

## Answers to Common Questions for TOEFL® Test Preparation: The Insider's Guide

### About the Course

**COURSE NAVIGATION:** To get started, click on the "Course" tab at the top of the course homepage. Please take some time to get familiar with the course syllabus and policies in unit 1.3. If you have any trouble navigating through the course, refer to unit 1.3.

**COURSE CONTENT:** In this test preparation course, instructors will guide you through each test section (Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing) and explain the kinds of questions you can expect using archived past test questions. During the weeks covering Speaking and Writing, all course participants can receive a score range for their practice test responses. During this course, you will get a look inside how the test is made. After taking this course, you will have a much better understanding of how to study for the TOEFL test. If you are ready to register for the test, you can do that anytime at: [www.ets.org/toefl/register](http://www.ets.org/toefl/register).

**VERIFIED CERTIFICATES:** You have the option to **upgrade to a Verified Certificate**. If you already upgraded, be sure to complete the quizzes and practice tests in the course. You can check what you have already submitted on the Progress tab in the top navigation bar of the course. Remember, to receive your verified certificate you need a final grade of 75% or higher. Your verified certificate will be issued to you through your edX dashboard a few days after the course ends.

### Additional Practice

**PRACTICE MATERIALS:** In addition to the practice content in the course, you can see our main TOEFL® test resources here: [www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/prepare/](http://www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/prepare/).

**COMPLETE PRACTICE TEST:** By participating in the course you qualify for an exclusive 25% discount on any TOEFL® Practice Online products. You can use this discount to purchase a complete practice test at [www.ets.org/toefl/shoptestprep](http://www.ets.org/toefl/shoptestprep). See more details in Unit 6.6 of the course.



## Reading

**BUILDING VOCABULARY:** There are lots of ways to learn new words, but what's important is to commit to learning a few new words every day. You can use vocabulary flash cards, study vocabulary words you find on university websites, and read novels, online articles, and news stories. We also recommend linking new vocabulary terms to an experience that you have had. This is a great strategy for remembering new words!

**READING SPEED:** Techniques like skimming and scanning can help to identify main ideas quickly. It's also important to make sure you are reading practice texts at the right level of difficulty. If your reading materials are too easy, you won't build your skills. If they are too difficult, you will just get frustrated. Another tip is to time yourself when using practice materials.

**MANAGING YOUR TIME:** During the Reading section, you should spend no more than 20 minutes on each reading passage and the related questions. You can use free practice materials such as the *TOEFL iBT*<sup>®</sup> Free Practice Test to time yourself. As you practice, you will see how much time you typically need to read each passage and how much time you typically need to answer the questions. Once you figure this out, you can adjust how much time you give yourself for reading a passage and answering questions.

## Listening

**VOCABULARY:** First, there is no specific list of TOEFL vocabulary that ETS has created or endorsed. In order to do well on the TOEFL test, you should be able to understand and use vocabulary that is typical of a first-year university student. This includes academic words that cross subject areas, such as "arbitrary," "capacity," and "fluctuate." Second, you are not required to know specialized vocabulary for specific fields like geology or economics. If there are specialized vocabulary words, they will be defined for you. You can review these and other vocabulary tips in Units 2.5 and 2.12.

**MAIN POINTS VS. SUPPORTING DETAILS:** As you read texts and listen to conversations and lectures, it is important for you to be able to distinguish main points from supporting details. We share some tips on how to do this in unit 3.2. A great way to decipher which pieces of information in a text, conversation or lecture are main ideas and which are supporting details is to try practice activity number 3 in unit 2.12.

**NOTE TAKING:** Many test takers like to take notes while they listen to the conversations and lectures in the Listening, Speaking, and Writing sections of the *TOEFL iBT*<sup>®</sup> test. Remember to keep your notes brief; don't try to write down everything you hear. It's important to practice note taking to see if it is a strategy that works for you. We discuss more note taking strategies in a course handout, which can be found on the course homepage.

**CONTROLLING AUDIO PASSAGES:** In this course, you can control the audio passages for test questions, but in the real test, you cannot. In the real test, you will only hear a conversation or lecture once. This is because the test is designed to simulate real academic situations, in which you will only hear lectures and conversations once, rather than repeatedly.

**MANAGING YOUR TIME:** During the Listening section, a good pace is about 30 seconds per question, or 2 questions per minute. Again, you can use the *TOEFL iBT*<sup>®</sup> Free Practice Test to time yourself and get closer to that pace.

## Speaking

**SPEAKING PRACTICE TEST:** There are four questions in the Speaking practice test. Course participants who submit responses to all questions will receive a score range. You will get credit for your responses when you answer “yes” to the questions about completing those activities.

**PRONUNCIATION:** Sometimes test takers are concerned about their accent when speaking. To improve your pronunciation, you can access an online dictionary that gives you the option to hear a speaker pronounce the words you look up, like Dictionary.com. After you look up a word and listen to the pronunciation, you can then try to pronounce the word just like the speaker. We suggest other ways to practice your pronunciation in the Resources section of Unit 4.9. TOEFL raters are accustomed to hearing various accents from around the world. The important thing is to have clear pronunciation so your responses can be understood. As long as your speech is comprehensible, it is possible to receive a high score with an accent.

**MAKING MISTAKES:** While speaking your responses on the TOEFL test, you can have occasional errors in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and still get a high score. A high score does not mean a response is perfect; it does mean that it is intelligible. You will learn how raters use rubrics to score Speaking responses next week in Unit 4.6. You can familiarize yourself with the contents of these rubrics to learn what raters are looking for in a high-level response.

**MANAGING YOUR TIME:** During the Speaking section, a great thing to keep in mind is that your response should only provide content that the question asks of you. Don't try to repeat everything you heard in a conversation or lecture. You may run out of time to say everything you wanted to say, but if you have thoroughly answered the question, then you can still receive a high score. We share some more time management tips in Unit 4.2.

## Writing

**WRITING PRACTICE TEST:** There are two questions in the Writing practice test. Course participants who submit responses to all questions will receive a score range. You will get credit for your responses when you answer “yes” to the questions about completing those activities.

**ORGANIZING WRITING RESPONSES:** Before you start your writing, it may be helpful to make a brief outline of the points you wish to make. You can write this outline on your scratch paper to help organize what you are going to write throughout your response. We discuss outlines in more detail in Unit 5.4. A general way to organize your writing is by using an introduction, body and conclusion to express your thoughts. The introduction should introduce the topic that your writing will be about.

Then, you can use the body of your message to express your main points supported by examples. Finally, you should end your writing by providing a brief summary of what you have written.

**MANAGING YOUR TIME:** In the Writing section, you will have between 20 and 30 minutes to prepare and write your responses, depending on the question type. Try to keep your writing simple and focused on important information supported by specific reasons and examples. Remember to think before you write. It's important that you use some time to decide what you want to say and to think about how you will organize your writing. While you are writing, keep track of the time you are spending. Try to finish writing your essay by the time the clock counts down to 4 or 5 minutes. Use the remaining time to check your work and make final changes.