

The Complete Language Score & CLB Guide

Converting IELTS General Training, CELPIP, PTE Core, TEF Canada and TCF Canada scores to CLB — based on the official IRCC equivalency tables

If Canada is your destination and Express Entry is your route, nothing shapes your file the way your language score does. It is both a gate and a lever: the gate that decides which immigration programs you qualify for at all, and the single biggest lever you control for raising your CRS score. In this guide you will learn what the CLB actually is, how scores from all five IRCC-approved tests convert into it, the minimum each program demands, and how one well-planned jump in CLB can add dozens of CRS points to your profile.

Every table in this guide was checked directly against the official IRCC pages on canada.ca at the time of writing.

What Is the CLB?

CLB stands for **Canadian Language Benchmarks**, the Canadian government's standard scale for measuring English ability. It runs from 1 to 12 and rates each of the four abilities — Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing — separately. Its French counterpart is the **NCLC** (Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens).

Here is the key point most applicants miss: IRCC never works with your raw IELTS or PTE score. Everything is converted to CLB first, and every decision is made on the CLB number. Two applicants who took different tests but landed on the same CLB are, in immigration terms, exactly equal.

The tests approved for Express Entry are these five:

- **English:** CELPIP-General, IELTS General Training, PTE Core
- **French:** TEF Canada, TCF Canada

Three details worth underlining:

1. Only the **General Training** module of IELTS is accepted — not Academic.
2. The **IELTS One Skill Retake** is not accepted for Express Entry. If you want to improve one ability, you have to sit the entire test again.
3. Your results must be **less than two years old** — both on the day you complete your Express Entry profile and on the day you apply for permanent residence.

Converting Test Scores to CLB

The tables below are taken directly from IRCC's official page. To claim a given CLB level, you need at least the score shown in **every ability**.

1) CELPIP-General

The simplest conversion there is: your CELPIP score in each ability *is* your CLB level.

CLB	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
10	10-12	10-12	10-12	10-12
9	9	9	9	9
8	8	8	8	8
7	7	7	7	7
6	6	6	6	6
5	5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4	4

2) IELTS General Training

CLB	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
10	7.5-9.0	8.5-9.0	8.0-9.0	7.5-9.0
9	7.0	8.0	7.0	7.0
8	6.5	7.5	6.5	6.5
7	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
6	5.5	5.5	5.0	5.5
5	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0
4	4.0	4.5	3.5	4.0

Notice the asymmetry: IELTS Listening is graded strictly at the top (CLB 9 requires Listening 8.0), while Reading is forgiving at the bottom (Reading 4.0 is enough for CLB 5).

3) PTE Core

CLB	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
10	89+	89+	88+	90+
9	84-88	82-88	78-87	88-89
8	76-83	71-81	69-77	79-87
7	68-75	60-70	60-68	69-78
6	59-67	50-59	51-59	60-68
5	51-58	39-49	42-50	51-59
4	42-50	28-38	33-41	41-50

4) TEF Canada (French)

NCLC	Speaking (EO)	Listening (CO)	Reading (CE)	Writing (EE)
10	393-450	316-360	263-300	393-450

NCLC	Speaking (EO)	Listening (CO)	Reading (CE)	Writing (EE)
9	371-392	298-315	248-262	371-392
8	349-370	280-297	233-247	349-370
7	310-348	249-279	207-232	310-348
6	271-309	217-248	181-206	271-309
5	226-270	181-216	151-180	226-270
4	181-225	145-180	121-150	181-225

One caveat: if you took TEF Canada between **December 11, 2023 and May 6, 2024**, scoring was temporarily modified during that window, and IRCC has asked affected candidates to update their profiles with the corrected scores.

5) TCF Canada (French)

NCLC	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
10	16-20	549-699	549-699	16-20
9	14-15	523-548	524-548	14-15
8	12-13	503-522	499-523	12-13
7	10-11	458-502	453-498	10-11
6	7-9	398-457	406-452	7-9
5	6	369-397	375-405	6
4	4-5	331-368	342-374	4-5

Rather than checking these tables by hand every time, use the [AvalVisa CLB converter](#): enter your score for each ability and see the exact CLB for all four at once.

The Lowest-Ability Rule — the One That Catches People Off Guard

There is no such thing as an "overall CLB" or an "average CLB". IRCC converts each ability separately, and every program requirement must be met in **each of the four abilities** on its own. The practical consequence: **your weakest ability is your real level**.

A concrete example. Say your IELTS General results are Listening 8.5, Reading 8.0, Writing 7.0, Speaking 5.5. Three of those abilities sit at CLB 9 and 10 — but Speaking 5.5 converts to CLB 6. That report card does not meet the CLB 7 requirement of the Federal Skilled Worker program, and every points calculation that depends on "all four abilities" — such as the skill transferability factors — is capped by that one weak skill.

So before booking your next test date, resist the urge to polish your strong abilities. Put all your energy into pulling the weakest one up; that is where the points are.

Minimum CLB for Each Express Entry Program

According to IRCC's official Express Entry language requirements page:

Program	Minimum language requirement
Federal Skilled Worker (FSW)	CLB/NCLC 7 in all four abilities (first official language) — second official language, if claimed: minimum CLB/NCLC 5
Canadian Experience Class (CEC) — TEER 0 and 1 jobs	CLB/NCLC 7 in all four abilities
Canadian Experience Class (CEC) — TEER 2 and 3 jobs	CLB/NCLC 5 in all four abilities
Federal Skilled Trades (FST)	Speaking and Listening: CLB/NCLC 5 — Reading and Writing: CLB/NCLC 4

Keep in mind these are entry thresholds, nothing more. Minimum scores get you into the Express Entry pool; they do not get you an invitation. The real competition happens on your CRS score.

