

TOEFL iBT® Speaking Practice Questions

This document may contain some question types that would not appear on a test that has been adapted for various accessibility purposes. On test day, you will receive an accessible assessment that is consistent with any accommodations for which you have been approved.

Speaking Practice Question 1: Independent Speaking -- Explain a Choice

Directions: You will now be asked to give your opinion about a familiar topic. Give yourself 15 seconds to prepare your response. Then record yourself speaking for 45 seconds.

Some people enjoy taking risks and trying new things. Others are not adventurous; they are cautious and prefer to avoid danger. Which behavior do you think is better? Explain why.

Preparation Time: 15 seconds

Response Time: 45 seconds



Speaking Practice Question 1: Independent Speaking (Explain a Choice) -- Response Tips

To respond to this particular question, you should clearly state what your opinion is: Do you think it is better to take risks or to be cautious? Then you should give reasons to support your opinion. If you take the position that you think it is better to take risks and try new things, you might give an example of a time when you or someone you know took a risk and was rewarded.

The example should have details, and the relationship between the example and your opinion should be clear. If you take the position that it is better to be cautious, you might give an example of a situation where being cautious is beneficial. You might continue to develop the response by contrasting what would happen in this situation if a risk were taken.

Keep in mind that there is no “correct” answer to this question. Either behavior can be supported with examples. The important part of this task is to make sure that you state your opinion and develop your response with examples and relevant details. It is important to use your own words and provide an original response. Including memorized reasons and examples may result in a lower score.

As with all speaking tasks, your response should be intelligible, should demonstrate effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and should be well developed and coherent. This task is scored using the Independent Speaking Rubric.

https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf

Speaking Practice Question 2: Integrated Speaking Practice (Campus-Related) -- Passage, Conversation and Question

Directions: The University is making a change in the courses it will offer. Read the article from the university newspaper about the change. Give yourself 45 seconds to read the article.

Sculpture Courses to Be Discontinued

University administrators announced yesterday that the sculpture program, a division of the art department, will be eliminated. “The main reason is a lack of student interest,” reported one administrator. “Although the number of art students has increased, fewer and fewer art majors are taking sculpture classes.” Furthermore, the department’s only sculpture professor is retiring this year. “Given the art department’s limited budget,” the administrator explained, “it just doesn’t make sense to hire a new full-time professor to teach sculpture for only a handful of students.”

Directions: Read the transcript.

Narrator Now listen to two students discussing the article.

Male student Everything alright?

Female student Yeah, I'm just upset about that article I showed you this morning ...

Male student Why, what's the big deal?

Female student Well, as an art major, I think it's a big loss for the department. The university's got it all wrong.

Male student What do you mean?

Female student Well, the low enrollment isn't because art majors don't want to take these classes. Problem is, who has time to take them when there are so many other requirements?

Male student I don't understand.

Female student See, the classes they're eliminating are all optional. The required courses are mostly painting and drawing, and they take up all our time. What we really need are different requirements—then art majors could take a better variety of classes ... all the things we're interested in.

Male student That makes sense. But, the thing about the professor ...

Female student Well, that's true. But still, they're being drastic. If money's the problem, they could hire a part-time professor! Or, most of the professors in the department have secondary fields ...

Male student Really?

Female student Yeah! At least a few painting teachers are also great sculptors. I'm sure one of them could teach a class.

Directions: Give yourself 30 seconds to prepare your response to the following question. Then record yourself speaking for 60 seconds.

The woman expresses her opinion of the university's plan. State her opinion and explain the reasons she gives for holding that opinion.

Preparation Time: 30 seconds

Response Time: 60 seconds

Speaking Practice Question 2: Integrated Speaking Practice (Campus-Related)

-- Response Tips

To respond to this particular question, you should state the woman's opinion of the university's plan to discontinue the sculpture courses. In this case, the woman disagrees with the university's plan and she believes that it is a "big loss for the department."

