

# English for Life Task-Based Curriculum

## What is English for Life?

*English for Life* is a five-level curriculum for adult and teen learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). It is based on task checklists called *Ability Checklists* and also includes projects. It does not utilize a textbook. Here I provide an introduction and the task checklists. These checklists may be freely used. Any one of the levels may serve as a curriculum guide for a course. All five levels together may serve as a basis for a full English program.

### **Introduction**

Central to the idea of *English for Life* is the notion that the best teacher of language is a person, not a book. The idea for this approach was born through dissatisfaction with the perspective that many learners seem to have that ‘going through the book’ is the goal of a language class.

The *English for Life* system stresses class content that is:

- Communicative:** Use language for *real communication* through reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Contextualized:** Use language for *local* purposes. Talk about *learners’ lives*.
- Edifying:** Use language to stimulate positive *growth* in learners and teachers.

### **Contextualization**

With many English learning materials, to change the material is to break copyright laws. Not so with *English for Life*! This system is available digitally, so that teachers can change and adapt it for their own contexts. Currently, these materials are prepared for the Indonesian context. What language is learned and how it is learned, in **your** context, should be determined by student realities and needs. Teachers should use what is given here as a starting point, and further adapt it to meet their students’ needs.

### **Overview**

Each of the five levels includes eight topical units (level one has ten). Grammar is not addressed specifically in this curriculum but rather will be learned as a by-product of the topical tasks. If more grammar instruction is desired, a basic grammar book can be used alongside this curriculum, beginning in level two.

## ***Themes***

The thematic content for each level is as follows:

### **Summary of Content**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Content</b>
Level 1	Basic Vocabulary and Phrases	greetings, food, home, family, numbers and money, community
Level 2	Home and Family	introductions, descriptions, jobs, home life, house, schedules and habits
Level 3	Community	the neighborhood, stores, services, directions, professions
Level 4	The World	culture, customs, holidays, geography, countries
Level 5	Personal Development	personality, traditions, beliefs, worldview, spirituality, values, ethics

## ***Completion Goals***

After completing all five levels of *English for Life*, a student should be able to:

- Talk easily and fluently about family, self, city and country, and express personal opinions. The student may have errors, but will be able to communicate effectively
- Understand personal information shared by others, and ask pertinent questions.
- Ask for clarification when necessary; demonstrate when he or she does not understand, and continue communication until comprehension is achieved.
- Give and understand social information, such as directions, time, spelling of words, descriptions, costs, quality, etc.
- Read and gain a *general* understanding about worldwide information, such as news articles, information on internet, or letters received from friends.
- Accomplish basic writing tasks, such as writing friendly letters or writing recipes, though writing will likely have some grammatical errors.

## ***Recycling***

An important feature of this curriculum is that content is recycled and revisited at different levels, in different ways. For example, on the topic of “food”:

- Level One: students learn names of foods
- Level Two: students revisit names of foods, talk about food preferences and diet, and learn to read simple recipes.
- Level Three: students talk about food again as they learn to order a meal at a restaurant.
- Level Four: students compare diets and nutrition in various countries

Students who have opportunities to review, remember, and build on previous learning in such ways are usually more successful in long-term language acquisition.

## ***Projects***

It is hoped that students and teachers engaged in the *English for Life* system will find that their time in class is spent not only learning English, but engaging in meaningful, interesting, and relevant activities. To promote this concept, a semester-long class project for each level (after level one) is suggested. The project activities are inherent in the units, making it possible for students to finish the level having created something that is useful. The projects suggested at each level are:

Level 2: Home and Family: A booklet for foreigners about Indonesian families and their homes.

Level 3: Community: A booklet for foreigners providing tips for living in Indonesia.

Level 4: The World: A video presentation of different areas of the world.

Level 5: Personal Development: Individual portfolios of personal growth and expectations.

Many other projects are possible. Local contexts and student interests should determine what can be accomplished of lasting value in a semester.

