

# SPEAKING TIPS: TOEFL

## Study Skills – Exam Preparation

The Speaking section measures your ability to speak English effectively in academic settings, during class as well as outside the classroom. The tasks in this section resemble the real-life situations that students encounter:

- During a class, students are expected to respond to questions, participate in academic discussions, summarize what they read and hear, and express their views on topics under discussion.
- Outside the classroom, students participate in casual conversations, express their opinions and communicate with people in such places as the bookstore, the library, the cafeteria and the housing office.

In the Speaking section, you will be asked to speak on a variety of topics that draw on personal experience, campus-based situations and academic content. The Speaking section is approximately 20 minutes long and includes six questions.

The first two questions are called Independent Speaking Tasks because they require you to draw entirely on your own ideas, opinions and experiences when you respond.

The other four questions are called Integrated Speaking Tasks because they require you to integrate your English-language skills listening and speaking, or listening, reading and speaking just as you must during class and outside the classroom.

### General Speaking Tips

- ✓ Concentrate on speaking loudly and clearly with good pronunciation and intonation. Try to speak in thought groups to have good flow to your speaking.
- ✓ Pause after prepositional phrases and related thought groups.
- ✓ Add emotion and feeling to what you are saying.
- ✓ Practice the same speech in your own language and then try to match the same gestures and feelings when you use English.
- ✓ Use language you know is correct. Use words and expressions, you have used before.
- ✓ Stay focus, remember the exam is only 20 minutes long and you need to show the examiner your skills with the language.

### Independent Speaking

Try the following activities to build the skills you'll need for the Independent Speaking tasks:

- Make a list of topics that are familiar to you and practice speaking about them. The topics can be academic or non-academic (sports, hobbies, travel, etc.).

- Think for 20 seconds about what you did yesterday, then recount your experiences in one minute. Remember to use the past tense of verbs and use connecting words and phrases, such as “first,” “then” and “while I was.”
- Think for 20 seconds about what you plan to do tomorrow, then talk about it for one minute.
- Think of a story with which you are familiar. Tell the story to several different people. Try to tell the story faster each time.
- Collect a number of pictures from magazines and newspapers. Look at each picture, then describe it in one minute. Describe the same thing more than once, using different adjectives and adding details.
- State an opinion or a preference for something familiar and present clear, detailed reasons for your choices. Use connecting words or phrases to help explain your opinion (for example, “the reason I prefer” or “this is important to me because”).
- Make a recommendation about a topic of concern or interest to you and explain why your idea is the best way to proceed.
- Think about topics related to student life (for example, the types of classes you enjoy taking or the best place to study). For each topic, write down two reasons to explain your preference and speak on this topic for one minute.
- Write down topics on slips of paper. Each day, choose one randomly and practice giving a one-minute response. Repeat your responses to each topic two or three times to build fluency.

### **Integrated Speaking**

These activities can help build the skills you’ll need for the Integrated Speaking tasks:

- Listen to a talk on the National Geographic website at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/> and take notes. Then use your notes to give a summary of the talk to a friend and eventually record a one-minute oral summary.
- Read an article or listen to a talk on an issue that interests you (for example, medicine in the XXI century or environmental policies). You can find great material at <https://www.ted.com/> or <https://ed.ted.com/>.

Prepare an outline for a one-minute opinion speech about the article or talk. Your outline should include your opinion, two points to support your opinion and one detail or reason to support each point.

- Find campus newspaper articles on the Internet. You can find great articles at <http://www.urosario.edu.co/Periodico-Nova-Et-Vetera/Cultura/>, <http://www.dailytexanonline.com/>, <http://dailyfreepress.com/>. After reading the articles, express your opinions about them to a friend.
- Read a short article from a newspaper or a textbook. Write down two or three questions and then answer them orally. Eventually, record your answers to the questions.

- Find a textbook in English that includes study questions at the end of each chapter. Practice answering the questions orally. Start by reading about subjects with which you're familiar and later move on to less familiar subjects.
- Find listening and reading material on the same topic. The material can contain similar or different views. The listening material can be a news report on a current topic on TV or radio, and the reading material can be a newspaper or Internet report.
  - ✓ Take notes or create lists of important points on the listening and reading material.
  - ✓ Do separate oral summaries of the information in the listening and reading material. Practice paraphrasing using different words and grammatical structures.
  - ✓ Combine the information from the reading and listening material and explain in writing how they relate. Later, practice explaining it orally using only your notes for reference.
  - ✓ State an opinion about the ideas and information presented in the reading and listening material and explain how they relate.
  - ✓ If the reading and/or listening material describes a problem, suggest and explain your own solution to the problem.