After stating the woman's opinion, you should convey the two main reasons she gives for holding her opinion. You will need to connect information from the conversation to the reading in order for the response to be complete. The woman argues that the reason for the low enrollment is because students who are art majors do not have time to take the sculpture classes, which are optional. A fully developed response might even point out that the reason for low enrollment is not lack of student interest as the university claims in the reading. You could also point out that students would probably take sculpture classes if the university changed the requirements.

Your response should also convey the woman's second reason for not agreeing with the university's plan: She believes that the university would not actually need to hire a full-time professor as stated in the reading, and that a part-time professor or other professor (who has a secondary field) could teach the class. You might also mention then that the concern about the budget expressed in the reading is irrelevant.

As with all speaking tasks, your response should be intelligible, should demonstrate effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and should be well developed and coherent. This task is scored using the Integrated Speaking Rubric.

https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf

Speaking Practice Question 3: Integrated Speaking Practice (Academic) -- Passage, Lecture and Question

Directions: Read a passage about revealing coloration from a biology textbook. You have 45 seconds to read the passage. Begin reading now.

Revealing Coloration

Many animals use coloration to protect themselves from predators. One defensive strategy involving the use of coloration is what is known as revealing coloration. Animals employing this strategy have an area of bright color on some part of their body; this bright color is usually hidden from predators' view. When approached by a predator, the animal suddenly reveals the area of bright color; this unexpected display of color startles or confuses the predator and provides the would-be prey with an opportunity to escape.

Narrator Now listen to part of a lecture from a biology class.

Professor There's a large tropical insect called the peanut bug—yes, like the peanuts that you eat—uh, and the peanut bug's front wings are colored so that they blend in with their surroundings. But its back wings—which are usually closed and hidden—have these bright, colorful spots on them. And when the peanut bug's attacked, it suddenly opens its back wings, and out pop these big, bright colors. And that surprises the predator, and gives the peanut bug a chance to get away.

Um, and then you have a butterfly ... called the morpho butterfly. And parts of the morpho butterfly's wings are very shiny, they reflect a lot of sunlight; when this butterfly is resting, this shiny part of its wings is hidden ... Now, morpho butterflies are often attacked by birds ... So when a bird approaches, the morpho flies away ... and when the morpho flaps its wings, all the bird can see are flashes of light reflected from the morpho's wings. Those flashes of light make it very difficult for the bird to follow the morpho, and the morpho is usually able to get away.

Directions: Give yourself 30 seconds to prepare your response to the following question. Then record yourself speaking for 60 seconds.

Using the examples of the peanut bug and the morpho butterfly, explain the concept of revealing coloration.

Preparation Time: 30 seconds

Response Time: 60 seconds

Speaking Practice Question 3: Integrated Speaking Practice (Academic) -- Response Tips

To respond to this particular question you should explain the concept of revealing coloration as it was presented in the reading. Revealing coloration is a defense strategy in which an animal surprises or confuses predators by suddenly revealing bright-colored parts of its body.

You should use the two examples given by the professor to explain the concept. You should convey the information that the peanut bug has bright colors on its wings and that when attacked, the bug suddenly opens the wings to reveal the bright colors. This surprises the predator. You could add that this allows the bug to escape. You should also explain how the morpho butterfly uses revealing coloration. You should mention that the butterfly has wings that reflect sunlight; when the butterfly flies away to escape from a bird, the butterfly's wings look like a flashing light, which is very difficult for birds to follow.

You do not need to repeat all the details from the reading and the lecture, but instead combine points from both to answer the question completely.

As with all speaking tasks, your response should be intelligible, should demonstrate effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and should be well developed and coherent. This task is scored using the Integrated Speaking Rubric.

https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf

Speaking Practice Question 4: Integrated Speaking Practice (Academic) -- Lecture and Question

Directions: Read the transcript.

Narrator Now listen to part of a lecture in a business class.

Professor Today, we'll talk about how companies determine the initial price for their products, by that I mean, when they first introduce a product in the market. There are different approaches, and today we'll discuss two of them. They are quite different ... each with their own advantages.

