READING COMPREHENSION IN TOEFL



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Reading is tested in the third section on both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test. This section consists of reading passages followed by a number of questions. The paper and the computer reading sections are **similar** in the following ways.

the types of passages the language skills tested the ordering of the questions

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

the types of questions the number of questions the amount of time the strategies and procedures

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR READING (Paper TOEFL * Test)

- **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.
- **Do not spend too much time reading the passages.** You do not have time to read each passage in dept, and it is quite possible to answer the questions correctly without first reading the passages in depth.
- **Do not worry if a reading passage is on a topic you are unfamiliar with.** All of the information that you need to answer the questions is included in the passages. You do not need any background knowledge to answer the questions.
- **Do not spend too much time on a question you are unsure of**. If you do not know the answer to a question, simply guess and go on. You can return to this question later in the section if you have time.
- **Guess to complete the section before time is up**. There is no penalty for guessing so it can only increase your score to guess the answers to questions that you do not have time to complete

PROCEDURES FOR A READING PASSAGE

(Paper TOEFL Test)

- Skim the reading passage to determine the main idea and overall organization of ideas in the passage. You do not need to understand every detail in each passage to answer the question correctly. It is therefore a waste of time to read the passage with the intent of understanding every single detail before you try to answer the questions.
- Look ahead at the questions to determine what language skills are being tested in the questions. Questions related to different language skills are answered in different ways.
- **Find the section of the passage that deals with each question**. The language skill tells you exactly where to look in the passage to find correct answers.
 - For main idea questions, look at the first line of each paragraph.
 - For directly and indirectly answered detail questions, choose a key word in the question, and skim for that key word (or a related idea) in order in the passage.
 - For vocabulary questions, the question will tell you where the word is located in the passage.
 - For where-in-the passage questions, the answer choices give you the four possible locations of the correct answer.
- **Read the part of the passage that contains the answer carefully.** The answer will probably be in a very predictable place in the passage.
- Choose the best answer to each question from the four choices listed in your test book. You can choose the best answer according to what is given in the appropriate section of the passage, eliminate definitely wrong answers, and mark your best guess on the answer sheet.

TOEFL SKILL: MAIN IDEA QUESTIONS

• Almost every reading passage on the paper TOEFL test or computer test will have a multiple choice question about the main idea of a passage. Such a question may be worded in a variety of ways; you may, for example, be asked to identify the topic, subject, title, primary idea, or main idea. These questions are all really asking what primary point the author is trying to get across in the passage. Since TOEFL passages are generally written in a traditionally organized manner, it is relatively easy to find the main ideas by studying the topic sentences, which are most probably found at the beginning of each paragraph.

Example from the Paper TOEFL Test

<u>Basketball was invented</u> in 1891 by a physical education instructor in Springfield, Massachusetts, by the name of James Naismith. Because of the terrible weather in winter, his physical education students were indoors rather than outdoors. They really did not like the idea of boring, repetitive exercises and preferred the excitement and challenge of game. Naismith figured out a team sport than could be played indoors on a gymnasium floor, that involved a lot of running, that kept all team members involved, and that did not allow the tackling and physical contact of American-style football.

The question:

What is the **topic** of this passage?

- (A)The life of James Naismith
- (B)The history of sports
- (C)Physical education and exercise
- (D)The origin of basketball

on both paper and computer tests

- What is the **topic** of the passage?
- What is the subject of the passage?
- What is the main idea of the passage?
- What is the author's main point in the passage?
- With what is the author **primarily concerned**?
- Which of the following would be the **best title**?

EXERCISE

The extremely hot and humid weather that occurs in the United States in July and August is commonly called the "dog days" of summer. This name comes from the star Sirius, which is known as the Dog Star. Sirius is the brightest visible star, and in the hot summer months it rises in the east at approximately the same time as the Sun. As ancient people saw this star rising with the Sun when the weather was at its hottest, they believed that Sirius was the cause of the additional heat; they believed that this bright star added its heat to the heat of the Sun and that these two together made summer weather so unbearably hot.

The topic of this passage is

- (A)the causes of the Dog Star.
- (B) the causes of hot and humid weather.
- (C)why the hot summer days are known as the "dog days".
- (D)the days that dogs prefer.

