
LISTENING

Listening is tested in the first section on both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test. This section consists of a number of different types of listening passages, each followed by one or more questions. The paper and the computer listening sections are **similar** in the following ways:

- *some of the passages*
- *some of the language skills*

The paper and the computer listening sections are **different** in the following ways:

- *some of the passages*
- *some of the language skills*
- *the use of visuals*
- *the number of questions*
- *the amount of time*
- *the control of time between questions*
- *the procedures and strategies*

LISTENING ON THE PAPER TOEFL® TEST

On the paper TOEFL test, the first section is called Listening Comprehension. This section consists of fifty questions (though some tests may be longer). You will listen to recorded materials and respond to multiple-choice questions about the material. You must listen carefully because you will hear the recording one time only and the material on the recording is not written in your test book.

1. **Short Dialogues** are two-line dialogues between two speakers, each followed by a multiple-choice question. You will listen to each short dialogue and question on the recording and then choose the best answer to each question from the four choices in your test book. The 30 short dialogues and 30 questions about them make up Part A of the paper TOEFL test.
2. **Long Conversations** are 60–90 second conversations on casual topics between students, each followed by a number of multiple-choice questions. You will listen to each long conversation and each of the questions that accompany it on the recording and then choose the best answer to each question from the four choices in your test book. The two conversations and the seven to nine questions that accompany them make up Part B of the paper TOEFL test.
3. **Talks** are 60–90 second talks about school life or on academic subjects, each followed by a number of multiple-choice questions. You will listen to each lecture and each of the questions that accompany it on the recording and then choose the best answer to each question from the four choices in your test book. The three lectures and the 11–13 questions that accompany them make up Part C of the paper TOEFL test.

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR LISTENING COMPREHENSION**(Paper TOEFL® Test)** 

1. **Be familiar with the directions.** The directions on every paper TOEFL test are the same, so it is not necessary to spend time reading the directions carefully when you take the test. You should be completely familiar with the directions before the day of the test.
2. **Listen carefully to the passages.** You should concentrate fully on what the speakers are saying on the recording because you will hear the recording one time only.
3. **Know where the easier and the more difficult questions are generally found.** Within each part of the Listening Comprehension section on the paper test, the questions generally progress from easy to difficult.
4. **Be familiar with the pacing of the test.** You have 12 seconds between each question on the recording, so you must answer each question within 12 seconds and then be prepared for the next question on the recording.
5. **Never leave any answers blank on your answer sheet.** Even if you are not sure of the correct response, you should answer each question. There is no penalty for guessing.
6. **Use any remaining time to look ahead at the answers to the questions that follow.** When you finish with one question, you may have time to look ahead at the answers to the next question.

LISTENING ON THE COMPUTER TOEFL® TEST

On the computer TOEFL test, the first section is called the Listening section. This section consists of 30–50 questions. In this section, you will listen to recorded material, look at visual cues, and respond to various types of questions about the material. You must listen carefully because you will hear the recorded material one time only and the recorded material does not appear on the computer screen.

Four types of passages may appear in the Listening section of the computer TOEFL test:

1. **Short Dialogues** consist of two- to four-line dialogues between two speakers. Each dialogue is accompanied by a context-setting visual and is followed by one multiple-choice question. You will listen to each short dialogue as you see a context-setting visual on the screen. Then you will listen to a question as you see the question and four answer choices on the screen. The 11–17 short dialogues and questions about them make up Part A on the computer TOEFL test.
2. **Casual Conversations** consist of five- to seven-line conversations on casual topics between students. Each conversation is accompanied by a context-setting visual and is followed by two or three multiple-choice questions. You will listen to each casual conversation as you see a context-setting visual on the screen. Then you will listen to each question as you see the question and the four answer choices on the screen. The two to four conversations and the questions that accompany them are found in Part B on the computer TOEFL test.

3. **Academic Discussions** consist of 120–150 second discussions on academic topics by two to five speakers. Each discussion is accompanied by a number of context-setting and content visuals and is followed by three to six questions of varying types. You will listen to each academic discussion as you see a series of context-setting and content visuals on the screen. Then you will listen to each question as you see the various types of questions and answers on the screen. The one or two academic discussions and the questions that accompany them are found in Part B on the computer TOEFL test.
4. **Academic Lectures** consist of 120–150 second lectures on academic topics by university professors. Each lecture is accompanied by a number of context-setting and content visuals and is followed by three to six questions of varying types. You will listen to each academic lecture as you see a series of context-setting and content visuals on the screen. Then you will listen to each question as you see the various types of questions and answers on the screen. The two to four academic lectures and the questions that accompany them are found in Part B on the computer TOEFL test.

