The Cambridge Framework for Life Competencies
How can we prepare our students to succeed in a world that is changing fast? We see the increasing need to work together with people from around the world, to think creatively and solve problems, to analyse sources more critically, to communicate our views effectively, to maintain a positive mindset in an increasingly complex world. How can we support the development of these skills? In Cambridge, we have set out to support teachers in this challenging area.
The stages of the learning journey

We have developed the Cambridge Framework of Life Competencies to show what different life skills there are and how they can develop along the learning journey.

We have grouped the different competencies into eight main areas:

- Creativity
- Critical thinking & problem-solving
- Digital literacy
- Learning to learn
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Emotional development
- Social responsibilities

We then track how each competency develops across five stages of the learning journey:
THINKING AND LEARNING SKILLS

**Creativity**
- Participating in creative activities
- Creating new content – from own ideas or other resources
- Discovering & expressing own personal identity and feelings through creative activities

**Critical thinking**
- Understanding links between ideas
- Evaluating texts, ideas and arguments
- Synthesizing ideas and information
- Identifying and prioritising problems to be addressed
- Evaluating options
- Asking effective questions

**Digital literacy**
- Using digital and online tools
- Following safe online practices – to protect yourself and your school
- Behaving appropriately to others online – ‘netiquette’

**Learning to learn**
- Practical skills for participating in learning –
- Showing a positive mindset for learning (English)
- Reflecting on and evaluating own learning success
- Identifying and articulating learning goals
- Identifying and using effective learning techniques
- Seeking help from other people or resources
- Making notes, storing & retrieving information
- Preparing for and taking exams

The Cambridge Framework for Life Competencies

Creativity

Critical thinking

Digital literacy

Learning to learn
SOCIAL SKILLS

Communication
- Using appropriate language/register for context
- Managing conversations
- Overcoming own language gaps
- Participating with appropriate confidence & clarity
- Supporting others to communicate successfully

Collaboration
- Taking turns in shared activities
- Listening to and respecting others’ contributions
- Sharing ideas
- Taking personal responsibility for own contributions to a group task
- Managing the sharing of tasks in a project
- Evaluating and responding constructively to others’ contributions or activities.

Emotional development
- Identifying and talking about own emotions
- Managing own emotions
- Empathy & relationship skills: recognising & responding appropriately to other children’s emotional state

Social responsibilities
- Understanding personal responsibilities as part of a group and in society – including citizenship
- Behaving consistently with personal and social responsibilities
- Showing leadership skills
- Understanding and describing own culture
- Understanding and respecting how other cultures can differ
- Understanding and discussing global issues - environmental, political, financial and social
- Understanding & managing career development options and techniques
Component skills

We have broken down the competencies even further, analysing the component skills typical for each competency.

Here are two examples:

**LEARNING TO LEARN**

- Taking control of your own learning

- Controlling learning environment
- Making effective use of available resources
- Getting help from other people
- Showing confidence in own ability to learn
- Finding own opportunities to learn outside classroom

**COLLABORATION**

- Managing the sharing of tasks in a project

- Understanding the need to share tasks
- Identifying tasks and sub-tasks that can be shared
- Ensuring the division of tasks is fair
- Offering to help when others need it
**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

**SHOWING LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

| PRE-PRIMARY | • Decides what activities they will take part in  
• Volunteers to perform simple tasks (e.g. tidy up toys, help younger children)  
• Shows confidence to speak in a familiar group  
• Suggests a way to solve simple problems |
| PRIMARY | • Volunteers to try out new activities  
• Volunteers for roles of responsibility  
• Takes the initiative in group projects – starting discussions and activities before being asked to  
• Shows confidence in expressing own ideas  
• Manages disputes peacefully |
| SECONDARY | • In group work, makes consultative decisions  
• Encourages others to participate and contribute in projects  
• Sets strategies and plans for tackling a task  
• Shows confidence in speaking in public (e.g. to present a project)  
• Resolves issues in a group |
| HIGHER EDUCATION | • Takes responsibility for creating and managing groups for shared activities  
• Identifies and communicates goals and approaches for group activities  
• Participates in decision-making in group/institution |
| IN THE WORKPLACE | • Takes responsibility for pursuing new opportunities or resolving business issues  
• Allocates and delegates work according to colleagues’/subordinates’ strengths  
• Identifies and effectively communicates business tactics and strategy |

