

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE

# TOEFL SPEAKING

SECTION



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## ABOUT TOEFL SPEAKING SECTION

The TOEFL Speaking section assesses your ability to speak in common situations in North American college and university campuses - both in and out of the classroom.

The Speaking section lasts for about 15 minutes and consists of four questions:

- One independent speaking question, in which you respond to a question on general-interest or campus-related topic. You will both see the question on your screen and listen to it on your headset. You will have 15 seconds to prepare your response and 45 seconds to give your response. Question 1 will ask you to state a choice among two possible situations, actions, or opinions on a general-interest or campus-related topic.
- Two integrated listening, reading, and speaking questions, in which you read a short passage, listen to a short lecture or conversation on the same subject, and then respond to a question about the material. For each question, you will have 30 seconds to prepare your response and 60 seconds to give your response. Question 2 will ask you to integrate information from a reading and a conversation on a campus-related topic. Question 3 will ask you to synthesize general written information and specific spoken information on an academic topic.
- One integrated listening and speaking question, in which you listen to a lecture and then respond to a question about the material. You will have 20 seconds to prepare your response and 60 seconds to give your response. Question 4 will ask you to listen to a talk on an academic subject and summarize key information.

## SPEAKING - PREFERENCE TOPICS

The Speaking selections of the TOEFL are on general-interest, campus-related, and academic topics. Items on general-interest topics ask about your personal preferences:

- A place you like to visit
- A place you like to study, read, have fun, etc.
- An important event in your life
- A person, event, class, or experience that influenced you.

Questions on campus-related topics are on subjects relating to life on a North American college or university campus, including student life, residence halls, university offices, and university services.

#### SPEAKING - CAMPUS-RELATED TOPICS

- Campus events, including performances, guest speakers, etc.
- Campus transportation
- Class announcements
- Food service
- Library and computer services
- Parking regulations
- University policies on academic honesty, class attendance, mobile phones, etc.

Questions on academic topics focus on topics students might encounter in classes in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

#### SPEAKING - ACADEMIC SUBJECT AREAS

- Arts and humanities: literature, art and art history, music and music history
- Sciences: life science, physical science, earth and space science, computer science
- Social sciences: geography, history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics
- Business and management: case studies
- After you take the TOEFL, your responses will be sent to trained raters who will score your work using special scoring guides, called rubrics. The rubrics, which are different for independent and integrated tasks, focus on:
  - Delivery: fluency and clarity, including pronunciation and intonation
  - Language use: appropriate and effective use of grammar and vocabulary
  - Topic development: the completeness and accuracy of your response, organization and flow of your ideas, and integration of information from readings and listening selections (on integrated questions)

### Independent Speaking

- Question 1: State a choice of two possible actions or opinions on a campus-related or general-interest topic.

### Integrated Reading, Listening, and Speaking

- Question 2: Read and listen to students talking about a short document on a campus-related topic. Respond to a question.
- Question 3: Read a short passage and listen to part of a lecture on an academic topic. Respond to a question.

### Integrated Listening and Speaking

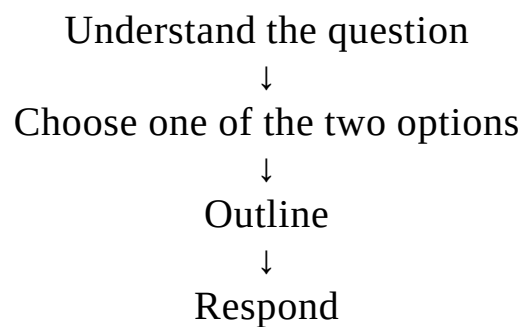


- Question 4: Listen to part of an academic lecture. Respond to a question.

## CHAPTER 1 - TASK 1 (PERSONAL PREFERENCE QUESTIONS)

This task is about personal preference. It asks you to express your preference from a given pair of choices. In this task, the questions mostly ask you to express an opinion and support it. Some other questions let you take a position and defend it. When responding to this question, you are to give some details and examples as well as reasons to rationalize your answer.

### RESPONSE PROCESS OF TASK 1



### STRATEGIES FOR TASK 1

- Quickly understand what the question asks you to do
- Choose one of the two options as quickly as you can
- Produce many ideas through a brainstorming process
- Organize the ideas in an outline
- Practice expressing key ideas in complete sentences
- Relax and speak clearly and confidently
- Do not hesitate or mumble, even when you make mistakes
- Remember, your time is limited

## SAMPLE QUESTION 1

Some people prefer to shop for fruit and vegetables in supermarket chains. Others prefer outdoor markets. Which do you think is better and why? Use specific reasons and examples to support your preference.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

## SAMPLE RESPONSE

Personally, I prefer to shop for my fruits and vegetables at outdoor markets instead of at supermarkets. The first reason is that the produce I purchase at outdoor markets is often fresher than the produce sold at supermarkets. For example, many times, the people selling the fruits and vegetables are the farmers who grew the products. Since they came straight from the farm, I know that they're fresh. Another important thing is that you can often negotiate the price at outdoor markets, which is something you can't do when you shop at supermarkets. By negotiating the price, this lets you save money, especially when you buy large amounts of produce.