Part A on the computer TOEFL test consists of only short dialogues, while Part B consists of a mixture of casual conversations, academic discussions, and academic lectures.

The Listening section of the computer TOEFL test is *computer adaptive*. This means that the difficulty of the questions that you see is determined by how well you answer the questions. The section begins with a medium-level question, and the questions that follow will get easier or harder depending on whether or not you answer the questions correctly.

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR THE LISTENING SECTION

(Computer TOEFL® Test) 

1. **Be familiar with the directions.** The directions on every computer TOEFL test are the same, so it is not necessary to spend time reading the directions carefully when you take the test. You should be completely familiar with the directions before the day of the test.
2. **Be familiar with computer adaptivity.** This section of the computer TOEFL test is adaptive. This means that you will start with a medium-level question, and the difficulty of the questions will increase or decrease depending on whether or not your answers are correct.
3. **Set the volume carefully before you start the Listening section.** You have the opportunity to choose the volume that you would like before you start the section.
4. **Dismiss the directions as soon as they come up.** The time starts when the directions come up. You should already be familiar with the directions, so you can click on **Dismiss Directions** as soon as it appears and save all your time for the questions.
5. **Listen carefully to the spoken material.** You will hear the spoken material one time only. You may not repeat the spoken material during the test.
6. **Use the visuals to help you focus on the context.** As you listen to the spoken material, you will see visual materials on the screen. The visual information may help you to understand the context for the spoken material as well as the content of the spoken material as you listen.
7. **Pace yourself between questions.** You control when the spoken material is played. You may take as much time as you need between questions.

8. **Think carefully about a question before you answer it.** You may not return to a question later in the test. You only have one opportunity to answer a given question.
9. **Click on an answer on the computer screen when you have selected an answer.** You may still change your mind at this point and click on a different answer.
10. **Click on **Next** and then click on **Confirm Answer** to record your answer.** After you click on the Confirm Answer button, you cannot go back and change your answer. A new question will appear, and you may not return to a previous question.
11. **Do not spend too much time on a question you are unsure of.** If you truly do not know the answer to a question, simply guess and go on. The computer will automatically move you into a level of questions that you can answer.
12. **Be very careful not to make careless mistakes.** If you carelessly choose an incorrect answer, the computer will move you to an easier level of questions. You will have to waste time working your way back to the appropriate level of questions.
13. **Monitor the time carefully on the title bar of the computer screen.** The title bar indicates the time remaining in the Listening section, the total number of questions in the section, and the current number.
14. **Do not randomly guess at the end of the section to complete all the questions in the section before time is up.** In a computer adaptive section such as the Listening section, random guessing to complete the section will only lower your score.

SHORT DIALOGUES

(PAPER TOEFL® TEST AND COMPUTER TOEFL® TEST)  

Short dialogues appear on both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test. Though short dialogues are slightly different in format on the two tests, they both test the same language skills. The paper and computer short dialogues are **similar** in the following ways:

- *the language skills tested*
- *the type of question used*
- *the number of people talking*

The paper and computer short dialogues are **different** in the following ways:

- *the possible number of lines of dialogue*
- *the use of context-setting visuals to accompany the dialogues*
- *the control of the timing between questions*
- *the presentation of the question*

SHORT DIALOGUES ON THE PAPER TOEFL® TEST

Short dialogues are found in Part A in the Listening Comprehension section of the paper TOEFL test. For each of the 30 short dialogues in this part of the test, you will hear a two-line dialogue between two speakers followed by a multiple-choice question. After you listen to the dialogue and the question, you must choose the best answer to the question from your test book. Look at an example of a short dialogue from the paper TOEFL test.

Example from the Paper TOEFL Test

On the recording, you hear:

- (man) *This physics course couldn't be any harder.*
 (woman) *I'll say!*
 (narrator) *What does the woman mean?*

In your test book, you read:

- (A) She has something to say to the man.
 (B) She doesn't think the physics course is hard.
 (C) She agrees with the man.
 (D) She'd like to discuss the physics course.

