

TOEFL iBT Test

The information below is currently not available in a study book. It is a completion of information from the ETS website and other organizations.

For those of you who may not have heard, the TOEFL iBT test has changed. Overall it is now shorter (3 ½ hours as opposed to 4 hours). The ETS states that the test is the same level of difficulty as before and that the new scores are comparable to the previous version of the test. Some organizations believe that the Reading, Listening, and Speaking sections are a bit easier because of the reduced amount of questions and passages. The Writing Section has remained the same. Currently there are no sample tests available to study with, but over the next year ETS will begin to make some available. At this time, it is recommended for students preparing to take the TOEFL iBT test to not change their study plans or strategies.

There is now a “MyBest Score” report included in a student’s score report. In other words, if a student takes the TOEFL iBT test more than once, both the current score will appear and a student’s best score for each section. This is intended to help students who are applying to university programs where they need a minimum score. It is the student’s responsibility to see if the program they are applying to will accept a “MyBest Score” report from ETS versus the last score report.

TOEFL TEST COMPARISON

Section of Test	Before 8-1-19	After 8-1-19
Reading	<p>3-4 Reading Passages. 12-14 Questions per Reading Passage. 60-80 Minutes for this Section. 90 Seconds to answer each question.</p>	<p>3-4 Reading Passages. 10 Questions per Reading Passage. 54-72 Minutes for this section. 105 Seconds to answer each question. Same question types and Reading Passages as before 8-1-19, just fewer questions.</p>
Listening	<p>4-6 Lectures with 6 questions each. 2-3 Conversations with 5 questions each. 60-90 Minutes. 34 Questions (24 Academic Based Questions or 70% of the Listening Section). 105 Seconds to answer each question.</p>	<p>3-4 Lectures with 6 questions each. 2-3 Conversations with 5 questions each. 41-57 Minutes. 28 Questions (18 Academic Based Questions or 64% of the Listening Section). Better for students who struggle with listening or paying attention to Academic Lectures. 87 Seconds to answer each question. Same question types and Listening Passages as before 8-1-19, just fewer Listening Passages.</p>
Speaking	<p>6 Tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  2 Independent Tasks— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independent Free-Choice ○ Independent Paired-Choice  4 Integrated Tasks— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Integrated Campus Conversation (Read/Listen). ○ Integrated Academic Lecture (Read/Listen). ○ Integrated Campus Conversation (Listening Only). ○ Integrated Academic Lecture (Listening Only). <p>20 Minutes.</p>	<p>4 Tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  1 Independent Task— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independent Paired-Choice  3 Integrated Tasks— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Integrated Campus Conversation (Read/Listen). ○ Integrated Academic Lecture (Read/Listen). ○ Integrated Academic Lecture (Listening Only). <p>17 Minutes. There is more context given before the question, and the questions themselves are longer. Remember to just focus on the main idea and answer the question.</p>
Writing	<p>2 Essays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Integrated Writing Topic. 20 Minutes  Independent Writing Topic. 30 Minutes 	<p>The Independent Writing Question has gotten longer. There is more context given before the essay question. There is now a warning on the essay prompts: "Do not use memorized examples". You can still use templates.</p> <p>2 Essays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Integrated Writing Topic. 20 Minutes  Independent Writing Topic. 30 Minutes

Tips for Preparing for the TOEFL

The test is designed for you to either enter an educational program or work program in the United States. In order to do well on the test, you need to think like an “American” college student.

LISTENING SECTION

When you are preparing for the listening section of the test, avoid common mistakes:

1-You try to understand everything.

-  Focus on the main points of the listening passage.
-  Understand the typical structure of a lecture.
-  Anticipate the questions. There should be one question about what the main idea is.

2-You open your eyes.

-  Close your eyes to eliminate distractions and to focus only on what is being presented to you.
-  It is extremely important to avoid looking at other students during the test and focus only on your computer station and/or desk. This will help to reduce distractions.

3-You take bad notes.

-  If you take notes, only write down nouns and verbs.
-  Use short hand. You do not need perfect spelling, grammar, etc. as these are your notes and no one else will see them. The purpose of notes is to jog your memory.

4-You write down the main idea.

-  Sometimes the main point or idea of the listening passage is not clear or simple at the beginning of the passage and you don't understand what the main idea is until the end of the listening passage. Focusing too much on what the main idea is and trying to write it down can distract you so much that you miss all the subtopics.

5-You think like a student.

-  Instead, think like a teacher.
-  Why is the specific information being presented in the lecture versus something else? Why is one idea highlighted or emphasized over another? Why is an explicit date or number stated?
-  Think about the structure of the presentation.

