

Self-Placement Guide

Accelerated Language Programs (ALPs)

Fairfield University – Rassias Center College Credit Program

To determine your proficiency level in the target (foreign) language for approximate placement at ALPs, you will need to speak the answers to the questions on the topics below. Try a relaxed location, where you feel the least anxiety in answering aloud. Since the ALPs include multiple languages, I describe the placement criteria and topics below in English. You are welcome to take a look at your favorite foreign language textbook, preferably a beginning- or intermediate-level one, to find the equivalent questions in the language. Just try not to peek at the answers when you challenge yourself to provide them aloud.

This is only a guide to approximate placement in the ALPs. On the arrival date in Hanover, NH, an instructor will interview you to determine your exact oral proficiency level. However, in certain cases described on the Fairfield University ALPs college credit site, registrants will be interviewed by telephone prior to arrival at Dartmouth College.
—Professor Joel Goldfield, Coordinator, ALPs College Credit Program

To self-place, begin with the first part. Then work your way down through the list. For placement purposes in credit-bearing courses, students begin at a level lower than the one the course plans to reach and for which its title is given. Thus an Intermediate course assumes that entering students are just below the Intermediate level. As a rough estimation, for example, if you can successfully do the tasks in about three-quarters of the Beginner topics in I.D. and I.E., but not all of them, you would likely be placed into an early Intermediate course. If you could accomplish all or nearly all the tasks in I.D. and I.E. plus II.B. and perhaps even II.C., you would likely be placed at a higher Intermediate level, such as in the second-semester course of the Intermediate sequence.

Language is cumulative. Participants at the more advanced levels should have few if any gaps at the earlier levels. While the items below form the core of our placement process, they are not exhaustive. There are additional topics, speaking characteristics, and cultural elements we may ask about or otherwise evaluate, depending upon your level and the language. But remember, there are no grades for placement. The interview process exists only to determine at which level you will feel most comfortable learning the language. The placement is not written in stone, however. Instructors pay attention to any significant individual needs and performance level relative to the group as a whole. If advisable, and in consultation with you, we may change your placement within the first few days.

I. Beginners.

A. If you have no knowledge of the language, you are a Rank Beginner.

B. Other beginner rankings: you can use the language orally as described under “C.,” “D.” and “E.” below

C. You answer in

1. single words (example: “Yes,” “No”) or
2. multiple words (example for D. 4 below: “6 o’clock”) but
3. generally not in a complete sentence, except if it happens to have been previously memorized (example: “My name is John”).

D. Topics. The more of these topics you can talk about, the stronger a beginner you are:

- 1) autobiographical information about yourself
- 2) about your family
- 3) the date
- 4) the time
- 5) the weather
- 6) clothing
- 7) colors
- 8) numbers at least to 100
- 9) objects in your environment
- 10) food
- 11) transportation (e.g., buying a train ticket)
- 12) your work

E. Question types: Can you ask any previously memorized questions about the topics above?

II. Intermediates. We would likely classify you as an Intermediate if you can:

A. Answer questions in at least 9 or 10 of the Topics in I. D. above with at least 70% accuracy

B. Speak in complete sentences when necessary

C. Speak in multiple sentences, such as to tell a brief story. It might be one recounting your activities earlier that day

D. Ask questions to obtain information pertinent to most of the topics above

E. Navigate through a role-play transaction, such as a ticket purchase, where there may be a complication such as a sold-out category.

III. Upper-Intermediate or Advanced:

A. You will need to be able to do nearly all or all of the tasks described above.

B. You can speak about future events.

C. You can hypothesize (example, “If I weren’t participating in the ALPs program, I would travel to _____”).

D. You can tell a story, speaking in paragraph form.

E. You can ask questions about all the topics in I. D. above.

F. You can spontaneously describe a challenging situation, such as a transportation mishap that occurred, using fairly detailed vocabulary for what went wrong, and respond to questions about it.