In the dialogue, when the woman says *I'll say*, she is showing that she *agrees* with what the man just said. Answer (C) is therefore the best answer to this question.

PROCEDURES FOR THE SHORT DIALOGUES (Paper TOEFL® Test)

1. **As you listen to each short dialogue, focus on the second line of the conversation.** The answer to the question is generally found in the second line.
2. **Keep in mind that the correct answer is probably a restatement of a key word or idea in the second line of the dialogue.** Think of possible restatements.
3. **Keep in mind that certain structures and expressions are tested regularly in the short dialogues.** Listen for these structures and expressions:
 - structures (*passives, negatives, wishes, conditions*)
 - functional expressions (*agreement, uncertainty, suggestion, surprise*)
 - idiomatic expressions (*two-part verbs, three-part verbs, idioms*)
4. **Keep in mind that these questions generally progress from easy to difficult.** This means that questions 1 through 5 will be the easiest and questions 26 through 30 will be the hardest.
5. **Read the answers and choose the best answer to each question.** Remember to answer each question even if you are not sure of the correct response. Never leave any answers blank.

6. Even if you do not understand the complete dialogue, you can still find the correct answer.

- If you only understand a few words or ideas in the second line, choose the answer that contains a restatement of those words or ideas.
- If you do not understand anything at all in the second line of the conversation, choose the answer that sounds the most different from what you heard.
- Never choose an answer because it sounds like what you heard in the dialogue.

7. Be prepared for the next question. You have only 12 seconds between questions.

SHORT DIALOGUES ON THE COMPUTER TOEFL® TEST

Short dialogues appear in Part A of the Listening section of the computer TOEFL test. For each of the short dialogues in this part of the test, you will see a context-setting visual as you listen to a two- to four-line dialogue between two speakers. After you see the visual and listen to the dialogue, you will see the question and the four answer choices on the computer screen. You must click on the best answer choice on the computer screen. Now look at an example of a short dialogue from the computer TOEFL test.

Example from the Computer TOEFL® Test 

You see on the computer screen:



You hear:

- (woman) *Do you want to leave now for the concert or wait until later?*
- (man) *Let's leave now. I'd prefer to get there a bit early.*

After the dialogue is complete, the question and answer choices appear on the computer screen as the narrator states the question. This question is a regular multiple-choice question that asks what the man means.

You see on the computer screen:

Listening

What does the man mean?

He doesn't want to go to the concert.

He would prefer to leave later.

He wants to leave the concert early.

He wants to go immediately.

You hear:

(narrator) *What does the man mean?*

In the dialogue, the man says *Let's leave now*. This means that *he wants to go immediately*. The last answer is the best answer to this question, so you should click on the last answer.

PROCEDURES FOR THE SHORT DIALOGUES

(Computer TOEFL® Test)

1. **Listen carefully to the short dialogue.** You may listen to the dialogue one time only.
2. **Use the visual to help you focus on the context.** A context-setting visual appears on the screen at the beginning of each short dialogue. It shows you who is talking and where they are talking.
3. **As you listen to each short dialogue, focus on the last line of the dialogue.** The answer to the question is generally found in the last line of the dialogue.
4. **Listen to the question following the short dialogue as you read it on the screen.** Each listening question is both spoken and written on the computer screen.
5. **Keep in mind that the correct answer is probably a restatement of a key word or idea in the last line of the dialogue.** Think of possible restatements of the last line of the dialogue.
6. **Keep in mind that certain structures and expressions are tested regularly in the dialogues.** Listen for these structures and expressions:
 - structures (*passives, negatives, wishes, conditions*)
 - functional expressions (*agreement, uncertainty, suggestion, surprise*)
 - idiomatic expressions (*two-part verbs, three-part verbs, idioms*)
7. **Even if you do not understand the complete dialogue, you can still find the correct answer.**
 - If you only understand a few words or ideas in the last line, choose the answer that contains a restatement of those words or ideas.
 - If you do not understand anything at all in the last line of the conversation, choose the answer that sounds the most different from what you heard.
 - Never choose an answer because it *sounds like* what you heard in the dialogue.
8. **Click on an answer on the computer screen when you have selected an answer.** You may still change your mind at this point and click on a different answer.

9. Click on **Next**. Then click on **Confirm Answer** to record your answer. After you click on this button, you cannot go back and change your answer.
10. Be prepared for the next question. After you click on **Confirm Answer**, the next question begins automatically.