When preparing for the listening section of the test, students should consider thinking like a teacher. By thinking like a teacher, you can anticipate the structure of the academic lecture. Teachers usually begin lectures by introducing a topic, concept, or definition. After they have introduced the topic, concept or definition, they try to provide examples or subtopics in order for a student to better understand the main topic. It is a good idea to take note throughout the lecture and all of the listening activities. When listening to a lecture, try to clue in on traditional words and phrases such as “another important concept”, “another example”, “now”, and “related”, etc. These should help you group your information and highlight what is important. Oftentimes, the majority of the questions for the listening section come from the subtopics or examples.

READING SECTION

When you are preparing for the reading section of the test, avoid common mistakes:

1-Read the passage first.

-  The test is not designed for students to read the entire passage, take notes, and thoughtfully answer the questions. It is a speed test as much as it is a comprehension test.
-  Many students decide to read the title, as well as the first and last sentence of each paragraph before diving into the answering the questions.
-  Some students chose to read the title, the introduction paragraph, and then the first sentence of each paragraph before answering the questions.
-  Still others will look over the questions and answer as many possible before going to look at the passage.
-  No matter what strategy you use, keep in mind that there is not enough time to read everything. Focus on getting as many correct answers as possible,

2-You don't take notes.

-  There is not enough time to make thoughtful notes about the passage or really any notes about the passage itself.
-  Focus on the questions. Write out the numbers on a piece of paper. If you are struggling with the answer to a question, try and eliminate as many answers as possible. Make an educated guess. Then circle the number of a question on your paper you wish to go back to and give more thought about if you have time.

3-Never review answers.

-  When you are taking practice test, it is a good idea to look over the answers. You need to understand why an answer is correct or incorrect. Do this will help you see patterns, increase comprehension, and better prepare you for the actual test.

4-Wrong practice type.

 Although it is a good idea to prepare for other standardized tests such as the SAT, you will only improve your score for the TOEFL if you practice and study for the TOEFL. Each standardized test type is unique, is testing for a particular set of skills, and has different strategies one should use to be successful.

5-You only watch YouTube videos.

 You need to actually do it. You can only learn and improve by really going out there and listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English as much as possible. Practice, practice, practice!

Reading passages are like puzzles. It is salient to understand the structure of a traditional reading passage on a standardized test. Most reading passages will start with an introduction and usually the last sentence of the introduction is the thesis statement or main point of the whole piece. The introduction is followed by two or more body paragraphs in which each one is supporting a different aspect of the thesis. The last paragraph is the conclusion and in many cases is a summary of the whole reading passage.

Make sure that you try and eliminate as many answers as possible when answering difficult questions. You are given four choices. Every time you eliminate an answer, you increase the probability of getting a correct answer.

# of choices	Probability
4 choices	25%
3 choices	33%
2 choices	50%
1 choice	100%

The questions are designed to be tricky. Sometimes when given a vocabulary question you may see synonyms of wrong answer choices in the original sentence, but your focus needs to be on the definition of the specific vocabulary word. Be sure you can explain why you selected your answer. In other words, why is a choice correct or incorrect.

SPEAKING SECTION

When you are preparing for the speaking section of the test, avoid common mistakes:

1-Ignoring your weaknesses.

-  Understand what your weaknesses are.
-  Practice speaking in English as much as possible.
-  If you are watching videos try to repeat what you hear.

2-Not recording your voice.

- ✎ Most people do not know what they sound like to others, especially in a second language.
- ✎ By recording your voice, you can learn to adjust your volume, accent, and pronunciation.

3-You try to fix everything.

- ✎ When you have discovered your weaknesses and listened to yourself speak, try and catalogue what needs to be improved.
- ✎ Focus on improving one aspect of your speaking at a time. Once you have overcome one weakness, move on to the next one on your list.
- ✎ If you try to fix too many things at once, you may become overwhelmed and frustrated, which may deter you from moving forward.

4-You don't repeat the question.

- ✎ When preparing for the speaking portion, many students try to complete as many questions as possible rather than completing one or two really well. Focus on one question at a time.
- ✎ Perfect the answer to one question by repeating your answer multiple times each time improving upon an area of weakness. This will help you learn more in the long run than doing several questions back-to-back without making corrections.

5-You have no feelings.

- ✎ One way to show mastery/fluency of a language is through the emotions or feelings one can hear in another's voice, not just the literal words being used.
- ✎ Feelings are often expressed through changes in volume, speed, and tone.
- ✎ It is better to be more expressive in your feelings than to have a grammatically perfect response to a question, as emotions convey additional meaning.

For the Independent Paired Choice Question

You need to have an opinion on the topic presented. Do not create a neutral opinion. You must sound like you are the expert and that you are absolutely correct. Your goal is to make the listener agree with your opinion. Only argue one-side of the topic!