## ***A General Understanding of Tasks***

The list of tasks for each level is provided in the *Ability Checklist*. Students receive this checklist at the beginning of the semester, and teachers plan their lessons using suggested activities and materials in the curriculum guidelines, or developing their own activities and materials. Class activities should be designed with the purpose of enabling students to check off the ‘I can’ statements on their checklist. An example of teaching activities to accompany this curriculum follows:

### Task examples from Level Three:

I can *give directions* to important places in my city.

I can *understand directions* and *write them down*.

1. Provide a map of the school campus. In pairs, have students practice giving instructions to each other on how to find their English class when they come on campus. Practice: turn right/left; go straight/up/down; first door on the right, etc.
2. Have students work in groups to prepare written instructions to get from the school to some well-known places in town. Have students compile these written instructions to create a document that would be helpful for a foreigner in Malang.
3. Have students work in pairs, taking turns giving and writing down how to get from the school to their homes.

## ***Integration of Skill Areas***

This system promotes the integration of reading, writing, speaking and listening wherever possible. The wording of student tasks sometimes promotes two skill areas, as in the task above,

“I can *understand* (listening) directions and *write* (writing) them down.” But skill integration can also be accomplished by developing class activities which accomplish several tasks. For instance, on the subject of Indonesian holidays, various tasks encourage students in effect to “read, write, and speak about an Indonesian holiday.” The sequence below illustrates one way to integrate these skills in classroom activities:

*Students will...*

- Write a paragraph about a holiday; teacher provides input for student correction
- Exchange paragraphs and read; write three follow-up questions
- Answer questions orally
- Tell a friend about the holiday

### ***Assessment***

This system promotes learner autonomy, and relies on self-assessment as the primary means of evaluation. Students decide at what point they feel comfortable checking off items on the Ability Checklists stating that they indeed *can* do those tasks in English. In many places self-assessment is new for learners, and so this system works best accompanied by periodic one-on-one progress meetings with the teacher. These meetings can include student evaluation of their effort in the class, and their view of their progress in each of the language skill areas. This system may not be the most ideal if formal tests and grades must be given.

**ABILITY CHECKLIST, LEVEL 1**  
**Basic Words and Phrases**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Greetings and Phrases**

- I know these greetings: hello, good morning, good afternoon, good evening.
- I know these words: please, thank you, you're welcome.
- I know this dialogue:
  - A: Hi, how are you?
  - B: I'm fine, how are you?
  - A: I'm fine.
- I know this dialogue:
  - A: My name is \_\_\_\_\_. What's your name?
  - B: My name is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A: Nice to meet you.
- I know how to say goodbye.
- I know these phrases: I don't speak English yet. I don't understand. Please repeat.

**2. Letters and Numbers**

- I can say the letters of the alphabet.
- I can spell my full name.
- I can say and understand phone numbers.
- I can count to 100.
- I can look at a number up to 100,000 and say it.
- I can understand and say amounts of money.
- I can ask the question "How much is it?" and provide the correct amount.

**3. Basic words**

- I know these words and phrases: yes, no, more-or-less, not yet, maybe.
- I know these colors: yellow, orange, pink, red, green, blue, purple, black, brown, grey, white.
- I can describe a color as *light* or *dark*.
- I know these words: big, little, good, bad, happy, sad, tired, busy, hungry, thirsty, clean, dirty, late.
- I know these words: this, that, these, those
- I know the basic pronouns, and the verb *to be*.
  - Ex: I am, you are, he/she/it is, we are, you are, they are
- I know these words: where, when, how, why, who, how much/how many

**4. People**

- I know these words: man, woman, child, children, boy, girl.
- I know these *family* words: mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, husband, wife.

- I know these *profession* words: teacher, student, pastor, doctor (and words suggested by student)

### 5. **Days and Months**

- I can say the days of the week and the months of the year.
- I can use these words: today, tomorrow, yesterday, day after tomorrow, day before yesterday.
- I can understand and answer the question, “What day is it today?”
- I can ask and answer the question, “When is your birthday?”
- I can say and understand years (1985, 2006, etc.)

### 6. **Food**

- I can name ten or more common vegetables.
- I can name ten or more common fruits.
- I know these words for drinks: water, milk, soft drinks, juice, tea, coffee.
- I know these words for ingredients: flour, sugar, oil, butter, salt, pepper.
- I know these words: meat, chicken, beef, pork, fish, eggs, rice, cake, cookies, bread, pasta.
- I know the words for meal times: breakfast, lunch, supper/dinner, snack.

