I'm not a bot

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ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. When asked about good ways to practice for the TOEFL speaking section, many people's default answer is to find a language partner—someone you can meet with, whether online, on the phone, or in person, to practice English conversation and test questions with. It's true that language partners can be a great resource as you study, but for a lot of people it's not a practical arrangement—particularly if you live in a non-English-speaking country. Practicing speaking by yourself can be tricky, but with some creativity you'll find that there are tons of great ways to do it. The tips below will help you approach the speaking section with confidence. Lightning questions I've written about lightning questions before—these are short questions, similar to the independent speaking and writing prompts, that you answer with minimal preparation and planning. You can make a list of questions in advance and just keep it handy (I have a few examples in this post). Every day, choose two or three questions to answer. Read the question, set a timer for a pre-determined length of time (as little as 20 seconds, as much as 90 seconds), and then speak about the topic for the entire time. Your goal is to fill up the entire time, to answer the question, and to pause as little as possible. Unlike on the TOEFL, you shouldn't be as concerned with giving a complete answer, and it's OK if you don't conclude your answer in the given time. The point of this exercise is to keep talking. Lightning questions are a great way to improve your fluency, even if you just do a few of them a day. Translate reading material You can exercise your grammar and vocabulary by translating reading passages—orally, of course—from your native language into English. Try to translate each sentence as accurately as you can without using a dictionary. If you're not sure how to translate a particular phrase or structure, write it down so you can look it up or ask someone later. As you do this exercise, avoid using a dictionary; if there's a word you don't know, try to describe it or give the closest synonym you can think of. Replacing words you don't know with ones you do is a skill that will give you a huge boost on the exam (and in life). Retell common stories If you translate something as you read it, you're going to be pretty confined in terms of your phrasing, since you're trying to match the text as closely as possible. For some more creative practice, try translating a fairy tale, movie you just saw, or a well-known story. This method gives you a lot more control over the difficulty of the material you're translating. Record yourself Nobody likes doing this, but it's still solid advice: record yourself speaking so you can listen and critique later. This will let you pick up on mistakes you're making that you may not even know about, plus you can compare your answers to sample TOEFL answers more easily. It also will get you used to the stress of being recorded so that it's not quite so strange to be speaking to a computer screen on test day. PS. Don't forgot how important it is to take a full-length TOEFL before your exam! Here's where to find TOEFL practice tests and some additional TOEFL practice questions. More from Magoosh Stay up to date with the latest TOEFL news, announcements and articles Are you taking the TOEFL and looking for some background information on the test? What does TOEFL stand for anyway? Do those letters mean anything? In this article, we explain the TOEFL meaning, give a brief history of the exam and its name, and go over all the other TOEFL acronyms you need to know before you take the exam. What Does TOEFL Stand For? TOEFL originally stood for “Test of English as a Foreign Language.” However, like many other standardized tests, the TOEFL no longer uses its original name, and the acronym no longer stands for anything. Now, TOEFL stands for just TOEFL. The TOEFL is a standardized test that measures a test-taker's mastery of the English language. TOEFL scores are primarily used by universities as part of the admissions process for non-native English speakers. A Brief History of the TOEFL and Its Name Below is a short history of the TOEFL and the different names it has been known by. From its creation in 1963, the exam's official name was the Test of English as a Foreign Language, which was commonly abbreviated to TOEFL. The exam was created as a way to measure the English skills of non-native speakers hoping to attend schools where English was the language of instruction. Looking at a student's TOEFL scores helped admission officers decide if that student had a high enough level of English to succeed at their school. The original TOEFL, used from 1964 to 1979, was completely multiple choice and tested students on their reading, listening and grammar skills. In 1979, the TOEFL was revised and new, optional TOEFL tests focusing on writing and speaking skills were added. These two new tests were called TWE and TSE (Test of Written English and Test of Spoken English, respectively). In 1998, the first computer-based version of the TOEFL (the TOEFL CBT) was released. In 2005, the TOEFL again underwent revisions and was released as the TOEFL iBT, which is the version of the exam still being used today. The TOEFL iBT combines the reading, listening, speaking, and