For the Integrated Campus Conversation Question

You need to imagine you are a reporter. Your goal is to present both sides or multiple perspectives on the topic. First state the facts as presented in the question or as you know the information from experts. Then state the different opinions and the reasons for the different opinions about the topic.

For the Integrated Academic Lecture Questions

You need to think like a teacher. Explain the topic through examples, characteristics, and/or history. Be sure to start off with a definition or fact about the topic before jumping to getting the listener to understand you through the context of examples, characteristics, and/or history.

WRITING SECTION

When you are preparing for the writing section of the test, avoid common mistakes:

1-You start writing immediately.

- ✎ Make an outline before you begin writing. This is especially important for the independent essay. Remember to include two opinions and examples to support your opinions in the independent essay.

2-You think you're done, but you're not.

- ✎ Unfortunately, the most difficult section for most students is the writing section and it is the last section of the test. It is understandable that you are tired and want to rush through the end, but don't.
- ✎ Be sure to take the time to read through each essay and edit them for spelling, grammar, and word choice, more importantly, make sure you have answered the question being asked.
- ✎ A couple of minutes of editing can increase your score by a couple of points to several points depending upon what you end up needing to edit.

3-You use fancy words.

- ✎ It is good to vary your language and not use the same words all the time. It is a good idea to know synonyms, however, it is equally important to understand which synonyms are appropriate. Your writing needs to sound like a native speaker has written it and not someone who is struggling with the definition of words. Although "important", "salient", and "significant" mean the same thing, a native speaker will use the words "important" and "significant", whereas only a very small group of people would use the word salient.
- ✎ Make sure you are comfortable with the language you are using and know the meaning of all of the words you are using. If you are not comfortable with your vocabulary, a grader can tell. Simple words still convey the message you are trying to get across with your essay.

4-You think your opinion matters.

- ✎ When it comes to the integrated writing essay, DO NOT state your opinion on the topic. Only use the information that ETS has provided you on the topic. You are only to report the information presented. If an opinion is stated within the information provided, then like a news reporter, you can state "it is Dr. Smith's opinion that...she believes this is so because...".

5-You do it alone.

- ✎ Writing and speaking are two skills in which a person needs the assistance of another.

- ✎ It is best to have a teacher, tutor, or native English speaker help you with your speaking and writing in English.

For the Independent Essay

Although important, perfect grammar, proper spelling, and great vocabulary are not going to get you a 30 on your writing section. ETS is more concerned about clarity, organization, and topic development. In fact, the grading break-down of the essays is that 35% of the score comes from grammar and vocabulary, whereas 65% of the score comes from the organization and development of the essay. You will want to create an outline of your overall essay, but make sure to focus a strong introduction. You only get one chance to make a good impression upon the graders of your essay. Your introduction should be structured like this:

- 1-A general statement related to the topic.
- 2-A sentence that narrows down and is closer to the exact topic.
- 3-A restatement of the question/essay topic.
- 4-State your opinion.
- 5-Provide two specific reasons for your opinion.

Each one of the above can represent a sentence, but sometimes these can be combined or expanded upon. A good rule of thumb is to not have an introduction of less than 4 sentences and no more than 8 sentences for the TOEFL.

It is also important to consider who is grading your essay. The first grading of the essay takes place by a computer program or robo-grader. The robo-grader has been programmed to look for:

- ✎ Number of words
 - This is one area in which using fluffy language (extra words) can be to your benefit.
- ✎ How often words are repeated
 - The robo-grader is not looking for common words being repeated such as articles (the, a, an, etc.), conjunctions (and, but, yet, etc.), or basic verbs (is, are, was, etc.).
- ✎ Number of phrasal verbs
 - Verb phrases with two or more words such as “agree with,” “act upon,” “cut out for”, etc.
- ✎ Use of idioms and colloquial phrases
 - Using idioms and colloquial phrases too much can become too casual, but using some throughout the essay shows an understanding of culture and the American English language.
- ✎ Word length & Sophisticated Vocabulary
 - Although it is acceptable to use simple words to convey your meaning, a few advanced words smattered throughout your composition correctly

shows that you have a greater grasp of vocabulary. However, do not use fancy words for the sake of using fancy words.

- If you sound like a thesaurus or dictionary, that can be counterproductive to the overall clarity of your essay.

Sentence length

- It is important to vary sentence length and grammatical structure.
- Using some more complex grammatical structures such as conditional sentences can yield a higher score.
 - Consider using a conditional sentence as the last sentence of the introduction and another one in the conclusion of the personal example in the independent essay.
 - A conditional sentence example is: “If I had to choose, I would definitely _____”.

Amount of commas

- More complex sentences generally use more commas.