### 7. **Clothes and Weather**

- I know these words: shirt, T-shirt, pants, shorts, skirt, dress, underwear, socks, swimsuit, jacket.
- I know these words: hat, shoes, sandals, umbrella, sunglasses, belt, watch, ring, necklace.
- I can describe what I am wearing or what someone else is wearing.
- I know these words: sun, rain, wind, hot, cold, wet, dry.
- I can describe the weather today.
- I can relate the weather to what I am wearing.

Ex: It’s sunny today, so I’m wearing sunglasses. It’s raining, so I’m carrying an umbrella.

### 8. **Activities and Times**

- I know these words: soccer, tennis, swimming, volleyball, basketball, running, walking
- I know these words: reading, sewing, watching TV, listening to music, playing guitar/piano, writing letters, cooking
- I can say the *time*.
- I can say what time I do various activities.
- I can understand what time someone else does various activities.

### 9. **House**

- I know these words: livingroom, diningroom, bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, laundry room.
- I know these words: floor, wall, window, door, ceiling, fan, light.
- I know these *livingroom and diningroom* words: sofa, chair, TV, desk, computer, table.
- I know these *bedroom* words: bed, closet, dresser, desk, sheets, blanket, pillow
- I know these *kitchen* words: sink, refrigerator, stove, microwave, counter, cabinets.

- I know these *kitchen* words: plate, fork, knife, spoon, bowl, cup, glass, napkin.
- I know these *bathroom* words: toilet, shower, mirror, towel, soap, toothbrush/paste, shampoo.

10. **Body**

- I know these words: face, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, teeth, hair, head
- I know these words: arm, hand, fingers, leg, foot, toes, chest, stomach, heart
- I can say when something hurts. Ex: I have a headache. My stomach hurts.
- I can understand when someone tells what is wrong with them.

**Verbs to learn throughout the course:**

- I know these words: sit, stand, walk, run, open, close, do, take, give, pray, go, come.
- I know these words: read, write, work, study, try, remember, speak, listen, understand.
- I can understand commands or requests using simple verbs.
- I can make simple sentences about my activities or ideas. Ex: I'm reading. I don't understand.
- I know these words: clean, wash, cook, iron, fix, use, prepare, tidy/straighten, make, buy
- I know how to make a request. Ex: Please cook the meat. Please buy some vegetables.

## ABILITY CHECKLIST, LEVEL 2

### Home and Family

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. My Family and Me

- I can *fill out* a form, giving personal data.
- I can *understand* personal questions and *respond* with information.
- I can *ask* questions about someone else, and *understand* the answers.
- I can *tell* about my family (physical description, age, personality, hobbies).
- I can *ask* about someone else's family, and *understand* answers.
- I can *write* a paragraph about a family activity (mealtime, shopping, etc.)
- I can *read* a classmate's paragraph about a family activity.
- Vocabulary:** I can *label* the people on a family tree (nephew, aunt, etc.).

#### 2. A Family Event (vacation, move, birth, wedding, illness, funeral, etc.)

- I can show pictures of a family event and *explain* their meaning.
- I can look at a classmate's pictures and *ask* questions.
- I can *tell* about a family event and *answer* questions.
- I can *understand* an event described by someone else, and *ask* questions.
- I can *write* a paragraph about a past event.
- I can *read* about someone else's event, and *write* follow-up questions.
- Vocabulary:** I know important words for the family events listed above.

#### 3. Daily and Weekly Routines

- I can *write* my daily or weekly schedule.
- I can *read* someone's schedule, and *ask* follow-up questions.
- I can *describe* my schedule and *answer* questions.
- I can *tell* what I am doing at different times of the day and week.
- I can *ask* what others are doing at different times of the day and week.
- I can *read* a description of a daily routine and *write* a schedule.
- I can *write* a paragraph describing a particular time in my week.
- Vocabulary:** I know words to describe typical daily and weekly activities.

