

Levels of knowledge of Polish as a foreign language

What do terms such as B1 or A2 mean? How long do I need to study Polish to speak it fluently? How long does it take to study one level? - these are some of the most common questions asked by students. It is worth knowing the answers to these questions before enrolling in a Polish as a Foreign Language course.

What do terms such as B 1 or A2 mean?

These are examples of the language proficiency codes, defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The letters A, B, and C designate the three main language proficiency levels basic, intermediate, and advanced, respectively), and the numbers 1 and 2 designate two smaller proficiency levels (1 - lower, 2 - higher). Sometimes, the terms A0 (complete beginner, starting "from scratch") and D (native speaker level) are also used.

How long do I need to study Polish to speak it fluently? How long does it take to advance one level?

Unfortunately, it is not possible to specify a fixed number of hours of study needed to reach a certain proficiency level. This is because the time needed to learn a foreign language is specific to the individual and depends on many factors, such as the time able to be devoted to learning (also individually, between lessons); the knowledge of other languages (e.g. knowing Slavic languages such as Slovak or Ukrainian simplifies and accelerates the learning of Polish); and on factors like our commitment, age, abilities, and learning skills. Generally, it takes around 120-200 hours to get to the next level. Remember, however, that learning certain skills requires more time – for instance, writing skills cannot be learned in a few lessons. It takes a lot of practice to become proficient in this area (remember how long it took you to learn to write essays in your own language?). Therefore, the speed of acquiring skills at any level can also fluctuate and differ from one student to another.

I don't know what level I'm at...

This often happens, especially if you have primarily focused on only one skill - for example, if you have only learned Polish "by ear" or tried to read Polish texts on your own. But don't fret – it's not a problem! Before signing up for a Polish as a Foreign Language course, we will ask you to speak with a teacher and write a placement test. Thanks to these methods, you will find out right away which level you are currently at, what you need to work on, and what you have already mastered.

The chart below will help you approximate your current level and/or which level you need to reach in order to achieve your goals.

Level of knowledge of the Polish language		Level according to CEFR*	Overall description	When you finish studying at this level, you should be able to: (example skills)	For whom? This level is sufficient if...
Basic (beginner)	Lower proficiency	A1	<p>You are able to communicate in Polish in the most basic situations.</p> <p>You can construct very simple sentences.</p> <p>Your conversational partner must speak slowly and clearly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - know the Polish alphabet and pronunciation rules, and be able to pronounce any Polish word -introduce and say a few sentences about yourself - about your family, work, interests, etc. -deal with the simplest communication situations, e.g., you can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -buy tickets for the bus, train, and cinema - ask for directions - shop at the store, pharmacy, and kiosks - book a table at a restaurant and order dinner - order a pizza and a taxi - inform the doctor about your health problems 	<p>you are visiting Poland for a short time (e.g. as a tourist or student for 1 semester) and you just want to learn the basics of the language</p>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talk about what you did yesterday, what you are doing today and tomorrow, etc. - understand simple sentences and short subtitles - write simple text messages and e-mails - make appointments that require specifying the date and time 	
	Higher proficiency	A2	You can understand simple sentences spoken at a slow pace. You can participate in 'normal' everyday life without major problems or special assistance.	<p>Utilize the range of material from the A1 level and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -expand the vocabulary and skills learned at the A1 level - understand and construct longer sentences using simple sentences - engage in routine, simple dialogue about everyday topics (e.g. work, weather, or family) - write short, uncomplicated professional messages (text messages, e-mails, greetings, wishes, etc.) - express your emotions in a simple way - know most of the basic grammar rules, - make wishes, express thanks, and give compliments 	you want to have a general understanding of the language and communicate with Poles in everyday situations

				- express assumptions and orders	
Intermediate (independent)	Lower proficiency	B1	You are an independent language user. You use the Polish language well and do not need help in everyday situations. You understand Poles who speak at a slow pace and can join the conversation.	Utilize the range of material from the A2 level and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand the main points of routine written and spoken communication that is conveyed using general language (e.g. newspaper, internet, radio, television) - express feelings and emotions - talk about plans, dreams, and the past and future - have no problem in everyday conversations - know all the basic grammar rules - use an extensive vocabulary - describe the world around you – e.g. people, nature, city, rooms - relate and describe situations 	you want to communicate freely with Poles. This level is useful if you want to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - obtain a permanent residence permit in Poland - get Polish citizenship - apply for the Pole's Card
	Higher proficiency	B2	You already know Polish well - you have no problems with everyday informal communication or in formal situations	Utilize the material from the B1 level and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand both simple and more complex messages - understand general language texts, but also those on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you plan to study in Poland -you're looking

			<p>(e.g. in offices). You can understand general language texts and can also read more specialized texts. You can write longer texts and conduct conversations fluently and actively</p>	<p>specific topics from various fields and on abstract information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand television programs and movies, as long as they use the standard conventions of the Polish language 	<p>for a job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you want to stay in Poland for a longer period of time - you want to understand articles, movies, programs, and books
Advanced	Lower proficiency	C1	<p>You can talk freely with Poles and can read Polish literature, media, and specialized texts. You understand Polish films without major problems, including those in which informal usage of the language appears (e.g. trade language, slang)</p>	<p>Utilize the range of material from the B2 level and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand difficult texts written for general and specialized purposes, - understand and can use metaphors and other stylistic devices - express yourself fluently about any everyday topic and without much difficulty - on specialized topics in your field - compose complex statements using the correct grammar, 	<p>you are a specialist - you want to work or study in Poland and understand everything without any problem</p>

				spelling, syntax, and stylistic rules	
	Higher proficiency	C2	<p>You already know Polish perfectly and are now focusing on-refining the details of pronunciation, accentuation, syntax and style. You have a rich vocabulary and know idioms and different styles of the language.</p>	<p>Utilize the range of material from the C1 level and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand all general written and spoken communication as well as specialized texts - read literary texts, including those written in an older style of the language - recognize and understand different variations of the language, including industry-specific terms and slang - recognize popular dialects - understand texts that differ stylistically - write long texts, including specialized texts (e.g. essays, reviews, short stories, summaries), choosing the right vocabulary and style - write without spelling, grammar, syntactic, and stylistic errors - master all grammatical rules and avoid making any mistakes - converse on any topic fluently and spontaneously, even when your conversational partner does not speak 	<p>- you want to know Polish like your own language (or even better 😊)</p>

				clearly or uses colloquial language - use a rich vocabulary and idioms that are accurately selected according to the situation	
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*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages , CEFR

You can find more information about the levels here:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/official-translations-of-the-cefr-global-scale>