Next, you should move on to the language skills. The following language skills will help you to implement these strategies and procedures with the short dialogues on both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test.

STRATEGIES

SKILL I: FOCUS ON THE LAST LINE

The short dialogues involve conversations between two people, each followed by a question. It is important to understand that the answer to this type of question is most often (but not always!) found in the last line of the conversation.

Example from the Paper and Computer TOEFL® Tests

On the recording, you hear:

- (man) *Billy really made a big mistake this time.*
 (woman) *Yes, he forgot to turn in his research paper.*
 (narrator) *What does the woman say about Billy?*

In your test book or on the computer screen, you read:

- (A) It was the first time he made a mistake.
 (B) He forgot to write his paper.
 (C) He turned in the paper in the wrong place.
 (D) He didn't remember to submit his assignment.

The last line of this dialogue indicates that Billy *forgot to turn in his research paper*, and this means that he *didn't remember to submit* it. The best answer is therefore answer (D).

The following chart outlines the most important strategy for the short dialogues:

STRATEGY #1: FOCUS ON THE LAST LINE

1. The last line of the dialogue probably contains the answer to the question.
2. Listen to the first line of the dialogue. If you understand it, that's good. If you don't understand it, don't worry because it probably does not contain the answer.
3. Be ready to focus on the last line of the dialogue because it probably contains the answer. Repeat the last line in your mind as you read through the answers in the text.

EXERCISE 1: In this exercise, you should focus on the last line of the dialogue, read the question, and then choose the best answer to that question. Remember that you can probably answer the question easily with only the last line.

1. (man) *Can you tell me if today's matinee is a comedy, romance, or western?*
 (woman) *I have no idea.*
 (narrator) *What does the woman mean?*
 - (A) She has strong ideas about movies.
 - (B) She prefers comedies over westerns and romances.
 - (C) She doesn't like today's matinee.
 - (D) She does not know.

2. (woman) *Was anyone at home at Barb's house when you went there to deliver the package?*
 (man) *I rang the bell, but no one answered.*
 (narrator) *What does the man imply?*
 - (A) Barb answered the bell.
 - (B) The house was probably empty.
 - (C) The bell wasn't in the house.
 - (D) The house doesn't have a bell.

3. (woman) *You just got back from the interview for the internship. How do you think it went?*
 (man) *I think it's highly unlikely that I got the job.*
 (narrator) *What does the man suggest?*
 - (A) It's unlikely that he'll go to the interview.
 - (B) He thinks he'll be recommended for a high-level job.
 - (C) The interview was apparently quite unsuccessful.
 - (D) He had an excellent interview.

TOEFL EXERCISE 1: In this exercise, listen carefully to each short dialogue and question on the recording, and then choose the best answer to the question. You should focus carefully on the last line.



NOW BEGIN THE RECORDING AT TOEFL EXERCISE 1.

1. (A) He is leaving now.
 (B) He has to go out of his way.
 (C) He will not be leaving soon.
 (D) He will do it his own way.

2. (A) He locked the door.
 (B) He tried unsuccessfully to get into the house.
 (C) He was able to open the door.
 (D) He left the house without locking the door.

3. (A) She doesn't like to listen to turkeys.
 (B) She thinks the dinner sounds special.
 (C) She especially likes the roast turkey.
 (D) She'd prefer a different dinner.

4. (A) He'll be busy with her homework tonight.
 (B) He can't help her tonight.
 (C) He's sorry he can't ever help her.
 (D) He'll help her with her physics.

5. (A) Her eyes hurt.
 (B) She thought the lecture was great.
 (C) The class was boring.
 (D) She didn't want to watch Professor Martin.

6. (A) Not all the bills have been paid.
 (B) They don't have enough credit to pay the bills.
 (C) What she said on the phone was not credible.
 (D) He used a credit card to pay some of the bills.

7. (A) She'll call back quickly.
 (B) She'll definitely be back by 4:00.
 (C) She'll give it back by 4:00.
 (D) She'll try to return fast.

8. (A) She hasn't seen Tim.
 (B) Tim was there only for a moment.
 (C) Tim was around a short time ago.
 (D) Tim will return in a minute.

9. (A) She doesn't like the place he chose.
 (B) She doesn't want to get into the car.
 (C) She's glad the spot is reserved.
 (D) They can't park the car there.
10. (A) There's plenty to eat.
 (B) The refrigerator's broken.
 (C) The food isn't in the refrigerator.
 (D) He's not sure if there's enough.