One approach or strategy sets the initial price of the product high, followed by a lower price at a later stage. Why? Well, ... when introducing a new product, companies want to build a high-quality image for it. Products that cost more are believed to be of higher quality. So, during the early stages of the product life cycle, companies can make very high profits from consumers willing to pay more for a high quality product, and although consumers know that prices will eventually go down, they're also willing to pay more to get the product sooner. This approach works very well with ... oh ... innovative, high-tech products, for example. Now just think about when video recorders, or ... video cameras ... or even cell phones ... first came out.

They were very expensive, but then they became much more accessible.

Another very common strategy sets an initial price low. Now this happens when the market is already saturated with the product and the strategy is to undercut its competitors. Say, there's a newly starting computer maker trying to gain market share. So what do they do? Well, they offer a computer at an affordable price, lower than existing brands. By doing this, the company appeals to new consumers who weren't probably even interested in getting a computer and ... well, of course ... to existing consumers who might now be tempted to switch brands. Now, how does this company make profits with its low-priced computer? Well, one thing that's often done is to encourage their customers to buy accessories also manufactured by them, like printers, or software, for example.

Directions: Give yourself 20 seconds to prepare your response to the following question. Then record yourself speaking for 60 seconds.

Using the points and examples from the lecture, explain the two pricing strategies described by the professor.

Preparation Time: 20 seconds

Response Time: 60 seconds

Speaking Practice Question 4: Integrated Speaking Practice (Academic) -- Response Tips

To respond to this particular question, you should explain the two pricing strategies described by the professor. You should include relevant points and examples from the lecture (and not from any other source). To begin your response, you could define what a pricing strategy is as explained at the beginning of the lecture. You could briefly mention that companies need to determine an initial price when they first bring their products to the market.

Then you would explain the first approach. You could say that one strategy sets prices high but the prices become lower at a later stage. In your response, you would need to explain that companies using this strategy make high profits at early stages of the product lifecycle (when the product first comes out). You would then need to include the example mentioned in the lecture. The initial high price approach works well with innovative high-tech products—for example, when video cameras (or video recorders, or cell phones) first came out.

In your response, you would also need to explain the second pricing strategy mentioned in the lecture. The other pricing strategy sets prices low to attract new customers and encourage existing customers to switch brands. You might include the detail that this strategy is used when the market is already saturated with a product. Then you would need to give the example of the computer company from the lecture. A computer manufacturer offers computers at low prices. It will make little profit from the computer itself but customers are encouraged to buy other related products the same company manufactures like software or printers, and so the company makes a profit.

You do not need to repeat all the details from the lecture. You need to only give sufficient details to explain the two strategies.

As with all speaking tasks, your response should be intelligible, should demonstrate effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and should be well developed and coherent. This task is scored using the Integrated Speaking Rubric.

https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf

Speaking Practice Question 5: Independent Speaking Practice (Explain a Choice)

-- Question

Directions: You will now be asked to give your opinion about a familiar topic. Give yourself 15 seconds to prepare your response. Then record yourself speaking for 45 seconds.

Some people think it is more fun to spend time with friends in restaurants or cafés. Others think it is more fun to spend time with friends at home. Which do you think is better? Explain why.

Preparation Time: 15 seconds

Response Time: 45 seconds

Speaking Practice Question 5: Independent Speaking Practice (Explain a Choice) -- Response Tips

To respond to this particular question, you should clearly state what your opinion is: Do you think it is more fun to spend time with friends in restaurants or cafés, or at home? Then you should give reasons to support your opinion. If you take the position that it is more fun to spend time with friends in restaurants or cafés, you might give an example of a time when you enjoyed being with friends in a restaurant, and explain reasons why you enjoyed the experience or discuss specific advantages of being in a restaurant.

The example should have details, and the relationship between the example and your opinion should be clear. If you take the position that it is more fun to spend time with friends at home, you might give an example of a situation in which you enjoyed spending time with friends at home, and explain reasons why you found it enjoyable or discuss specific advantages of being at home. You might continue to develop your response by contrasting the experience of spending time with friends at home with what it would be like to spend time together in a restaurant. You could mention some disadvantages of being in a restaurant.

