



TOEFL Section 3: Speaking

Teachers File

The speaking section of the TOEFL takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. You will be asked 6 speaking questions. The first two are about familiar topics, and the other four are about short readings, lectures, and conversations. You will have a short amount of time after you read each question to prepare your response. Then you will be given a short amount

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Questions 1 and 2: Familiar Topics

In Questions 1 and 2 you will be asked to give an opinion or explanation related to a familiar topic.

1. Read the question. Take notes on the main points of your response. Then, respond to the question.

What do you think your life will look like after retirement? Use reasons and details to support your response.

Preparation time: 15 seconds

Response time: 45 seconds

Listen to the sample response.



I don't see myself as a person who will ever fully retire. I like to keep busy, and I have trouble relaxing. If I want to spend a few hours reading or listening to music I usually schedule it into my date book. I find that if I don't force myself to relax from time to time I always find some sort of project or work to do. Though I may not want to hold a paying job in the medical field when I am older, I will probably volunteer in a third world country rather than retire. I'm lucky that I've found work that I am interested in. If I grow tired of my job I may feel differently when the time comes.

2. Narrator: Read the question. Take notes on the main points of your response. Then, respond to the question.

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If I had the choice between an online course and a course at a college or university, I would choose the classroom setting. I believe it takes a lot of discipline to study at home, and I am a person who is easily distracted. While my roommate has no problem turning off her phone while she is studying, I'm the type of person who worries that I will miss an important call. Even when I'm studying for exams or writing essays, I have to do my work in the library where I can't be interrupted. In addition I learn better when I hear somebody presenting the information than I do just by reading it. While the convenience of an online course is attractive to me, I know my grade would suffer.

Question 3 and 4

In question 3 and 4 you will read a short passage and then you will hear a short talk on the same subject. Then you will answer a question that relates to both of them.

3. Read an article from a campus newspaper. Take notes on the main points of the reading passage.

Reading time: 45 seconds.

Why isn't recycling mandatory on campus?

How does an Ivy League educational institute, such as U of C get away with being so nonchalant about recycling? After a recent search across campus, volunteers from the U of C Environmental Watch group counted only 10 recycling bins. In comparison, the students counted 30 vending machines, the majority of which carry plastics, cans, and glass bottles. Only one paper recycling bin was found. This means that almost all of the paper that is discarded on campus, including U of C residences, is being disposed of in the regular garbage. When asked why no recycling bins for paper have been placed on campus, U of C president, James Wicker, explained that the company the university employs to pick up recycling

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Response time: 00 seconds

Listen to the sample response.



The woman also read the article that the man refers to. Though she agrees that there is an error in the article regarding the lack of recycling in the residences, she believes that more should be done to improve the recycling program on campus. In particular, she is concerned that there is no effort being made to recycle paper on campus. She thinks that the university could pay for a better recycling program by including some of the cost in the student fees.

Transcript for listening conversation question 3:

M: Hey Lisa, you and your roommate have a recycling bin in your dormitory room, don't you? I'm sure I've thrown a water bottle in a bin at your place before.

W: Sure. Why do you ask Mark? Are you wondering where to go to pick one up. I think they have them available in the housing office.

M: No, it's not that. My roommate and I have one too, and we put it out with our garbage each week. It's just that I read this article in the campus paper today that suggests that none of the dormitories on campus are recycling.

W: Oh, I read that article too. I agree that the writer obviously didn't check her facts. But, she had a point about the lack of bins for recycling paper. I mean, what type of institution goes through more paper than a university?

M: True. And, like anything, the budget is always to blame.

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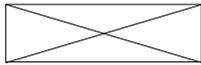
Reading time: 45 seconds

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

OCD is an anxiety disorder that causes a person to experience obsessive thoughts and to react to these with compulsive behavior or rituals. The obsessions are typically described by OCD sufferers as persistent thoughts or impulses that cause a great amount of stress. These differ from those stressors that the average person suffers from in daily life, such as work or financial problems, in that they are a product of the imagination. While most OCD sufferers admit to knowing that their concerns are not real, they cannot control the thoughts from recurring, and they compensate by performing certain repetitive actions. In addition to these symptoms and responses, a true OCD sufferer spends a large part of the day battling this disease. The debate continues over whether the disease should be classified as a psychological or biological disorder.



