



TOEFL Exam

Test Preparation and Strategies

Preparing for any international English exam can be a stressful and time-consuming experience. But if you've gotten this far, congratulations! It takes a lot of hard work to arrive at this level. Now is when the real work begins. Taking an international exam requires discipline and not only a high level of English, but also a strong understanding of test taking strategies and a deep knowledge of the structure of the test. This document will address the structure of the Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL, as well as give some important tips and strategies for studying.

Overview

The TOEFL, like most international exams, follows a very strict pattern for each test. It has four main components which are the four main disciplines in any language. Below you will find a description of each section and the order of the test

Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing
60-80 minutes 3 reading passages 36-56 questions	60-90 minutes 6-9 listening passages 34-51 questions	Approximately 20 mins. 6 tasks	50 minutes 2 tasks

The entire TOEFL test takes approximately 4 hours to complete, including a ten minute break. The cost of the exam is \$195 USD and is administered 50 weeks per year. The test can be taken as many times as you like and can afford. One important note is that this test gives experimental questions in the reading and listening sections, however both will not be given as experimental sections on a single exam. For this reason the times of these sections is less precise, as it is possible that you may receive an extra section that is experimental. These are not graded but you will not know which section is experimental.

Tips & Strategies

1. Multiple Choice

The TOEFL exam offers only one question type. The multiple choice questions on the exam always offer four options and will never require outside knowledge. For this reason it is very important to have a sound strategy for addressing multiple choice questions. Many people prefer the method of first removing any options deemed wrong, then selecting the most likely answer from what remains. Others prefer to only look for the right answer and not waste time on the wrong ones. In any case, it is vital that you practice multiple choice situations so that you know what method works best for *you*.

Sources:

<https://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about/content/>
http://toefl.uohabylon.edu.in/images/ibt_2015_1812462.pdf



2. Keyboard Proficiency

The TOEFL exam is administered 100% using computer technology. You will definitely want to brush up on your keyboard skills before the exam, especially if you use the old one-finger method of typing. Knowing your way around the keyboard is an incredibly helpful skill, as it can save you loads of time especially in the writing section of the exam. If this is a worry for you, be sure to take a keyboarding class before the test date.

3. What's the Big Idea?

While the TOEFL exam is certainly looking for your correct use of the language and grammar, it is important to note that of even more significance is your ability to extract or convey main ideas. Detail is always key and should never be overlooked, but being able to identify the over-arching points of a reading or listening passage are indispensable, as well as the ability to convey more abstract concepts in your speaking and writing sections. Once you have established the main points, then detail is a welcome addition, but should never be approached in the opposite fashion.

4. Speaking to No One

One of the biggest deterrents for students considering the TOEFL exam is the fact that the speaking section requires the test taker to literally speak to no one. You record yourself speaking your answers and then someone in the United States listens to you and gives a grade. This is often intimidating for students who feel much more comfortable speaking to a human being, but should never be a deal-breaker. This anxiety can easily be overcome, especially when taking the time to understand the speaking section of the exam.

5. You Can't See the Questions First

Another stressor of the TOEFL exam is that, in the reading and listening sections of the test, you are not allowed to preview the questions nor see them simultaneously. In the reading section, you are given time to read and then later look at the questions, and are only shown extracts of the passage to aid you while answering. On the listening section you will hear an audio example of up to seven minutes without seeing any questions before. Both of these must be planned and strategized in advance in order to achieve your maximum potential, and require training and discipline.

6. Read, Listen, Repeat

On both the speaking and writing sections of the test, you will be required to build your answer using reading and listening passages. Certain questions and sections in both of these disciplines require the test taker to, for instance, read a passage, then listen to a lecture, and then respond in either writing or speaking. If you are unable to glean the correct information from a short listening passage in the speaking section, your score will suffer because your content will be incorrect. For this reason, training in both of these disciplines must be intense, and the test does require an overall higher level in both these areas.

7. Practice Makes Permanent

The notion the "practice makes perfect" is a very flawed one. How you practice is how you will perform on the test. If you practice inconsistently and don't have a plan, this will reflect in your test score, but if you look at the details and practice your weaknesses, you will certainly be more successful. Coming up with a plan and seeking out valuable resources will undoubtedly result in a more ideal score and hopefully save you some time and money in the long run.

Sources:

<https://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about/content/>

http://toefl.uohabylon.edu.in/images/ibt_2015_1812462.pdf



8. Take a Preparation Course

If there is one thing that is true about most international exams it is that they are not cheap. Oftentimes making an investment in a preparation course can mean the difference between taking the test once or three times, which can be a sound use of your money in the long run. Because these tests follow a specific formula, studying for the test and mastering test taking skills will often lead to a higher score and more positive outcome for the student.

Sources:

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