writing sections into a single exam that is taken on the computer. The TOEFL iBT has an increased emphasis on integrative skills and using multiple skills at a time to answer a question. Around this time, the creators of the TOEFL dropped its longer, original name, and its acronym became the official name. Today, the TOEFL is administered in over 130 countries and has been taken by over 30 million people. For more information on TOEFL meaning and history, check out ETS's guide to the TOEFL program history. What Are Other Common TOEFL Abbreviations? Now you know what TOEFL stands for, but there are many other acronyms to know in the TOEFL world! Below are some of the other common TOEFL abbreviations you should be aware of. ETS: The Educational Testing Service (ETS) is the organization that designs, administers, and scores the TOEFL. They also oversee other standardized exams such as the GRE and TOIEC. TOEFL CBT: This acronym stands for computer-based TOEFL. The TOEFL CBT was the first version of the TOEFL to be taken on the computer. It began to be replaced in 2005 by the TOEFL iBT and is now no longer used. TOEFL iBT: What does iBT stand for in TOEFL? iBT is an abbreviation for “internet-based test.” The internet-based TOEFL, or TOEFL iBT, is by far the most popular version of the TOEFL; 97% of people who take the TOEFL take this version. It's taken on the computer and measures four skill sets: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. TOEFL PBT: The paper-based TOEFL, or TOEFL PBT, was taken by people in areas where the TOEFL iBT wasn't available. It has now been replaced by the revised TOEFL Paper-delivered Test which is taken with paper and pencil and tests three skill areas: reading, listening, and writing. TOEFL ITP: What does TOEFL ITP mean? Its full name is the TOEFL Institutional Testing Program Assessment Series, and it is a series of paper-based tests teachers can use to measure their students' English skills. TOEFL ITP scores won't be accepted by universities as a replacement for the TOEFL, but they can be used as English-placement tests in schools or for scholarship programs, among other uses. IELTS: The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is the other main exam that tests for English language proficiency, in addition to the TOEFL. The IELTS is less popular than the TOEFL, and it is used more often by people immigrating to the UK, Australia, or Canada than it is by those applying to universities. TOIEC: What does TOIEC stand for? The TOIEC (which formerly stood for Test of English for International Communication) is another standardized test produced by ETS to measure English skills. However, unlike the TOEFL, which is used mostly by people hoping to attend university or graduate school, the TOEIC is primarily used by employers to test the language skills of potential employees. TEFL: This acronym is very close to TOEFL, but it stands for something entirely different! TEFL stands for “Teaching English as a Foreign Language” and it refers to English language instruction for non-native English speakers. It's also possible to be TEFL-certified, which means you've taken a class and possibly an examination that show you have the skills needed to teach English. Recap: What Does TOEFL Stand For? TOEFL used to stand for “Test of English as a Foreign Language,” but the exam no longer uses that name officially, and now only goes by “TOEFL.” While its name has changed several times, the TOEFL meaning has remained the same. The TOEFL was created in 1963 as a way to measure the English skills of non-native speakers hoping to attend a school where classes were taught in English. Over the years, the TOEFL has changed to test more skills and more integrated skills, and the exam has gone from being paper-based to primarily computer-based. There are lots of acronyms associated with the TOEFL, and knowing the key ones can help you stay organized and understand the exam and what it tests better. What's Next? Now that you know the story behind the TOEFL, are you ready to take the exam? Read our guide to learn the seven steps to register for the TOEFL so you can get the process started! Not sure what TOEFL score you should be aiming for? Learn what a good TOEFL score is based on the schools you're interested in. How difficult is the TOEFL? Should you be doing a lot of studying? Learn the seven hardest things about the TOEFL and reasons why it may not be as challenging as you think! The TOEFL iBT Speaking section measures your ability to speak English effectively in academic settings. The four questions/tasks resemble real-life situations you might encounter both in and outside of a classroom. Question 1: Independent Speaking Task — requires you to draw entirely on your own ideas, opinions and experiences when you respond. Questions 2–4: Integrated Speaking Tasks — require you to combine your English-language skills — listening and speaking, or listening, reading and speaking — just as you would in or out of a classroom. Prep time: You'll get 15–30 seconds of preparation time before each response, and your response will be 45 or 60 seconds long. 