#### 4. Weather and Clothing

- I can *read* a paragraph about weather.
- I can *read* a weather map, and ask and answer questions with a partner.
- I can *describe* what people are wearing, and pictures of clothing.
- I can *talk* about appropriate clothing for different weather.
- I can *write* about changes in weather or dress.
- I can *read* about changes in weather or dress, and *write* questions.
- Vocabulary:** I know words to describe weather, temperatures, and clothing.

5. **Leisure Activities**

- I can *describe* pictures of leisure activities.
- I can *tell* which activities I have or have not done.
- I can *ask* which activities someone else has or has not done.
- I can *talk* about activities that I will do on the weekend.
- I can *discuss* various sports, giving my opinion.
- I can *write* a paragraph describing a leisure activity that I enjoy.
- I can *read* a description of a leisure activity, and write follow-up questions.
- Vocabulary:** I know words for leisure activities and sports.

6. **Food**

- I can *list* my typical daily diet, and *compare* my diet with someone else's.
- I can *understand* products and prices in an American grocery flyer.
- I can *talk* about my food preferences, and ask questions about someone else's.
- I can *talk* about the food preferences of my family.
- I can *compliment* someone on their cooking.
- I can *read* a simple recipe.
- I can *read* about a food, and *answer* questions.
- Vocabulary:** I know at least 30 food names.

7. **House and Home**

- I can *describe* my home, including rooms, colors, and special features.
- I can *answer* simple questions about my home.
- I can *ask* questions about someone's home, and *understand* their answers.
- I can *describe* my home in a letter.
- I can *understand* and *answer* questions about my home in a letter.
- I can *identify* common household items.
- Vocabulary:** I know words for parts of the house, appliances, and household items.

8. **Friends**

- I can *describe* a friend, including looks, personality, and activities.
- I can *answer* questions about my friend.
- I can *make a polite request*.
- I can *extend an invitation*.
- I can *interrupt politely*.
- I can *make an apology*.
- I can *initiate a friendly conversation*.
- Vocabulary:** I know important phrases for the above functions.

## ABILITY CHECKLIST, LEVEL 3

### Community

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. People in the community

- I can *describe* people who do different jobs (both character and job descriptions).
- I can *understand* and *answer* questions about different occupations.
- I can *read* about different professions, and answer questions.
- I can *ask questions* about someone's job, and explain my job by *answering* questions.
- I can *write* a description of my job, or my ideal job.
- Vocabulary:** I know words for many different kinds of occupations.

#### 2. Living in a community

- I can *describe* my community or neighborhood in conversation.
- I can *ask* questions about someone's community or neighborhood.
- I can *take a phone message*.
- I can *communicate* in public places such as the post office or a bank.
- I can *read* about common courtesies needed in a community.
- Vocabulary:** I know words for different kinds of stores and transportation.

#### 3. Maps, Location, Directions

- I can *understand* city signs, and *describe* them in English.
- I can *give directions* to important places in my city.
- I can *understand* directions and *write* them down.
- I can *ask* for help in finding a place when I'm lost; I can *give* help to a stranger.
- I can *ask* for clarification when I didn't understand the first time.
- Vocabulary:** I know phrases for giving directions.

#### 4. Health

- I can *describe* physical symptoms and *ask* for advice.
- I can *understand* descriptions of physical symptoms, and *give* advice.
- I can *discuss* medicines, and how to take them.
- I can *read* about different kinds of exercise, and *write* about my habits.
- I can *read* an article about health, *take notes*, and *discuss* it.
- I can *share* a prayer request and *pray* about a physical problem.
- Vocabulary:** I know words for health care places, medicines, and conditions.

5. **Safety**

- I can *report* an emergency to 911.
- I can *ask* questions about an emergency, such as address, condition, etc.
- I can *read* about safety for foreigners in Indonesia, and *tell* a foreigner how to be safe here.
- I can *write* about a personal experience, involving an emergency or safety.
- I can *read* about someone's experience, and *ask* questions.
- Vocabulary:** I know words for emergencies and crimes.

