phrasal verbs (separable and inseparable) 　　Idiomatic expressions