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The TOEFL speaking tests contain academic situations set both inside and outside the classroom In classrooms, there are situations where you must: respond to questions contribute to class discussions read or listen to something and then summarize it give your opinion of topics under discussion In situations outside the classroom, you need to: take part in conversations with administrative staff, such as at the library take part in casual conversations with other students give your opinion about something Description of the speaking tasks Independent Task Choice - Preparation time: 15 seconds Response time: 45 seconds You will be presented with two situations or opinions. You'll be asked which you prefer and you need to explain your choice. Integrated Tasks Read/Listen/Speak 2. Campus Situation Topic: Fit and Explain. Preparation time: 30 seconds Response time: 60 seconds A reading passage (75–100 words) presents a campus-related issue. A listening passage (60–80 seconds, 150–180 words) comments on the issue in the reading passage. The question asks the test taker to summarize the speaker's opinion within the context of the reading passage. 3. Academic Course Topic: General/ Specific. Preparation time: 30 seconds Response time: 60 seconds A reading passage (75–100 words) broadly defines a term, process, or idea from an academic subject. An excerpt from a lecture (60–90 seconds; 150–220 words) provides examples and specific information to illustrate the term, process, or idea from the reading passage. The question asks the test taker to combine and convey important information from the reading passage and the lecture excerpt. Listen/Speak 4. Academic Course Topic: Summary. Preparation time: 20 seconds Response time: 60 seconds The listening passage is an excerpt from a lecture (90–120 seconds; 230–280 words) that explains a term or concept and gives concrete examples to illustrate that term or concept. The question asks the test taker to summarize the lecture and demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the examples and the overall topic. Read this article: Study secrets of students who get 26+ on TOEFL speaking Advertisements ETS®, TOEFL®, TOEFL iBT® and TOEFL Junior® are registered trademarks of Educational Testing Service (ETS). This web site is not endorsed or approved by ETS. These practice speaking questions closely resemble what you'll see on the real TOEFL. First is a collection of independent TOEFL speaking samples (question one). After that are the integrated TOEFL speaking questions (questions 2 to 4).Question One (Independent)The first TOEFL Speaking question is the independent task. It's also called the “personal choice” question. You must give your personal opinion on a everyday topic. 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This will help you achieve the best result.15 tips to improve your TOEFL Speaking score fast!1. Know the test structure 100%TOEFL Speaking tests your spoken English for university entry. This section of the exam is 17 minutes long. There are a total of 30 points available. A “high score” would be 26-30 points. Your university will tell you in advance what score you need.TOTAL AVAILABLE POINTS: 30 Good: 26-30 Fair: 18-25 Limited: 10-17 Weak: 0-9The TOEFL Speaking exam has two parts and 4 tasks to complete. The first is “Independent Speaking” (x1 task). The second is “Integrated Speaking” (x3 tasks). These tasks try to simulate real-life situations inside and outside the academic classroom. Let's take a closer look...Question typesTask 1 Independent speakingTask 2 Integrated speakingTask 3 Integrated speakingTask 4 Integrated speakingExplain a choiceCampus-relatedAcademicAcademicPreparation time:15 seconds30 seconds30 seconds20 secondsSpeaking time:45 seconds60 seconds60 seconds60 secondsPART 1: “Independent Speaking”In this section, you will answer one question using your own ideas, opinions, and experiences. There are three main types of questions:i) Good/bad idea ii) Paired choice iii) Agree or disagreeYou should always support your opinion with relevant examples and give as much detail as you can. You may also contrast your chosen answer with an alternative viewpoint. In this section, you'll have 15 seconds to prepare and your speaking time is 45 seconds.Let's look at 3 examples of these questions and how to give strong answers to them:Q. Some companies have rules that forbid employees from using personal cell phones during working hours. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.A. I personally think this is a really good rule. I know that most people are addicted to their cell phones these days, but I can tell you that I constantly see people around me missing important information in our classes because of this addiction to their phones. I know that my grades definitely suffer every time that I allow myself to become distracted in class by my mobile.I am also sure that companies could easily improve production and efficiency by banning the use of personal phones in offices. When the power goes out, we all suddenly become much more aware of our surroundings! And we have to remember that we can still relax and connect with others without these distracting devices. Q. Some people think they can achieve more when they work with other people. Some think they are more productive when they are alone. What is your opinion? Explain why.A. I don't think there's a very clear answer to this one. For example, I believe it can be beneficial to have other people around when trying to achieve a goal, like for example to lose weight. When I was trying to lose weight, I went to group sessions. It