6. **Restaurants**

- I can *read* a restaurant menu, and *ask* questions about it.
- In a restaurant, I can: *order*, *ask* and *answer* questions, and *ask* for the bill.
- I can *express* and *understand* food preferences.
- I can recommend a local restaurant that foreigners might enjoy, in *speaking* and in *writing*.
- I can *express gratitude* for the food.
- Vocabulary:** I know words and phrases for ordering in a restaurant.

7. **Shopping**

- I can *talk* with someone about where and how to buy food.
- I can *read* product labels, and *ask* questions about products.
- I can *talk* with sales people in different kinds of stores.
- I can *understand* a price given in U.S. currency, and give the right amount.
- I can *participate* in a typical conversation about paying by credit.
- I can *write* a paragraph related to shopping.
- I can *read* someone's paragraph, and *write* follow-up questions.
- Vocabulary:** I know types of stores and products, and vocabulary about payment.

8. **Responsibilities in a Community**

- I can *discuss* civic responsibilities and *tell* about my involvement.
- I can *understand* and *fill out* an internet volunteer registration form.
- I can *read* a story about volunteering, and *take notes*.
- I can *read* about a volunteer opportunity.
- I can *write* a letter applying for a volunteer position, and answer questions in an interview.
- I can *compare* volunteering in the U.S. and Indonesia in a *discussion*.
- I can *give a report* about a local volunteer project, and *answer* questions.
- Vocabulary:** I know words related to civic duties and volunteering.

## ABILITY CHECKLIST, LEVEL 4

### The World

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. International Friendships

- I can *introduce* myself (past, family, job, etc.) to a foreigner.
- I can *understand* a native speaker's description of him or herself.
- I can *write* a one-page letter introducing myself to a foreigner.
- I can *read* a letter from a native speaker, introducing him or herself.
- I can *read* about cross-cultural relationships, and *share* my opinions.
- Vocabulary:** I know 20 adjectives used to describe relationships.

#### 2. Geography

- I can *read* about a famous place in the world, and answer questions.
- I can *describe* a foreign place which I have visited or read about.
- I can *answer* questions about the place that I describe.
- I can *watch* a video about a famous place, *write* questions, then *discuss* my questions.
- I can *write* about the geography of Indonesia.
- I can *answer* a foreigner's questions about the geography of Indonesia.
- Vocabulary:** I know 30 country names.
- Vocabulary:** I know words to describe land, water, elevation, etc.

#### 3. Lifestyles

- I can *explain* and *answer* a foreigner's questions about life in Indonesia.
- I can *read* about life in another country, and *share* with my classmates.
- I can *listen* to a description of a different lifestyle, and *ask* questions.
- I can *compare* different lifestyles, and *talk* about positives and negatives.
- I can *write* about a desired lifestyle change for myself or someone else.
- Vocabulary:** I know names of people and adjectives for the 30 country names that I have already learned. (Ex: Sweden, Swede, Swedish)

#### 4. Food

- I can *describe* Indonesian shopping, food preparation, and eating habits.
- I can *write* an Indonesian recipe in English.
- I can *understand* explanations of foreign food habits, and *ask* questions.
- I can *compare* Indonesian food with food from other countries.
- I can *explain* my food preferences.
- I can *read* about nutrition around the world, and *discuss* issues.
- I can *pray* before a meal.
- Vocabulary:** I know words describing food, food categories and meals.

5. **Travel**

- I can *describe* an Indonesian tourist attraction, and *give* advice to foreigners.
- I can *understand* the description of an international tourist attraction.
- I can *write* a letter giving advice to a foreigner coming to Indonesia.
- I can *answer* the questions of a foreigner in Indonesia.
- I can *find* tourist information on the internet; I can *understand* costs, dates, etc.
- I can *read* tourist information in English, and *write* a letter for information.
- I can *pray* for someone who is traveling.
- Vocabulary:** I know how to talk about Indonesian tourist attractions in English.

6. **Understanding Culture**

- I can *understand* a talk about cultural differences, and *ask* questions.
- I can *research* about a foreign culture, and *take notes*.
- I can *give a talk* about a foreign culture, and *answer* questions.
- I can *understand* a talk about non-verbal communication; I can *discuss* potential misunderstandings.
- I can *role play* situations in a foreign culture, using appropriate actions and language.
- I can *write* a paragraph on what I have learned about culture.
- Vocabulary:** I know at least 10 words that are used in discussing culture.