## SAMPLE QUESTION 2

Some students study for an exam up to the exact moment that it starts. Others stop studying an hour or more before it begins. Which method do you prefer and why? Include details and examples in your explanation.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

## SAMPLE RESPONSE

When I study for exams, I like to study right up until the last minute. I feel

that stopping an hour or so before the test is a waste of a good hour of study time. As far as I am concerned, it is important to cram as much information into my head as possible, so I should use every last minute before the test. There have been many times when something I studied right before an exam appeared on the test. I was repaid for being diligent in my studies.

### SAMPLE QUESTION 3

Some people like to travel alone. Others like to travel with different people. Which option do you prefer and why?

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

STEP 1. State your opinion.

*I much prefer traveling with others to traveling alone.*

STEP 2. Give your reasons.

*It is safer to travel with others than to travel alone.*

*You can save money on places like hotels if you travel with others.*

### SAMPLE RESPONSE

I much prefer traveling with others to traveling alone. It is because it is safer to travel with others. And I can save money on places like hotels if I travel with others. So I like traveling with others.

### SAMPLE QUESTION 4

Some course grades are largely based on students' individual projects, while other courses put great importance on team projects. Which way of grading do you prefer and why? Please include details and examples in your response.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds  
Response Time: 45 Seconds

*Response process of Task 1*

*Topic → Reason 1 & Details → Reason 2 & Details*

*Make an Outline*

*Topic → Individual projects*

*Reason 1 → Fairer way to grade students*

*Details*

- *Team project: only 1 or 2 stud. work hard*
- *Everyone gets the same grade: not fair!*

*Reason 2 → Better results*

*Details*

- *Ind. proj. motivate stud. to study harder*
- *Team papers tend to be short & superficial*

SAMPLE RESPONSE

Individual projects

→ In my opinion, individual projects should be considered more important than team projects when grading students' performances.

Fairer way to grade students - Team project: only 1 or 2 stud. work hard -  
Everyone gets the same grade: not fair!

→ This is because I believe the grading system based on individual work is a fairer way to grade students. Nine times out of ten, only one or two students really work hard on a team project. So, it is not fair if every member of a team gets the same grade regardless of their contribution.

Better results - Ind. proj. motivate stud. to study harder - Team papers tend to be short & superficial

→ Another reason is that focusing on individual projects can derive better results from students. Individual projects give students motivation to study harder, since students are aware that they're going to be graded based on their own work, while team papers tend to be relatively short and superficial.

## TOPIC PRACTICE 1 - EDUCATION

### Practice 1.

Some students like to study alone while others like to study in groups. Which do you think is better and why? Include details in your explanation.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

### *Opinion A*

*Study in groups*

*I like studying in groups better than studying alone.*

### *Reasons A*

*\* We can correct one another.*

*\* We can explain the things that we do well to others.*

### Sample Response A

I like studying in groups better than studying alone. First, when I am in a group, everyone can correct one another when we make mistakes. Second, we can explain the things that we do well to others. So, if I am good at something but some other members are not, I can explain it to them to help them understand.

### *Opinion B*

*To tell the truth, I really prefer studying in groups.*

### *Reasons B*

*(1) They help me stay focused on what I am studying.*

*(2) They help me gain a wider perspective on the subject.*

### Sample Response B

To tell the truth, I really prefer studying in groups. As a matter of fact, I often have trouble focusing when I study alone. But, when I study in a group, I can focus much better. And another thing is that if you study in a group, you can hear more opinions about the subject at hand. So the group helps me gain a wider perspective on the issue I am studying.

### Practice 2.

Some students like to study alone while others like to study in groups. Which do you think is better and why? Include details in your explanation.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

### *Opinion A*

#### *Study alone*

*For me, studying alone is much better than studying in groups.*

#### *Reasons A*

*\* I can study the things that I want to study.*

*\* I feel that I can improve much more quickly.*

### Sample Response A

For me, studying alone is much better than studying in groups. To begin with, I can study the things that I want to study when I am alone. In a group, I may



not get to study the topics that I need to focus on. In addition, I feel that I can improve much more quickly by studying alone. I don't have to study at others' paces, so I can study much faster by myself. This helps me to improve at a better rate than I would if I were studying in a group.

### *Opinion B*

*I prefer studying alone to studying in groups.*

### *Reasons B*

*(1) I don't have to worry about everyone's schedule.*

*(2) I can study by myself anywhere that I want to.*

### Sample Response B

The way I see it, I prefer studying alone to studying in groups. Though studying alone may have some disadvantages, I feel that there are more benefits to it. First, when I study alone, I don't have to worry about everyone's schedule. I only need to think about myself and when I want to study. Second of all, I can study by myself anywhere that I want to. I don't need a meeting place like study groups do. Instead, I can study anywhere I can find a place to sit down. That's very convenient for me.