was really helpful because we got together to do exercise and to record our weight loss. We would be there for each other when someone lost motivation or when someone was falling into temptation.On the other hand, in high school, getting together to finish an assignment often turned into a party rather than a workspace, and I knew I was wasting my time. Other people can often be a major distraction! I think it all depends on what needs to be achieved and how disciplined you are. I think if I'm honest with myself, I'm probably more productive when I just lock myself in my room. Q. State whether you agree or disagree with the following statement. Then explain your reasons using specific details in your argument. “Teachers should assign daily homework to students.” A. I think that the concept of homework is debatable, and I can definitely see both sides of the argument. But, if I had to make a choice, I'd have to agree. I know that most students hate homework, but I think there are two very positive aspects to daily homework.As humans, we definitely need repetition in learning, and seeing the concepts only once in the classroom may be limiting. Going over ideas again at home creates repetition, and if we get used to doing this, I think we have more chance of success in the future.I also believe that homework allows children to bond with their parents. When I was young, my parents really helped me when I had questions or doubts about my homework and it really brought us closer together. PART 2: “Integrated Speaking”Questions 2, 3 and 4 on the TOEFL Speaking test are “Integrated Speaking” tasks. 'Integrated' simply means that these tasks combine reading, listening and speaking skills. For example, you may need to listen and respond orally, or to listen, read and then respond orally.This section focuses on campus and academic–related topics. In questions 2-4, you'll have 15-30 seconds to prepare your answers. Your speaking/response time for each question is 45-60 seconds.Let's look at an example for each topic and how to give a strong answer:Directions: Read the passage and then listen to the audio. Finally, answer the question.Group WorkThe geology department is aware of the problems surrounding group work and its unpopularity among students. We realise that in some cases students do not contribute and thus gain marks they do not deserve, while stronger students are frustrated at being held back by weaker students. Similarly, it is very difficult for tutors to award marks for group projects, as it is unclear who is responsible for each part.However, the department feels that there is a great deal to be gained from group work in terms of self-organisation and communication skills. To this end, we plan to introduce a system whereby the group work itself is not formally assessed. Each student will undertake an individual piece of work based on the group project. This will be designed to ensure participation in the project. (Male student) Thank goodness the department has made changes to the way they assess group work! I had a nightmare last term with our geology project. I couldn't bear going through that again!(Female student) Why, what happened?(Male student) Well, there were three of us in the group. One guy worked really hard, but he didn't trust anyone else to do anything. He just wanted to do it all himself.(Female student) It sounds like you were freeloading.(Male student) Well, I wasn't! I offered up plenty of ideas, but he kept saying they were no good. In the end, I stopped trying and left it to him. The other guy was a waste of space. He didn't pull his weight at all. We barely saw him.(Female student) Did you get a good grade?(Male student) A reasonable one, considering how little work I did. But I'm sure I'd have done better if I'd been given the chance to say what I wanted.(Female student) Well, the new system should give you that opportunity.(Male student) Yeah, I hope so, though I wish they'd abolish group work altogether. All this organisation and communication is just a waste of time. It's got nothing to do with geology! Q. The man expresses his opinion of group work. State and explain his opinion. Compare his opinion with that of the Geology Faculty.A. The man doesn't like group work because he had a negative experience when another group member kept rejecting his ideas. He felt he couldn't contribute. He said that he wasn't taking the easy road because he did constantly try to participate, unlike the third team member who simply did nothing.He felt that the marks didn't reflect each participant's work fairly. He agreed with the faculty that giving one mark to the whole group doesn't correctly reflect how much or how well each individual member worked.He says that he really wants to be able to work individually, and this is in accordance with what the faculty recognised as important, so they seem to agree on this point. However, the man does not agree with what the university states at the end of their message about the importance of organisation and communication skills for all students. He believes that those skills have nothing to do with geology. Directions: Read the passage taken from a psychology textbook and the lecture that follows it, then listen to the audio. Finally, answer the question. Flow In psychology, the feeling of complete and energised focus in an activity is called “flow”. People who enter a state of flow lose their sense of time and have a feeling of great satisfaction. They become completely involved in an activity for its own sake, rather than for what may result from the activity, such as money or prestige. Contrary to expectation, flow usually happens not during relaxing moments of leisure and entertainment, but when we are actively involved in a difficult enterprise; in a task that stretches our mental or physical abilities.