Which Test Is the Best Fit for Iranians?

Short answer: the one that matches your learning style, your test-centre access, and your weak spots. Here is how the options compare — whether you are preparing from inside Iran or from Toronto, Istanbul, Dubai, or anywhere else the Iranian diaspora calls home.

IELTS General Training. By far the most familiar option for Iranians: Persian-language books, teachers, prep courses and mock tests exist in quantities no other test can match, and IELTS has a long history of being administered inside Iran — useful if the person taking the test is you, your spouse, or a family member still there. Speaking is a live, face-to-face interview with an examiner, which feels natural to some and nerve-racking to others. The classic Persian-speaker weakness on IELTS is Writing, which is graded strictly; and from CLB 9 upward, the Listening bar is high too.

CELP-IP-General. Fully computer-based, completed in a single sitting, built around Canadian accents and everyday Canadian situations, with a conversion to CLB that is direct and unambiguous. It suits fast typists and anyone who tenses up in a face-to-face interview, and if you already live in Canada it is the most accessible option of all. The limitation applies to family members still in Iran: test centres are concentrated in Canada and a limited number of other countries, so sitting CELPIP from Iran usually means travelling. Before anyone commits, check the current list of test centres and confirm the fee can actually be paid from where they are.

PTE Core. The youngest test on the list: fully computer-based, machine-scored, with fast results. It has become popular with people who are comfortable speaking into a microphone and would rather not have a human examiner judging their Speaking in real time. The trade-off is a question format quite different from IELTS — without format-specific practice, even strong English speakers can be caught out. Test-centre coverage and Persian-language prep material still lag behind IELTS, though both are growing quickly.

TEF / TCF Canada (French). If you are willing to take French seriously — from scratch or from an intermediate base — this is the most points-generous route of all, as the next section shows. For Persian speakers, learning French from zero is realistically a one-to-two-year project, so it makes most sense if your timeline is longer or you already have some French behind you.

The bottom line: if resources and access matter most, choose IELTS General; if you dread live interviews and type quickly, look at PTE Core or CELPIP; and if you want maximum CRS points over the medium term, take French seriously.

A CLB Strategy for a Real CRS Jump

Since **March 25, 2025**, job offer points have been removed from the CRS — which makes language the **biggest factor still under your control**. Under the official CRS grid, first-official-language points for **each ability** are:

CLB level per ability	Points (without spouse)	Points (with spouse)
CLB 4 or 5	6	6
CLB 6	9	8
CLB 7	17	16
CLB 8	23	22
CLB 9	31	29
CLB 10+	34	32

Burn three golden thresholds into memory:

The CLB 7 threshold. This is the FSW entry requirement and the point where the skill transferability factors switch on — language combined with education or with foreign work experience, worth up to 25 points per combination.

The CLB 9 threshold — the big one. The moment **all four abilities** reach CLB 9, two things happen at once: the base score per ability jumps from 23 to 31, and the transferability cap doubles from 25 to 50 points per combination. Run the numbers for a single applicant with a bachelor's degree and three years of foreign work experience who moves from CLB 8 to CLB 9 in all four abilities: 32 base points (4×8), plus 25 more from the education combination, plus 25 more from the foreign-work combination — **a jump of up to roughly 80 points**, from nothing but a better test report. What CLB 9 looks like in practice: IELTS L 8.0 / R 7.0 / W 7.0 / S 7.0, CELPIP 9 in every ability, or PTE Core around 84 / 82 / 78 / 88.

The French NCLC 7 threshold. Score NCLC 7 in all four French abilities while holding CLB 5 or higher across your English abilities, and you collect **50 additional points** (with weaker English, or no English test at all, it is 25 points). On top of that come the second-official-language points, worth up to 24. For many files stuck just below the invitation cut-off, French is effectively a shortcut to an invitation — especially since IRCC also runs draws dedicated to French speakers.

Four practical recommendations:

1. Start by running your current report card through the [CLB converter](#) and identify your weakest ability.
2. Then build two scenarios in the [AvalVisa CRS calculator](#): your score today, and your score one CLB step higher. The gap between those two numbers is your motivation to practise.
3. Because the IELTS One Skill Retake is not accepted, make sure all four abilities are ready before you rebook — not just the weak one.
4. If you are close to the CLB 9 threshold, the cost of one or two extra test sittings is trivial next to dozens of CRS points. But if you are stuck around CLB 6-7, a targeted course focused on your weakest ability will pay off far more than sitting test after test.

The Bottom Line

CLB is the common currency of every Canadian immigration program. Learn the tables, respect the lowest-ability rule, aim for the 7 and 9 thresholds, and if your horizon is long enough, bring French into the equation. The AvalVisa team keeps both the [CLB converter](#) and the [CRS calculator](#) aligned with the official IRCC tables, so you can plan your path with real numbers rather than guesswork.

This guide is for general information and is not a substitute for formal immigration advice. All tables and requirements were checked against the official [canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca) pages at the time of writing; always review the latest IRCC pages before making a final decision. Prepared for avalvisa.com by Hadi Imani, Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC #R522575).

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