Now listen to a talk on the same academic subject.



Explain how the professor's description of OCD expands upon the reading.

Preparation time: 30 seconds

Response time: 60 seconds

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obsessions for OCD sufferers are not realistic. They are more like persistent thoughts that don't make sense. In addition, the compulsions are generally unrelated to the obsessive thoughts.

Transcript for listening conversation question 4:

Professor: The terms "obsessed" and "addicted" are used so loosely these days, that one of the most serious mental diseases in America is often not taken seriously even by medical professionals. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is in fact one of the most debilitating psychological diseases, though it only affects about 4% of the population. Now, when I say debilitating, I mean, in terms of quality of life. While very few people die from the symptoms and responses to OCD, if they don't seek any help, which most don't, they become severely depressed and isolated. Holding down a job or maintaining social relationships are virtually impossible for many OCD sufferers. The term obsession has to be defined properly when making a proper diagnosis. A true obsession for OCD sufferers is

something that is considered abnormal even by the patient himself. So, we're not talking about a passion for golf, or a love of game shows here. To an OCD sufferer, an obsession is generally a persisting thought with no merit, such as the feeling that one is going to throw oneself into traffic. The rituals and behavior that OCD sufferers engage in, such as repetitive hand washing or excessive checking are usually unrelated to the obsessive thoughts. In other words, someone who can't get the image of a tree falling on their house out of their mind might engage in an unrelated ritual such as flipping constantly through pages of a certain book.

Question 5 and 6

In question 5 and 6 you will hear a conversation and a lecture. You will be asked a question about each.

5. Listen to a student asking a professor about dropping a class.

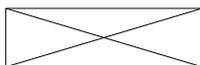
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In this conversation the student is concerned about her statistics class. She is doing poorly and is considering dropping the class. She feels that the professor speaks too quickly and she is unable to note the important points. The professor offers a few suggestions. First he suggests bringing in a tape recorder. Secondly he suggests getting a tutor. Finally, the professor says that it might be possible to get into the class she wants without his course if she talks to the psychology teacher about it. I prefer the final option. In my experience some prerequisites do not pertain to the course that requires them. Statistics is quite a general course that may be useful but is not always necessary.



Transcript for listening question 5 conversation:

S: Hi professor Jones. Thanks for agreeing to see me on such short notice. I just realized that the deadline for dropping classes is at the end of this week.

P: I have to assume you are considering dropping my class. I had a quick look at your last two quiz marks. You failed the first and just passed the second one. What is it that is causing you the most trouble?

S: Well, to be honest, I'm only taking statistics because it is a prerequisite for a psychology class I want to take. I really am not very good with numbers.

P: Have you been to all of my classes?

S: Yes, every one of them. But to be honest you speak a little bit too quickly for me. I find it difficult to get detailed notes.

Professor: Well, perhaps you should think about bringing in a tape recorder. That way if you miss something you can listen to it again when you're studying at home.

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6. Now listen to part of a talk from a geography class. Take notes on the main points of the lecture.

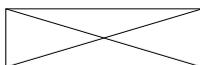


What can we learn about identifying the age of icebergs from the professor's discussion?

Preparation time: 20 seconds

Response time: 60 seconds

Listen to the sample response.





From this discussion we learn that the color of an iceberg can help identify its age. An iceberg that is made mostly of snow and has plenty of air pockets appears white to the human eye. We know this is a relatively young iceberg because the ice is not too thick to reflect the light back out. In contrast an iceberg that has been around for a much longer time is made up of compressed ice with very little air. The observer of this older iceberg will see blue rather than white, because only the stronger wavelengths of light can reflect back out.

Transcript for question 6 lecture:

While most icebergs appear white like snow, some have a blue tint

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