The galectin-1 gene encodes a beta-galactoside-binding protein whose overexpression is associated with neoplastic transformation and loss of differentiation. Transient transfection assays of a series of deletions constructs (pGAT) showed that the galectin-1 promoter is highly active in cells both expressing and non-expressing the endogenous gene, and that the basal activity is determined by sequences encompassing the transcription start site (-50/+50). Both an upstream (-50/-26) and a downstream position-dependent (+10/+50) cis-elements are necessary for efficient transcriptional activity and are able to bind nuclear proteins.