(Male professor speaking)I think this will help you get a picture of what your textbook is describing. I had a friend who taught in the Physics Department, Professor Jones, he retired last year...Anyway, I remember...this was a few years ago now...I remember passing by a classroom early one morning just as he was leaving, and he looked terrible: his clothes were all crumpled, and he looked like he hadn't slept all night. And I asked if he was ok.I was surprised when he said that he had never felt better, that he was happy. He had spent the entire night in the classroom working on a mathematics puzzle. He didn't stop to eat dinner; he didn't stop to sleep...or even rest. He was that involved in solving the puzzle. And it didn't even have anything to do with his teaching or research; he had just come across this puzzle accidentally, I think in a mathematics journal, and it just really interested him. So he worked furiously all night and covered the blackboards in the classroom with equations and numbers and never realised that time was passing by.Q. Explain flow and how the example used by the professor illustrates the concept.A. The article describes flow as the feeling of focus in which people can lose their sense of time, while becoming entirely involved in an activity that doesn't necessarily result in either money or prestige. From the text, we can understand flow as: being involved in something that is difficult or challenging, rather than in moments of relaxation.The professor's example of his colleague is relevant because he describes how this co-worker had clearly lost his sense of time by working all night on the mathematics puzzle he had come across, not stopping to rest, eat or even sleep. He also explains how the puzzle was not going to lead his colleague to any specific conclusion. It represented a personal challenge that kept him intrigued and fully satisfied while he was in the process of doing it. 2. Understand your TOEFL Speaking scoreTo score top marks in the TOEFL Independent Speaking task, study the assessment rubric (criteria). The marks are focused on the following three concepts:A. Delivery: The candidate generally speaks at a good speed and shows fluency of expression. Speech is clear and may include minor lapses or minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, but these do not affect overall intelligibility.B. Language use: The response demonstrates effective use of grammar and vocabulary. It shows a relatively high degree of automaticity with good control of basic and complex structures. Minor errors may be noticeable but they do not lead to misunderstanding.C. Topic development: The response is sustained and relevant to the task. It is generally well-developed and coherent, and relationships between ideas are clear.Source: ETS TOEFL Official WebsiteWhen answering TOEFL Speaking questions, consider the following:Did I answer completely?Did I speak clearly?Did I make any mistakes with grammar?Did I choose my words correctly?Were my ideas clearly organised?Did I make good use of the time given?Did I speak too quickly or slowly?Did I use pauses effectively?3. Use introductory phrases to buy yourself more timePractise giving your opinions, describing problems and solutions, and using language to compare and contrast ideas. These are key concepts in the TOEFL Speaking test.The more you talk about your thoughts and opinions, the easier speaking in English will become, and the less stressful it will be to talk about bigger ideas.Practise beginning your answers with phrases, such as:“As far as I'm concerned...”“Personally, I think that...”“It seems to me that...” To describe problems and solutions, use intro phrases like these:“The problem is...”“The problem seems to be that...”“The real issue seems to be that...”To compare and contrast ideas, try expressions like:“On the contrary...”“Instead, I'd say that...”“Some may argue that...”4. Communicate regularly with native speakersListen carefully to how native speakers sound when they speak, and try to copy what you hear. There are many free and paid online platforms where you can interact with native speakers. Facebook has many groups where you can find speaking partners.If you want more focused preparation for the TOEFL Speaking exam, consider taking paid online lessons with a qualified native English teacher. At OTUK, our courses concentrate on fluency AND exam technique to help you get faster results.Click here to Request your free consultation today! 