Keep in mind that there is no “correct” answer to this question. Either position can be supported with examples. The important part of this task is to make sure that you state your opinion and develop your response with examples and relevant details. It is important to use your own words and provide an original response. Including memorized reasons and examples may result in a lower score.

As with all speaking tasks, your response should be intelligible, should demonstrate effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and should be well developed and coherent. This task is scored using the Independent Speaking Rubric.

https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf

Speaking Practice Question 6: Integrated Speaking Practice (Campus-related) -- Passage, Conversation and Question

Directions: State University plans to build a new auditorium. Read an article about the plan in the campus newspaper. You have 45 seconds to read the article. Begin reading now.

University to Build New Auditorium

The university has decided to demolish the old campus auditorium and replace it with a new one. The auditorium is one of the oldest original buildings on campus, and administrators say it is showing signs of its age: sagging floors, peeling paint, a drafty interior, and outdated decor. The new auditorium, by contrast, will have a clean, modern appearance. Also, the old auditorium is too small to accommodate the number of current students. The new auditorium will be bigger, with a greater number of seats to accommodate a larger student body.

Directions: Read the transcript

Narrator Now listen to two students discussing the article.

Male student I wish they wouldn't do this.

Female student Really? But the place is so old...

Male student Yeah, but I like that. I think it's a nice, historic-looking building.

Female student Hmm ... well, I guess it's kinda pretty...

Male student It's an important part of the university's history. It was one of the first things built on campus...we should preserve that ... not get rid of it.

Female student That's a good point. But what about the need for an expansion?

Male student I don't think it's necessary.

Female student But it was built when the university was so much smaller.

Male student That's true, but think about it: have you ever seen the space completely full?

Female student Well ... uh, no, I guess not.

Male student Me either. There are never any events when the entire student body is there. In fact, there are usually just a small number of students in the audience for a play or a concert.

Female student That's true.

Male student So why make it bigger, if it works as-is?

Female student I see what you mean.

Directions: Give yourself 30 seconds to prepare your response to the following question. Then record yourself speaking for 60 seconds.

The man expresses his opinion of the university's plan. State his opinion, and explain the reasons he gives for holding that opinion.

Preparation Time: 30 seconds

Response Time: 60 seconds

Speaking Practice Question 6: Integrated Speaking Practice (Campus-related) -- Response Tips

To respond to this particular question, you should state the man’s opinion of the university’s plan to replace the old auditorium with a new auditorium. In this case, the man disagrees with the university’s plan and thinks replacing the old building is unnecessary, and that it should be preserved.

After stating the man’s opinion, you should convey the two main reasons he gives for holding his opinion. You will need to connect information from the conversation to the reading in order for the response to be complete. The man argues that the old building is “nice” and “historic-looking,” and is an important part of the university’s history, so it should be preserved rather than being replaced with a building that has a modern appearance. You might also mention that the man points out that the old auditorium was one of the first buildings on campus.

Your response should also convey the man’s second reason for disagreeing with the university’s plan: He does not think an auditorium with more seating to accommodate the larger number of students is needed, because the auditorium is never completely full. You might add that he says that no events at the auditorium are attended by the entire student body, and that usually only a small number of students are there for a play or concert.

As with all speaking tasks, your response should be intelligible, should demonstrate effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and should be well developed and coherent. This task is scored using the Integrated Speaking Rubric.

https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf

Speaking Practice Question 7: Integrated Speaking Practice (Academic) -- Passage, Lecture, and Question

Directions: Read a passage from a psychology textbook. You have 45 seconds to read the passage.

Flow

In psychology, the feeling of complete and energized 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.

Directions: Read the transcript

Narrator Listen to part of a talk in a psychology class.

Male professor 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 . . . I remember passing by a classroom early one morning just as he was leaving, and he looked terrible: his clothes were all rumpled, 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 never felt better, that he was totally 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 realized that time was passing by.

Directions: Give yourself 30 seconds to prepare your response to the following question. Then record yourself speaking for 60 seconds.

Explain flow and how the example used by the professor illustrates the concept.

