

## General Language Characteristics of Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced ESL Students for Listening and Understanding

| BEGINNER  | INTERMEDIATE  | ADVANCED  |
|---|---|---|
| <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– “listens” by watching actions of the teacher</li> <li>– blends waves of sound into comprehensible units, understanding basic commands; e.g., “Sit down,” “Take out your pencil”, “Let’s go”</li> <li>– understands familiar repetitive oral language; e.g., greetings</li> <li>– may not appear to retain vocabulary or structures</li> <li>– may become completely lost during group discussions</li> <li>– understands, with repetition, visual and concrete aids and the gist of poems, songs and short stories with familiar vocabulary.</li> </ul> | <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– follows simple instructions</li> <li>– easily follows most routine classroom instructions but may rely heavily on visual input</li> <li>– understands most small-group discussions on everyday topics</li> <li>– may begin to take notes in group lessons but relies on peers for better comprehension in content-area lessons where language is topic-specific and abstract</li> <li>– retains some information from large-group lessons</li> <li>– listens for details/sequence in order to retell stories</li> <li>– understands tag questions, e.g., “Didn’t they?”, and negative questions; e.g., “Don’t you want to come?”</li> </ul> | <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– relies more on aural than visual input in group lessons</li> <li>– understands most peer-group discussions</li> <li>– understands most of a content-area film, retains the information and relates it to own experience to help predict and infer</li> <li>– can better understand jokes, television shows with cultural references, teasing and sarcasm</li> <li>– requires fewer repetitions of complex instructions</li> <li>– discerns prejudice, bias, intent and emotion</li> <li>– comprehends formal, idiomatic and colloquial English on familiar topics of personal relevance or interest.</li> </ul> |

## General Language Characteristics of Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced ESL Students for Speaking

| BEGINNER   | INTERMEDIATE  | ADVANCED   |
|--|---|--|
| <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– may experience silent periods</li> <li>– may respond in the first language or may not respond verbally at all</li> <li>– uses body language to convey messages</li> <li>– may use simple repetitions or memorized functional expressions; e.g., “Hello”, “Thank you”</li> <li>– may repeat phrases in choral-reading/ speaking situations</li> <li>– often labels, “This is a _____”</li> <li>– uses visuals and objects to express needs or describe immediate experiences</li> <li>– asks simple questions to fulfill immediate needs; e.g., “Go washroom?”</li> </ul> | <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– narrates events, using picture cues or a series of linked sentences to show present, past, future time</li> <li>– begins to develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), employs simple sentence structures and basic vocabulary to communicate on a limited number of everyday topics, describes familiar objects and events</li> <li>– begins to express opinions on concrete topics, using “I like _____”, “I think _____”</li> <li>– uses language literally</li> <li>– uses common phrases and expressions in appropriate situations and gives simple instructions</li> <li>– asks questions for clarification and about homework</li> <li>– may not be able to express ideas clearly in content-area discussions</li> <li>– converses one-on-one about familiar topics</li> <li>– conducts brief interviews with peers and teachers.</li> </ul> | <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– initiates and sustains class discussion</li> <li>– initiates and involves others in conversation</li> <li>– presents/defends own point of view in different situations</li> <li>– is more interactive and productive in group work</li> <li>– functions in a variety of social settings</li> <li>– demonstrates increasing control over grammar; appropriately uses synonyms, descriptive words, idioms, slang and complex sentence structures</li> <li>– speaks confidently and fluently on everyday topics; is moving toward acquiring the vocabulary and rhetoric needed for discussing content-area issues; i.e., acquiring Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).</li> </ul> |

## General Language Characteristics of Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced ESL Students for Reading

| BEGINNER   | INTERMEDIATE  | ADVANCED   |
|--|---|--|
| <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– looks at pictures in books and environmental print</li> <li>– may need to learn English print directionality (left to right), depending on first language background</li> <li>– may read dictated labels and phrases from personal writing journal</li> <li>– may read along in group/buddy/shared reading situations</li> <li>– recognizes sound–symbol relationships</li> <li>– recognizes alphabetical order</li> <li>– develops basic sight vocabulary of everyday words in the environment</li> <li>– rereads stories constructed from personal experience (language–experience approach).</li> </ul> | <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– reads short passages of new material for which the student has background knowledge</li> <li>– may read and understand storybooks/short novels slightly below or at grade level</li> <li>– integrates all cueing systems (pictures, syntax, phonetics) with reasonable success</li> <li>– has difficulty comprehending content-area material (textbooks, resource books, magazines, encyclopedias); comprehension may be limited due to the specificity and abstract nature of academic language</li> <li>– uses context clues to predict meaning</li> <li>– reads cloze paragraphs successfully</li> <li>– uses a dictionary to determine exact meanings</li> <li>– identifies main ideas, key vocabulary</li> <li>– uses word analysis skills to gain meaning</li> <li>– uses textual features to support reading.</li> </ul> | <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– may read stories and novels at grade level</li> <li>– may exhibit less facility with and comprehension of expository text</li> <li>– reads beyond the print—makes inferences, reaches conclusions, detects bias</li> <li>– reads for enjoyment, independently</li> <li>– reads for information</li> <li>– shifts from narrative to expository prose</li> <li>– shifts from learning to read, to reading to learn.</li> </ul> |

## General Language Characteristics of Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced ESL Students for Writing

| BEGINNER   | INTERMEDIATE  | ADVANCED  |
|--|---|---|
| <p><i>The student:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="margin-left: 100px;">– observes subject–verb agreement</li> <li style="margin-left: 100px;">– uses simple present, present continuous, simple past, future and “will” of common verbs.</li> </ul>   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– may draw pictures of self, family, friends (labelled in first language, when able, or with one-word English labels that the student may copy from the teacher’s model)</li> <li>– may write from right to left, depending on first language background</li> <li>– may copy words from charts, books or friends’ journals</li> <li>– participates in guided and group writing</li> <li>– makes lists.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– writes simple narrative compositions; e.g., personal letters</li> <li>– may use a combination of invented and conventional spellings</li> <li>– develops strategies for accurate spelling of unpredictable words</li> <li>– begins to exert more control over aspects of grammar; e.g., verb tense and increasingly complex sentence structures</li> <li>– may rely heavily on copying to write research reports.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– gains more control over different types of writing for a variety of purposes</li> <li>– requires guidance, modelling and intervention with academic report writing</li> <li>– starts to develop a sense of personal style</li> <li>– approximates native-like command in some areas of grammar; e.g., verb tense, complex syntactic structures.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– writes complete sentences—affirmative and negative statements</li> <li>– writes most question forms.</li> </ul>   |   |   |