5. Summarise quicklyOn the TOEFL Speaking test, you will need to read and listen to material that may be fairly long or wordy. It's important to pick out the most important points fast and summarise information to create answers that are short, clear and relevant.You can prepare by frequently listening to the news, podcasts, audiobooks, etc. in English, and then recording your own summary of what you have heard. You can also practise doing this with reading texts or articles.You can use an online tool like Resoomer to summarise a text fast. This may help you to find shorter ways of expressing the same ideas in English.Try to express your ideas at ever-increasing speeds, begin with a 2-minute summary, then a 90-second summary, then 60 seconds, etc. Each time remove any non-essential elements. Only focus on the key concepts. This exercise forces your brain to select relevant words and phrases for more effective communication.Listening text transcript:It's always been one of those big sci-fi questions – is there life on Mars, or rather, could Mars ever support life? Well, it is generally assumed that in order to have life, you need water. Well, ever since the 1960s we've been sending out probes to Mars to try to...ascertain if there is water on Mars, or if there ever has been, and in the 1990s, 1996 to be precise, the U.S. Mars Global Surveyor was launched. The surveyor remains in orbit around Mars to this day and has some rather nifty equipment on board, including a high-resolution camera, a sensor that can identify soil and rocks, and a laser that can take measurements and map the planet's surface.So what have we learnt from the Global Surveyor? Well, we've found out that yes, there was once water on Mars, and in great quantities too. I'm talking oceans, seas, lakes...much like Earth today. They have deduced this from the shapes of the mountains and valleys on Mars – they are the same shape as those formations on Earth that we know were created by water. In fact, some analysts are suggesting that there is still water on Mars to this day, but deep down, in holes 100 to 400 meters below the surface.This idea created quite a stir, as you can imagine, and a number of scientists have tried to either prove...or refute this theory, using other evidence available to us. Some Chinese scientists, for example, have been studying a meteorite that was collected from Antarctica in 2001, but they've found no evidence of water there, but that's not to say there isn't any water on Mars, as Mars and meteorites are separate entities entirely. Another source of evidence we have is images from astronomical telescopes, but we can't see much of the planet from this angle – just the poles, and they are covered in ice caps – dry ice, not H20 – so that doesn't help us one way or the other.Q. Using information from the talk, describe what we know about water on Mars, and how we know this.A. We hear from the professor that there was once water on Mars, perhaps a similar amount to on Earth today. This data has been retrieved by a probe sent to orbit Mars in the 90s. Scientists have even been able to measure the shape of the land and draw maps of the planet. They believe there was once water on Mars because the rock formations are similar to those formed by water on Earth. Some argue that there is still water on Mars, but deep underground.Some Chinese scientists have been exploring a Martian meteorite that landed on Earth in 2001. They haven't found any signs of water in these rocks, but this doesn't discount the possibility of water on Mars itself. The professor also explains that we can view images from telescopes, but they don't really help us decide whether Mars has water as they can only see the poles of the planet. These are covered in dry ice, making it difficult to see. In conclusion, we still don't know whether there is currently water on Mars. 6. Support your answersPractise explaining your answers. Support them with clear reasons. If you want to argue that travelling on a gap year is better than going straight to university, then be prepared to come up with at least three reasons to justify your opinion. In the test, you will not have time to give three reasons, but it is always better to have too many than too few.For the travel/university example, your reasons might be: learning about new cultures, visiting famous places, and taking a necessary break from education. You could use a couple of these reasons to support your answer. 7. Use adverbs/adjectives to add complexity to your languageYou need to demonstrate that you have a good knowledge of vocabulary. Including various adverbs and adjectives can add more expression and complexity to your English.Try to use transitional adverbs to make your speech flow, e.g. however, therefore, consequently, moreover, nevertheless, nonetheless, thus, and hence. When discussing your personal opinions, use adjectives like: reliable, resourceful, sensible, passionate, and bright.Check out our blog posts about adjectives and adverbs to improve your vocabulary for the TOEFL Speaking test. You can download all our posts as free pdfs to study at home!8. Take notes effectively when listening to English speakersIn the TOEFL Speaking test, you will have the opportunity to write notes as you listen to texts in preparation for your answer. If you don't regularly practise this skill, time may become a problem, and you may not record all the important points. For the integrated tasks on the Speaking test, you'll have 45 seconds to read a text, during which time, you'll also make notes.Exercise: Try listening to the radio/TV news and make a bullet point list of the essential information. This will be the backbone of a good summary to reference when speaking. Now practise retelling the news item in the shortest way possible using your notes. You can get a friend to comment on your summary or ask you a specific exam