7. **Holidays, Festivals, Religions**

- I can *write* a paragraph about an Indonesian holiday, for a foreigner.
- I can *read* about a foreign holiday, and *write* a summary.
- I can *ask* questions of a foreigner, about special holidays.
- I can *answer* basic questions about North American holidays.
- I can *participate* in a holiday or tradition from another culture, knowing how to act and what to say.
- I can *understand* a talk about major world religions, and *write* a summary.
- Vocabulary:** I know 20 words for holidays, festivals, and religions.

8. **Helping Others**

- I can *read* about a world need, and *answer* questions.
- I can *research* a world need, and *share* with my classmates.
- I can *interview* someone about needs abroad, and *give* a report.
- I can *read* two advertisements for charitable organizations, and *write* a comparison.
- I can *report* on an Indonesian initiative in meeting world needs.
- I can *discuss* Indonesia's responsibilities in the world, and *write* a letter recommending involvement.
- Vocabulary:** I know words to describe world needs and problems.

## ABILITY CHECKLIST, LEVEL 5

### Personal Development

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1. **Personality**

- I can *take* a personality test or learning styles inventory.
- I can *talk* about my abilities and talents in relation to jobs and activities.
- I can *describe* my personality to a friend, and *answer* questions.
- I can *write* a one-page summary of my personality, abilities and talents.
- I can *read* about someone's personality, and *ask* follow-up questions.
- Vocabulary:** I know 30 character quality adjectives.

#### 2. **Life Story**

- I can *write* my life story, suitable for a publication.
- I can *tell* my life story.
- I can *read* a short (1-2 pages) biography, and *answer* questions.
- I can *ask* questions and find out about a person's past.
- I can *answer* someone's questions, telling about my past.
- Vocabulary:** I know the words of life stages.

#### 3. **Life Adventures**

- I can *read* about an adventure, and *answer* questions.
- I can *interview* someone about an adventure.
- I can *write* a summary of an interview.
- I can *plan* a trip, doing research and taking notes.
- I can *present a talk* on a trip, using visuals.
- Vocabulary:** I know nouns and adjectives for countries and people.

#### 4. **Change**

- I can *read* about a life change, and *understand* the main idea.
- I can *tell* about someone who had a significant life change.
- I can *discuss* change, and *understand* why change is difficult.
- I can *do research* about a habit that many people want to change.
- I can *give a talk* about how to achieve a desired change.
- Vocabulary:** I know expressions for habits.
- Vocabulary:** I can describe life change in writing and speaking.

5. **Problems and solutions**

- I can *read* about a problem, and *discuss* it, giving suggestions.
- I can *write* a response to a problem, giving advice.
- I can *write* about a problem, asking for advice.
- I can *apply* my faith or values to a current problem.
- Vocabulary:** I know words for problems related to marriage, family, and health.

6. **Social Responsibility**

- I can *read* about a need in another part of the world, and answer questions.
- I can *understand* advertising (print and video) requesting charitable donations.
- I can *do research* about a charitable organization.
- I can *present* a report on the above, and *answer* questions.
- I can *interview* a volunteer about his or her work.
- I can *write* a summary of my interview for a newsletter.
- Vocabulary:** I know words for natural disasters and social problems.

7. **Ethical Dilemmas**

- I can *read* about ethical issues, and *discuss* my opinion.
- I can *participate* in a group decision on an ethical problem.
- I can *read* about an ethical problem in our society, and *write* a response.
- I can *write and share* a personal point of view on an ethical question.
- Vocabulary:** I know the words and expressions for controversial issues.

8. **Future Plans**

- I can *understand* a talk about goal-setting.
- I can *list* my short and long-term goals.
- I can *share* my goals, and *understand* someone else's goals.
- I can *speak clearly* about possibilities, probabilities and certainties.
- I can *write* a final essay about my goals and dreams, and read it to others.
- Vocabulary:** I know words and expressions to talk about the future.