SKILL 2: CHOOSE ANSWERS WITH SYNONYMS

Often the correct answer in a short dialogue is an answer that contains synonyms (words with similar meanings but different sounds) for key words in the conversation.

Example from the Paper and Computer TOEFL® Tests

On the recording, you hear:

- (woman) *Why is Barbara feeling so happy?*
 (man) *She just started working in a real estate agency.*
 (narrator) *What does the man say about Barbara?*

In your test book or on the computer screen, you read:

- (A) She always liked her work in real estate.
 (B) She began a new job.
 (C) She just bought some real estate.
 (D) She bought a real estate agency.

In this dialogue, the key word *started* means *began*, and the key word *working* refers to *job*. The best answer to this question is therefore answer (B).

The following chart outlines a very important strategy for short dialogues:

STRATEGY #2: CHOOSE ANSWERS WITH SYNONYMS

1. As you listen to the last line of the dialogue, focus on key words in that line.
2. If you see any synonyms for key words in a particular answer, then you have probably found the correct answer.

EXERCISE 2: In this exercise, underline key words in the last line of each short dialogue. Then underline synonyms for these key words in the answers, and choose the best answer to each question. Remember that the best answer is probably the answer that contains synonyms for the key words in the last line of the dialogue.

1. (woman) *Did you see the manager about the job in the bookstore?*
 (man) *Yes, and I also had to fill out an application.*
 (narrator) *What does the man mean?*
- (A) He got a job as bookstore manager.
 (B) The bookstore was not accepting applications.
 (C) He saw a book about how to apply for jobs.
 (D) It was necessary to complete a form.

2. (man) *We're planning to leave for the trip at about 2:00.*
 (woman) *Couldn't we leave before noon?*
 (narrator) *What does the woman ask?*
- (A) If they could leave at noon
 (B) If it is possible to go by 12:00
 (C) Why they can't leave at noon
 (D) If they could leave the room
3. (man) *Was the concert well-received?*
 (woman) *The audience applauded for a long time after the performance.*
 (narrator) *What does the woman say about the concert?*
- (A) The performance went on for a long time.
 (B) There was applause throughout the performance.
 (C) The people clapped on and on after the concert.
 (D) The audience waited for a long time for the concert to begin.

TOEFL EXERCISE 2: In this exercise, listen carefully to each short dialogue and question on the recording, and then choose the best answer to the question. You should look for synonyms for key words in the last line.



NOW BEGIN THE RECORDING AT TOEFL EXERCISE 2.

1. (A) The final exam was harder than the others.
 (B) There were two exams rather than one.
 (C) He thought the exam would be easier.
 (D) The exam was not very difficult.
2. (A) He's not feeling very well.
 (B) He's rather sick of working.
 (C) He's feeling better today than yesterday.
 (D) He'd really rather not answer the question.
3. (A) The company was founded about a year ago.
 (B) It was just established that he could go into business.
 (C) The family is well-established.
 (D) The business only lasted a year.
4. (A) He did not look at the right schedule.
 (B) The plane landed in the right place.
 (C) The plane arrived on time.
 (D) He had to wait for the plane to land.
5. (A) She'd rather go running.
 (B) She doesn't want to go into the pool.
 (C) She'll change clothes quickly and go swimming.
 (D) She needs a sweatsuit to go running.
6. (A) The firefighters saved the homes for last.
 (B) A firefighter saved the hillside last night.
 (C) The homes on the hillside were burned.
 (D) The houses weren't destroyed.
7. (A) There's enough soup.
 (B) The spices are adequate.
 (C) She thinks the soup's too salty.
 (D) The man should add more salt and pepper.
8. (A) He was lucky to receive a grant for his studies.
 (B) He used his fortune to pay his fees.
 (C) He is a scholar at a college with low fees.
 (D) He paid to get a scholarship.
9. (A) It profited from previous mistakes.
 (B) It earned a lot of money.
 (C) This was the last year that it would make a profit.
 (D) It was not so successful.
10. (A) Chuck's bank account has too much money in it.
 (B) He thinks Chuck has the wrong kind of bank account.
 (C) He thinks that Chuck is on his way home from the bank.
 (D) There isn't enough money in Chuck's account.