question.You won't be marked on the appearance of your notes. They are just for you. Keep them as brief as possible by using abbreviations and “shorthand”. Use bullet points and include only one fact per line. Make sure your notes are 100% clear to you.Let's look at an example text with very brief bullet point notes.Reading:Beginning with the fall semester, tuition bills must be paid in full before classes begin. Returning students will not be able to attend classes for which they preregistered last spring if there is an outstanding balance due on the account. Although in previous semesters students were allowed to attend classes if 50 percent of the bill was paid, the new policy, with no exceptions, will go into effect immediately. The bursar's office is open Monday to Friday from nine to six to assist you with financial aid, loans, and scholarship applications. Please check your account balance online.Notes:New policy = 100% paid before attend class, starting autumnOld policy = only 50% paid beforeOffice open Mon-Fri 9-6 for helpCheck account balance online9. Use phrasal verbs (but not too much!)Native speakers often use phrasal verbs in conversation, especially in more informal situations. It's a good idea to use some phrasal verbs during your TOEFL Speaking test to show that you know them. This is higher-level vocabulary.Make sure you know common phrasal verbs to use in different contexts. For example:Get on, get back, get overLook after, look up, look forward toPut off, put on, put awayYou don't need to learn all the phrasal verbs in the dictionary! Just focus on fully understanding 15-20 common ones. Check out our list of recommended phrasal verbs for IELTS – these can also be used for your TOEFL exam.Use phrasal verbs naturally and just several times during your Speaking test. Make sure you don't overuse them, like in this example below:I don't know how I got through the lecture today. Everyone was dozing off! The students at the back of the room did nothing but fool around. I know the faculty has tried to crack down on disrespectful behaviour and get back to a sense of decency, but today the lecturer ended up breaking off the lesson and leaving the room to cool off. I think that this behaviour may cause a drop off in the number of students who enrol, and the university may even do away with the course altogether.10. Record yourself speakingListening to yourself speaking is a highly effective method of study. This can help you find weak points in pronunciation, reduce pauses, correct common mistakes in grammar, etc. It's also a good idea to share your recordings with a study buddy or English-speaking friend/tutor to get additional feedback.Suggested exercises:Use a mirror = Practise answering TOEFL Speaking tasks in front of a mirror. This will help you build confidence when speaking aloud in public. Start by doing this alone. Later ask a friend/tutor to play the role of the examiner.Use your phone = Record yourself giving answers to Speaking questions by using a dictaphone app on your mobile. Do this once a day. Do this in the morning and review your recording in the evening. Keep paper notes on what to improve. Practise doing the same Speaking task at least 3 times.Don't judge yourself too harshly. We all make mistakes. The objective here is to practise speaking, analyse our errors, and then improve over time. The more you speak about the same topics, the better your answers will become! 11. Master transition wordsConnect and move between ideas by frequently using phrases like: first, however, in contrast, on the other hand, moreover, etc. Remember that flowing easily between ideas is a sign of fluency. Using transitions can help you avoid pauses and lead the examiner smoothly into your next point.Let's look at some really useful transition words and phrases:Giving yourself time to think Let's seeThat's an interesting/a good questionLet me thinkContrasting AlthoughWhereasWhileIn spite ofOthers may argueExpanding on your point First (of all) . . . Second . . . ThirdSimilarlyMoreoverEmphasising EvidentlyAbove allObviouslyWithout a doubtIllustrating cause and effect As a resultConsequentlyThanks toGeneralising OverallFor the most partGenerally speakingSummarising/Concluding In conclusionAs a resultIn summary 12. Show what you know!We can think of the TOEFL Speaking test as a “performance”. You are the main actor and you need to demonstrate your knowledge of English to the examiner. This may include vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, style/flow, and other aspects of the language.Use each Speaking task as an opportunity to show the examiner what you know in English. If you want to get a higher score, you need to use more complex vocabulary and grammar correctly. This should also be relevant to the question.If you can, try to include a number of different verb tenses in your answers. For example:Q. Do you agree or disagree that pupils should have a job while they are studying at school?A. When I was at school, I had a part-time job, and it really helped me to learn about self-discipline. I don'thave a job at the moment because I need to dedicate all my time to university, so I suppose I can see both sides of the argument. I would definitely recommend getting a part-time job if you can handle the workload. I know I'llsee the benefits of it later in my life. We've already mentioned vocabulary like phrasal