### Practice 3.

Some people think that they can learn better by themselves than with a teacher while others think that it is always better to learn from a teacher. Which do you think is better for you and why? Include details in your explanation.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

## *Opinion A*

### *With a teacher*

*In my opinion, it's always better to learn with a teacher.*

### *Reasons A*

*\* Books can't teach us everything.*

*\* Teachers can reduce the number of mistakes we make.*

### *Sample Response A*

In my opinion, it's always better to learn with a teacher. For one thing, teachers can provide me with the information I need in order to understand the textbooks. After all, books can't teach us everything. For another thing, learning with teachers can reduce the number of mistakes we make. They can guide us in our studies and keep us from making too many errors.

## *Opinion B*

*I like learning with teachers better than learning alone.*

### *Reasons B*

*(1) They help me increase my knowledge.*

*(2) They encourage me to enjoy learning.*

### *Sample Response B*

I like learning with teachers better than learning alone. The reasons for this are very simple. First, teachers help me increase my knowledge. After I read a book, a teacher can explain the important parts of it to me and help me understand it better. This makes me learn more. Also, teachers encourage me

to enjoy learning. Many of my teachers have made my classes so exciting. Because I enjoyed the class, this made me like learning, so I learned a lot while also having fun.

Practice 4.

Some people think that they can learn better by themselves than with a teacher while others think that it is always better to learn from a teacher. Which do you think is better for you and why? Include details in your explanation.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

*Opinion A*

*By oneself*

*As for me, I prefer studying by myself to studying with a teacher.*

*Reasons A*

*\* I can decide on the study method that suits me the best.*

*\* I can develop my creativity as well as increase my knowledge.*

Sample Response A

As for me, I prefer studying by myself to studying with a teacher. There are two reasons I feel this way. First, by studying alone, I can choose the study method that suits me the best. I know much better than a teacher the way that I prefer to study. Second of all, when I study by myself, I can develop my creativity as well as increase my knowledge. When I study with a teacher, I have to follow the teacher's methods. This isn't creative. By myself, however, I can improve my creative ability.

### *Opinion B*

*As far as I am concerned, I like studying by myself better than studying with a teacher.*

### *Reasons B*

*(1) I can be exposed to more sources of information.*

*(2) I can learn how to study by myself.*

### *Sample Response B*

As far as I am concerned, I like studying by myself better than studying with a teacher. One of the reasons is that if I study by myself, I can be exposed to more sources of information. Teachers usually give us only the material that they want us to read. We don't always get to read opinions or thoughts different from our teachers'. There is also another reason. It is that I can learn how to study by myself much better. Nowadays, more and more students are learning with private tutors, which is expensive. If I learn how to study by myself, I won't need to find a private tutor.

## TOPIC PRACTICE 2 - LIFE

### Practice 1.

If you had some extra money, would you spend it right away or save it? Which choice do you prefer and why? Include details in your explanation.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

### *Opinion A*

*Save the money*

*I think that I would save the money.*

### *Reasons A*

*\* Saving for a rainy day is always important.*

*\* If I save now, I can have more money in the future.*

### Sample Response A

I think that I would save the money. For one, saving for a rainy day is always important. I want to be prepared in case something bad happens in the future. If I spend the money now, I won't be prepared for the future. In addition, if I save now, I can have more money in the future. By putting the money in the bank or investing it in some other way, I can make my money grow. That way, I'll have more money in the future.

### *Opinion B*

*I'd rather save my money than spend it right away.*

### *Reasons B*

*(1) I'll need a lot more money in the future.*

*(2) By saving, I can build up my money to purchase better things in the future.*

### Sample Response B

I'd rather save my money than spend it right away. First, I'll need a lot more money in the future. For example, I will have to buy a home and a car in the future and also pay for college. Also, by saving, I can build up my money to purchase better things in the future. If I save money now, I can have more money in the future to purchase nicer clothes, furniture, or whatever I want to spend my money on.

### Practice 2.

If you had some extra money, would you spend it right away or save it? Which choice do you prefer and why? Include details in your explanation.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds

Response Time: 45 Seconds

### *Opinion A*

*Spend the money*

*I think I would prefer to spend all of the money right away.*

### *Reasons A*

*\* The value of money decreases as time passes.*

*\* Spending money can help the economy grow.*

### Sample Response A

I think I would prefer to spend all of the money right away. First, because of inflation, the value of money decreases as time passes. So, the best way to get full value for my money is to spend it immediately. Second, spending money can help the economy grow. If people don't buy anything, then companies have no need to manufacture more products. So it's important for people like me to spend money.

### *Opinion B*

*As I see it, spending is better than saving.*

### *Reasons*

*(1) Pleasure today is just as important as being secure in the future.*

*(2) You never know what will happen in the future, so you might as well enjoy the present.*

### *Sample Response*

As I see it, spending is better than saving. Here are the reasons why I feel that way. First, pleasure today is just as important as being secure in the future. Some people never spend their money. They just save and save and never buy anything. I'd rather enjoy spending my money. Also, you never know what will happen in the future, so you might as well enjoy the present. Therefore, if I see something that I want, I'm going to buy it now and not worry about saving my money.

### *Practice 3.*

Some people like to spend their free time doing indoor activities while others like to spend their free time doing outdoor activities. Which do you prefer and why? Include details in your explanation.

Preparation Time: 15 Seconds