**CRITICAL THINKING**

**EVALUATING TEXTS, IDEAS AND ARGUMENTS**

| PRE-PRIMARY | • Says whether something is true or not |
| PRIMARY | • Says whether something is true or not, and gives a reason  
• Explains why they believe or not what a character says in a story  
• Identifies inconsistencies in stories  
• Identifies missing key events from short narrative summaries |
| SECONDARY | • Distinguishes fact and opinion as well as source and evidence  
• Identifies assumptions and inferences in a text  
• Gives reasons for the evaluation of an argument’s plausibility or coherence |
| HIGHER EDUCATION | • Check clarity, relevance and fairness of the arguments and points of view presented by different writers  
• Recognises basic fallacies in argumentation  
• Arrives at nuanced evaluations of arguments in texts |
| IN THE WORKPLACE | • Checks the strength of argument in a proposal – e.g. its significance and coherence  
• Evaluates the plausibility of explanations in a report, e.g. the weight of evidence  
• Assesses the significance of implicit assumptions in a proposal |
Life Competencies in ELT

These Life Competencies are already embedded into many of your English lessons. The purpose of the Framework is to help you approach this more systematically and effectively. Here are some examples of activities you may already be using to develop Life Competencies.

1. **Reading**
   - Tick (✓) the qualities you need to be a news journalist.
     - funny
     - confident
     - positive
     - warm
     - intelligent
     - charming
     - active
     - adventurous
     - brave
     - talented
     - cheerful
     - serious

2. **Speaking**
   - Work in pairs. What other adjectives can you think of?

3. **Speaking**
   - Would you like to be a journalist? Say why or why not.

**Objectives**

4. On April Fool’s Day in many English-speaking countries, people play jokes on others. Journalists are usually serious, but sometimes they play jokes, too. Do you have a similar day in your country?

5. Read and listen to the article. Which photo relates to each story? Write the dates of the stories on the pictures to match them.

6. Read the article again. Which story are these people talking about?

   1. ‘I saw that. I think they were in the middle of making a nature programme.’
   2. ‘What a great way to get people interested in your product.’
   3. ‘They said the mistake happened because of a bad translation.’
   4. ‘It definitely doesn’t come from a plant. I think it’s made with flour and water.’
   5. ‘I think people believed the story because he was such an intelligent person.’

**April Fool’s Day**

In 1957 the BBC news programme Panorama told its viewers that Swiss farmers were enjoying a really good year for their spaghetti crop. They showed a film of the farmers picking the pasta from their trees. Many people believed the story and some of them even phoned up the BBC to ask how they could grow their own spaghetti tree. The date, of course, was April 1st, or April Fool’s Day – the day when people in many countries across the world like to play jokes on each other.

April 1st seems to be very popular with journalists. They have the extremely important job of reporting the news to us. For 364 days a year they need to be serious. But for one day a year they allow themselves to forget this responsibility for a few minutes and have a bit of fun trying to fool their readers or viewers.

Think Level 2, CUP
(Think, Level 2, Students book p103)
SPEAKING TASK

Give a short presentation about an invention or discovery that has changed our lives.

1. Work alone. Make a list of inventions or discoveries that have changed our lives.
2. Choose one of the inventions and prepare an ideas map about it. Write questions on the diagram.
3. Work with a partner. Discuss your research questions and help each other answer the questions on the ideas maps.
4. Work with a partner. Take turns to practise giving your presentation.
5. Give each other feedback using the questions below.
   1. Was the presentation clearly organized and interesting?
   2. Was there a clear description of the invention/discovery?
   3. Were there examples of how the invention/discovery has changed our lives?
6. Work in small groups. Take turns to give your presentations. Discuss which one of your inventions has had the biggest influence on our lives.

TASK CHECKLIST

| Did you use phrases with make correctly? | ✔ |
| Did you use passive and active forms correctly? | |
| Did you outline the topic clearly? | |
| Did you explain clearly how something is used? | |
Going forward

Applications of the Framework

How can the Framework be used to improve English language programmes?

**CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

Use descriptors of component competencies at each learning stage to develop Curriculum Learning Outcomes

**LEARNING MATERIALS**

Use descriptors to design suitable learning activities

**TEACHER DEVELOPMENT**

Develop awareness of the component skills that learners should be developing at each stage of learning

**EVALUATION**

Develop appropriate tasks and record-keeping to monitor success in developing Life Competencies

**Validation**

Cambridge is working on the validation of the Framework, setting up a number of research projects to examine the appropriacy of the proposed component competencies and their descriptors. If you would like to get involved with these validation projects, contact languageresearch@cambridge.org
Further reading


Most Likely To Succeed - http://www.tonywagner.com/1933


Next Generation: ‘MyWays’ http://nextgenlearning.org/myways


University of Cambridge Primary School Learning skills and Computing learning outcomes, Available at http://universityprimaryschool.org.uk/

