

Strategies for Preparing for the Speaking Section

- When you address the practice TOEFL Speaking sections in the practice tests in this book, listen carefully to each of your recorded responses. Create a set of guiding questions to help you evaluate your performance. Here are some examples of the kind of questions you may want to include:
 - Did I complete the task?
 - Did I speak clearly?
 - Did I avoid grammatical errors?
 - Did I use words correctly?
 - Did I organize my ideas clearly and appropriately?
 - Did I provide a complete response?
 - Did I use the time effectively?

Once you have completed your evaluation, decide what changes you want to make to your response. Then try again, making a new recording. Compare the recordings and determine if any further revisions are necessary.

- Try to periodically analyze your strengths and weaknesses. Try to understand what you are and are not able to do well and why.
- When you monitor your speaking practice, try to evaluate the pace of your speech. After each practice, ask yourself the following questions:
 - Did I speak too fast?
 - Did I speak too slowly?
 - Did I pause too often?
- You may want to monitor your own progress by keeping an audio journal, which entails keeping samples of your speaking activities or practices. You can also ask for feedback from one or more friends, tutors, or teachers.

Tips for the Day of the Test

- Remember that taking notes on the reading and listening material in the Integrated Speaking tasks on the TOEFL iBT test is allowed.
- Listen to the item directions carefully to understand exactly what you are being asked to do.
- Use your preparation time as effectively as possible. Plan your response by thinking about the important ideas you want to convey in a simple, organized way.
- Do not begin speaking until you are told to do so.
- Answer each question as completely as possible in the time allowed.
- Make sure to adjust your microphone and volume carefully.
- Speak into the microphone at an appropriate volume. Do not put your mouth directly onto the microphone. If you touch your mouth to the microphone, scorers may find it difficult to understand what you are saying.
- Avoid whispering. If you whisper, scorers may find it difficult to understand what you are saying.

Frequently Asked Questions About the TOEFL Speaking Section

1. Why does the TOEFL iBT test include a Speaking section?

The focus of the test is on communicative competence and encompasses your ability to use English to communicate effectively in an academic setting. Speaking is a key communication skill, along with listening, reading, and writing.

2. Why are some of the questions in the Speaking section based on reading passages and/or dialogues or lectures?

Speaking tasks that combine reading passages and/or dialogues or lectures with speaking are called integrated tasks. They are included in the TOEFL iBT test in recognition of the fact that to succeed academically in English-speaking colleges and universities, students need to be able to combine all their English language skills—in reading, listening, and speaking, as well as writing—inside and outside the classroom.

3. How much reading and listening will I have to do for the Speaking section?

The reading and listening materials that are associated with the integrated tasks vary in length but are all quite brief. Reading passages range from approximately 75 to 100 words, and the dialogues or lectures are generally between 60 and 90 seconds long. In addition to being short, the reading passages, dialogues, and lectures are not intended to be difficult. They are designed to provide you with clear and accessible information to use in answering the questions.

4. May I take notes at all times during the Speaking section?

Yes. You may take notes at any time during the Speaking section—while reading the written passages, listening to the spoken dialogues or lectures, and preparing your responses. While you listen to the dialogues or lectures and take notes, you should not try to write down word for word everything you hear. If you try to do this, you will probably miss hearing important information. Similarly, while preparing your spoken response, do not try to write out an answer that you will then try to speak. You will not have enough time to write out a full response, and raters will be rating you on your ability to speak, not on your ability to read aloud from a text that you have written. Instead, you should use your preparation time to review whatever notes you have taken and to organize your ideas.

5. How will my responses be rated?

Each of the six tasks in the Speaking section is rated by human scorers who will assign ratings ranging from 0 to 4 for each response. The scorers will evaluate your responses for topic development, delivery, and language use, and assign an overall score for each response, based on these factors.

6. How will the total Speaking section score be determined?

The scores on your individual speaking tasks are added up, with each individual task score carrying the same weight. The sum of these individual scores is converted into a scaled score of 0 to 30, and that is the Speaking section score that will be reported to the institutions you request.

7. How will mistakes affect my score?

Raters will not focus on the number of errors you make. They will score the response based on the overall performance. A response that contains minor or occasional errors may still be scored at the highest level.

8. What happens if I do not have time to finish my answer?

You may find that for some tasks, you are not able to include in your answer all the information you would like to. The time allotted for each speaking response is considered sufficient for you to give a complete answer, and you should try to give as thorough an answer as possible. However, the raters who evaluate your responses recognize that it may not always be possible for you to anticipate precisely how much of what you want to say will fit into the amount of time provided. Keep in mind that how clearly and coherently you convey information is as important as how much information you convey. Therefore you should avoid speaking at an unnaturally rapid pace if you see that time is going to run out before you say everything you have planned to say. You may find it useful to time yourself when practicing the speaking tasks. This will help you get an idea of how much can be said in the allotted time.

9. What happens if I finish my response before time runs out?

If you finish your answer before time runs out, you may want to consider what additional information you could add that would make your answer more complete. If you have extra time, it may not be a good idea for you to merely repeat what you have already said. Rather, ask yourself what else you could say to clarify, elaborate on, or otherwise develop your response more fully. Timing yourself when practicing the speaking tasks should help you get accustomed to the time allowances.

10. May I go back and change an answer?

No. Each of your spoken responses is recorded, and it is not possible to go back and rerecord what you have said. For each question, you will be given some time to prepare your answer, and this should help you plan ahead of time what you want to say. You should also remember that your speaking responses are not expected to be perfect. If in the course of giving your spoken response, you realize that you should have said something differently, you should feel free to correct your mistake if you wish, just as you would if you had made a mistake while speaking in your native language and wanted to correct it. Otherwise you may want to simply ignore an error and continue with your response, making sure that the remainder of what you say is as intelligible, coherent, and accurate as possible.

11. How will my accent and pronunciation affect my score?

All TOEFL iBT test takers speak with an accent to some degree or another, and your score will not be affected by your accent, unless your accent interferes with the intelligibility of your response. Minor and/or occasional pronunciation mistakes are also expected, even among the most proficient test takers, and, here again, as long as pronunciation mistakes do not interfere with the intelligibility of your response, they will not count against your score.