verbs, adverbs/adjectives, and transition words in our list of TOEFL exam tips. There is no specific set of vocabulary given by TOEFL ETS for candidates to learn. Your goal should be to acquire vocabulary over time as you progress your English.4 ways to improve your vocabulary for TOEFL:Read regularly in English and keep a notebook for new vocabularyUse a dictionary and thesaurus to make sure you fully understand each new wordMake a list of 10 new words/expressions each week and test yourselfWrite down vocabulary you can use for common TOEFL Speaking topics, focus on learning more words for your weaker topics13. Practise preparing quickly (use the news!)In the TOEFL Speaking test, you will have 15 seconds to prepare your first response. Make sure you know what this feels like. Try to watch or listen to the news every day and give yourself 15 seconds to prepare a summary of one news item.At first, you may find it hard to make notes in such a short time. That's ok! With practice, you will get faster. If your English is good enough, use native news sources and not ESL-adapted material. Make sure you have a stopwatch on your mobile to time yourself.ESL-adapted news sources:BBC Learning EnglishBreaking News EnglishNative English news sources:BBC News (main)CNN news video shorts 14. Get comfortable with background noiseThere may be some background noise during your Speaking exam. If you need complete silence to speak well, this may be distraction on your test. This may also affect you during tasks that involve listening.Practise speaking and listening to English in public places where there are multiple distractions. If you don't have anyone to practise with, record yourself speaking in places that have some amount of background distraction. You can also practise at home by increasing background noise from a TV or radio while you are doing a speaking or listening task. 15. Listen to different accentsDuring your TOEFL speaking test, the examiner may ask you to listen to a number of audio recordings. The audio for the first task will probably contain a mixture of accents from English-speaking countries around the world – USA, England, Scotland, India, South Africa etc. This could be a problem if you are only used to one accent of English.Expose yourself to as many different accents as possible so that you become familiar with them over time. Remember that you can control the accent you use, but you never know what to expect when other people open their mouths and start speaking English! You need to be flexible and able to understand a variety of different accents for the test.For some great audio samples, check out the IDEA archive of accents and dialects of English. For example, try listening to these accents from across England. These practice speaking questions closely resemble what you'll see on the real TOEFL. First is a collection of independent TOEFL speaking samples (question one). After that are the integrated TOEFL speaking questions (questions 2 to 4).Question One (Independent)The first TOEFL Speaking question is the independent task. It's also called the “personal choice” question. You must give your personal opinion on a everyday topic. You have 15 seconds to prepare, and 45 seconds to speak.Practice 1: Daily HomeworkPractice 2: Household ChoresPractice 3: Young TeachersPractice 4: Making MistakesPractice 5: Studying For TestsPractice 6: Television NewsPractice 7: Working on ProjectsPractice 8: Cell Phone BansPractice 9: Cosmetic SurgeryPractice 10: University Budgets (new) Practice 11: Technology (new) Practice 12: Learning a Language (new)Question Two (Campus Announcement)The second TOEFL speaking question is the campus announcement task. First, you read a short announcement, article or letter which describes a change that is happening on campus, or suggests a change. Next, you hear two students talk about the reading. One of the students agrees or disagrees with the change. Finally, you must summarize both the reading and the listening. You will have 30 seconds to prepare your answer, and 60 seconds to speak.Practice 1: Mandatory Quiet HoursPractice 2: Campus ToursPractice 3: Campus Fitness CenterPractice 4: No Coffee in the Library (new) Practice 5: Dormitory Study Rooms (new)Question Three (General to Specific)The third TOEFL speaking question is the general-to-specific task. First, you have 45 seconds to read a short article on an academic topic. The reading is usually about a specific term or concept. It defines the term and give some basic details. Next, you hear a short lecture about the same topic. The lecture will explain the topic using one or two examples. Finally, you must summarize the reading and lecture. You will have 30 seconds to prepare, and 60 seconds to speak.Practice 1: Social Impact FramingPractice 2: Convergent EvolutionPractice 3: Confirmation Bias (new) Practice 4: Anchoring Effect (new)Question Four (Academic Lecture)The fourth TOEFL speaking question is the academic lecture task. First, you will listen to a lecture that describes two “things.” The “things” might be two characteristics of something, two features of something, two changes caused by something or two definitions of something. Next, you will be asked to summarize the lecture. You will have 20 seconds to prepare, and 60 seconds to speak.Practice 1: Low Light AnimalsPractice 2: Dry EnvironmentsPractice 3: Seed Dispersal (new) TOEFL Speaking Guides and Templates