

# A Portfolio for Languages in Canada



A *Portfolio for Languages in Canada* draws on the European Language Portfolio (ELP). The latter is an adaptable language educational tool, developed according to the principles and methodology of language learning, teaching, and assessment promoted by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is used as support in the application of the CEFR, both in and outside the school environment. There is not a single portfolio, but numerous ones, made for various languages and different target and age groups (i.e. The Canadian Language Portfolio for Teachers).

## What Is the European Language Portfolio (ELP)?

### Uses of the ELP:

The ELP is a personal document, in which language users can:

- document their language learning progress and intercultural experiences
- record the competences that they develop and on which they draw when communicating
- self-assess their language proficiency according to the CEFR levels
- reflect on the contexts in which they learn the language (formal and informal)
- set their language learning goals

### Principles of the ELP:

- the learner is the owner of the ELP
- all language knowledge and skills are valued positively
- language learning in and outside formal education is important
- language learning is a life-long process
- the CEFR is used as a reference for language learning, planning, and assessment

### Components of the ELP:

- *Language Passport*, in which learners:
  - \* summarize their language qualifications, current levels of proficiency, and intercultural experiences

- *Language Biography*, in which learners:
  - \* outline personal learning objectives
  - \* document personal language learning history
  - \* give information about their language courses and significant linguistic and intercultural experiences
  - \* regularly assess their progress through 'Can Do' statements
- *Dossier*, in which learners:
  - \* collect samples of their work in the targeted language(s)

## How Does the ELP Work?

The ELP is based on a self-assessment grid, which uses the CEFR six levels of communicative proficiency (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2). These levels are summarized for each of the listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing skills. Positive descriptors ('Can Do' statements) are used for each level associated with each skill. Such descriptors can be developed into specific tasks for planning, tracking, and assessing learning. For example, the descriptor for A1 Spoken Interaction in the self-assessment grid is:

*I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.*

Once learners are able to perform the respective tasks, they can record their level(s) for the evaluated skill(s) in their *Language Passport*. Then, they can proceed to the next level, depending on what goals they have established for themselves. Thus, learners can assess their own language skills.



This tool encourages active learning and learner autonomy, as well as language contextualization. The *Language Biography* and the *Dossier* allow learners to record and rely on both the formal and informal language knowledge that they achieve along the way.

## Who Can Use the ELP?

The ELP is useful for all professional & educational categories, age groups, and target languages:

- students & other language learners
- teachers & teacher trainers
- parents
- schools
- policy & decision makers
- employers and employees

## Do All Learners Use the Same Portfolio?

Versions of the ELP have been developed for different age groups (e.g. elementary, intermediate, secondary, adult) by various educational institutions (e.g. Edmonton Public School Board, Second Language Research Institute of Canada of the University of New Brunswick). The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers has developed a Canadian version of the ELP for teachers, *The Canadian Language Portfolio for Teachers*, available in English and French.

## What Are the Benefits of the ELP?

### Students & Other Language Learners:

- document all steps in their language learning
- are actively and positively involved in language learning
- become autonomous learners
- develop skills to plan, monitor, and assess their learning
- are motivated by using language in practical contexts
- develop self-confidence by shifting the language learning focus from 'cannot do' to 'can do'

### Teachers and Teacher Trainers:

- upgrade their professional skills
- use the positive descriptors to develop lessons and tasks
- target specific competencies
- can associate intercultural experiences with language teaching and assessment
- develop learner autonomy in their students
- foster communication and language use in their students

- better track and report their students' progress
- facilitate life-long learning
- can participate in inter-school/inter-provincial/inter-national PD by having a common basis for language teaching and assessment
- encourage a teaching perspective that is learner-centered, communication-oriented, and reflective of the target language contexts and functional use
- work with an internationally recognised training tool

### Parents:

- have a transparent tool to understand their children's language proficiency, in view of inter-school/inter-provincial/international mobility
- know in which school program to register their children
- track their children's language progress
- see how their children use the target language in context
- become involved in their children's language education

### Schools:

- have a clear and comprehensive tool to develop language policy and approaches to language teaching
- can engage in international and/or inter-provincial program exchanges and dialogue
- become appealing to a whole-range of learners, by promoting plurilingualism and intercultural learning
- can employ the ELP across different levels and language learners, which fosters awareness and concretization of the value of all languages and cultures

### Employers and Employees:

- obtain or present practical, detailed and transparent evidence of second/foreign language skills
- can consult the ELP for workplace language training requirements
- have a record of internationally transferable language and cultural skills that they have or need to develop

### Policy & Decision Makers:

- have a common basis for educational and curriculum reform in a clear, transparent cross-provincial manner
- have a concrete tool to support stakeholders in providing internationally recognized quality language education
- can track, evaluate, and consequently manage linguistic and cultural diversity in classrooms, schools, and societies
- have a common basis to engage in inter-provincial dialogue

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