Reading and Listening Skill Level Descriptors for ESL – STEPS

ESL Level*	Descriptors
6	**Advanced ESL** **Reading:** Can understand complex texts such as operating instructions, work reports, and manuals containing workplace and technical vocabulary. Can analyse and evaluate the reasoning in persuasive texts, determine central ideas or themes and identify supporting ideas. Can determine the meaning of general academic and content-specific words and phrases as well as idiomatic language in some academic and professional texts. **Listening:** Can participate in conversations and extended discussions about a range of substantive topics, texts, and issues. Can understand extended speech on a range of topics such as detailed presentations, meetings, and media broadcasts to summarize claims and evidence.
5	**High Intermediate ESL** **Reading**: Can understand the overall structure of most written materials in everyday and workplace communications and diagrams. Can apply reading skills to searching for documents and information online efficiently. Has proficiency with some technical vocabulary related to work needs and a growing number of idiomatic expressions which aid in understanding website organization and business correspondence. **Listening**: Can participate in routine conversations, discussions, and exchanges of information about a range of work and life topics and issues delivered at a normal rate. Can understand instructions in a variety of contexts.
4	**Low Intermediate ESL** **Reading**: Can understand text in formats such as tables, checklists, and more detailed forms in the workplace. With help, can cite specific details from and summarize texts such as routine emails and webpage content. Using context, can determine the meaning of general words and phrases and frequently occurring expressions in written texts about familiar every day and work contexts, such as in simple written instructions and basic terms in common computer applications. **Listening**: Can integrate the ideas of multiple speakers in routine conversations and answer relevant questions about familiar topics. Can follow basic rules for discussion and ask questions to gain information and clarify understanding.
3	**High Beginning ESL** **Reading:** Can understand simple material on familiar topics such as workplace notices, advertisements, and common forms. With support, can identify the main topic and locate information in short familiar texts and ordered lists. Can determine the meaning of frequently occurring words, phrases, and expressions in written texts about familiar topics such as basic directions, schedules, signs, maps, and menus. **Listening:** Can take turns in interactions with others and respond to simple wh- questions with noticeable ease. Can participate in and understand the main idea of conversations about familiar topics and contexts.
2	**Low Beginning ESL** **Reading:** Can understand transportation, health, and workplace signs with multiple words or symbols and can comprehend short texts such as simple work forms. Can understand frequently occurring words, simple phrases, and formulaic expressions beyond basic needs such as in labels and work schedules. **Listening:** Can understand common yes/no questions and wh- questions on familiar topics. Can actively listen to and participate in short conversations about familiar contexts and topics such as simple greetings and introductions, and workplace instructions.
1	**Beginning ESL Literacy** **Reading:** Can understand very common words and symbols to meet basic personal and survival needs. Can understand important information on flyers and signs, such as time, days of the week, months, years, and numbers 1-100. Can recognize the meaning of some frequently occurring words and phrases on simple public signs and very basic forms. **Listening:** Can understand simple yes/no questions and some wh- questions. With limited involvement, can participate in short conversations involving simple greetings and introductions. Can minimally comprehend isolated words and phrases (e.g., recognizing basic commands).

*National Reporting System's (NRS) Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs) for ESL