Preparation Time: 30 seconds

Response Time: 60 seconds

Speaking Practice Question 7: Integrated Speaking Practice (Academic) -- Response Tips

To respond to this particular question, you should explain the concept of flow as it was presented in the reading. Flow is a state or feeling of complete and energized focus in an activity—usually one that stretches one’s physical or mental abilities.

You should use the example given by the professor to explain the concept. You should convey the information that the professor’s friend experienced flow while working on a mathematics puzzle, which is a mentally challenging activity. You should explain that since flow is characterized by losing a sense of time, the friend stayed up late or did not stop for other activities. You should also explain that he seemed happy or satisfied, which is another characteristic of flow. And you could add that he was involved in the activity for its own sake, and not because the puzzle was related to his teaching or research.

You do not need to repeat all the details from the reading and the lecture, but instead combine points from both to answer the question completely.

As with all speaking tasks, your response should be intelligible, should demonstrate effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and should be well developed and coherent. This task is scored using the Integrated Speaking Rubric.

https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf

Speaking Practice Question 8: Integrated Speaking Practice (Academic) -- Lecture and Question

Directions: Read the transcript.

Narrator Listen to part of a lecture in a biology course.

Female professor Human beings aren't the only animals that use tools. It's generally recognized that other animals use tools as well . . . use them naturally, in the wild, without any human instruction. But when can we say that an object is a tool? Well, it depends on your definition of a tool. And in fact, there are two competing definitions—a narrow definition and a broad one. The narrow definition says that a tool is an object that's used to perform a specific task . . . but not just any object. To be a tool, according to the narrow definition, the object's gotta be purposefully changed or shaped by the animal, or human, so that it can be used that way. It's an object that's made. Wild chimpanzees use sticks to dig insects out of their nests . . . but most sticks lying around won't do the job . . . they might be too thick, for example. So the sticks have to be sharpened so they'll fit into the hole in an ant hill or the insect nest. The chimp pulls off the leaves and chews the stick and trims it down that way until it's the right size. The chimp doesn't just find the stick . . . it . . . you could say it makes it in a way.

But the broad definition says an object doesn't have to be modified to be considered a tool. The broad definition says a tool is any object that's used to perform a specific task. For example, an elephant will sometimes use a stick to scratch its back . . . it just picks up a stick from the ground and scratches its back with it . . . It doesn't modify the stick, it uses it just as it's found. And it's a tool, under the broad definition, but under the narrow definition it's not because, well, the elephant doesn't change it in any way.

Directions: Give yourself 20 seconds to prepare your response to the following question. Then record yourself speaking for 60 seconds.

Using points and examples from the talk, describe the two different definitions of tools given by the professor.

Preparation Time: 20 seconds

Response Time: 60 seconds

Speaking Practice Question 8: Integrated Speaking Practice (Academic) -- Response Tips

To respond to this particular question, you should explain the two definitions of tools given by the professor. You should include relevant points and examples from the lecture (and not from any other source). To begin your response, you could mention that animals use tools. Then you could explain that there are two competing definitions of a tool.

Then you would explain the first definition. You could say that according to the narrow definition, an object is a tool if it has been purposefully changed or shaped in order to be used for a specific task. You would then need to include the example mentioned in the lecture. You could explain that when chimpanzees use sticks to find insects, it fits the narrow definition of a tool since the chimpanzees change the sticks to make them useful for the task. You might also include specific details about how the chimpanzees remove leaves from the sticks and sharpen them so that they fit into insect nests.

In your response, you would also need to explain the second definition of a tool. According to this broad definition, the object must be used for a specific task, but it does not need to be modified to be considered a tool. Then you would need to give the example of elephants using sticks to scratch their backs. You could explain that this fits the broad definition of a tool since the elephants use the sticks for a specific task, but do not change the sticks.

You do not need to repeat all the details from the lecture. You need to only give sufficient details to explain the two strategies.

As with all speaking tasks, your response should be intelligible, should demonstrate effective use of grammar and vocabulary, and should be well developed and coherent. This task is scored using the Integrated Speaking Rubric.

https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/toefl_speaking_rubrics.pdf