The main idea of this passage is that

- (A)the name for the summer days came from Sirius, the Dog Star
- (B)dogs generally prefer hot summer days
- (C)the hottest days occur in the summer because of the movements of the Sun and stars
- (D) Sirius rises at almost the same time as the Sun during the summer months.

TOEFL SKILL: STATED DETAIL QUESTIONS

Stated detail questions are found on both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test. A stated detail question asks about one piece of information in the passage rather than the passage as a whole. The answers to these questions are generally given in order in the passage, and the correct is often a restatement of what is given in the passage. This means that the correct answer often expresses the same idea as what is written in the passage, but the words are not exactly the same. The questions that test stated details are generally multiple choice questions.

Example from the Paper TOEFL Test

Flutes have been around for quite some time, in all sorts of shapes and sizes and made from a variety of materials. The <u>oldest known flutes</u> are about 20.000 years old; they were made from hollowed-out bones <u>with holes cut in them</u>. In addition to bone, older flutes were often constructed from bamboo or hollowed-out wood.

Today's flutes are generally made of metal, and in addition to the holes they have a complicated system of keys, levers, and pads. The instrument belonging to well-known flautist James Galway is not just made of any metal, it is made of gold.

The question:

According to the passage, the oldest flutes

- (A)had holes cut in them
- (B)were made of metal
- (C)were made 200.000 years ago
- (D)had a complicated set of levers and pads.

on both paper and computer tests

According to the passage

It is **stated** in the passage

The passage **indicates** that

Which of the following is **true** ...?

EXERCISE

Many parts of the southwestern United States would become deserts again without the waters of the Colorado River. A system of thousands of miles of canals, hundreds of miles of tunnels and aqueducts, and numerous dams and reservoirs bring Colorado River water to the area. The Imperial Valley in southern California is an example of such a place; it is a vast and productive agricultural area that once a desert. Today, 2,000 miles of canals irrigate the fertile land and keep it productive.

Which of the following is mentioned in the passage as a way that Colorado River water gets to the Southwest?

- (A) By truck
- (B) In bottles
- (C) In wells
- (D) Through canals

According to the passage, the Imperial Valley

- (A) is a desert today
- (B) is located in Colorado
- (C) produces a lot of agricultural goods
- (D)does not require irrigation

TOEFL SKILL: FIND "UNSTATED" DETAILS

You will sometimes be asked in the reading section of both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test to find an answer that is *not stated* or *not mentioned* or *not true* in the passage. This type of question really means that three of the answers are *stated*, *mentioned*, or *true* in the passage, while one answer is not.

Example from the Paper TOEFL Test

The Florida Keys are a beautiful <u>chain</u> of almost 1,000 <u>coral and limestone</u> islands. These islands form an <u>arc</u> that heads first southwest and then west from the mainland U.S. Highway 1, called the Overseas Highway, connects the main islands in the chain. On this highway, it is necessary to cross forty-two bridges over the ocean to cover the 159 miles from Miami, on the mainland, to Key West, the farthest island on the highway and the southernmost city in the United States.

The question:

Which of the following is **NOT mentioned** about the Florida Keys?

- (A)The Florida Keys are a chain of islands
- (B)The Florida Keys contain <u>coral and limestone</u>
- (C)The Florida Keys are in the shape of an <u>arc</u>.
- (D)The Florida Keys are not all inhabited

"UNSTATED" DETAIL QUESTIONS On both paper and computer tests

Which of the following is **not stated** ...?
Which of the following is **not mentioned**...?
Which of the following is **not discussed**...?
All of the following are true **expect**....

EXERCISE

Blood pressure measurement has two components: systolic and diastolic. Systolic pressure is taken when the heart is contracting to pump blood; diastolic pressure is taken when the heart is resting between beats. In the usual blood pressure reading, the systolic measurement is given first and is the higher of the two.

Normal blood pressure is a systolic measurement of 140, and when the systolic pressure is 160 or higher, then hypertension exist. Systolic pressure between 140 and 160 indicates borderline hypertension.

Which of the following is NOT true about systolic blood pressure?

- (A)It is taken during the contraction of the heart.
- (B)It is usually given first in a blood pressure reading.
- (C)A normal systolic measurement is 140
- (D) Hypertension exists when the systolic pressure is below 140.

Which of the following is NOT stated about diastolic pressure?

- (A)It is one of the components of blood pressure measurement.
- (B)It is taken when the heart is resting.
- (C)It is lower than systolic pressure.
- (D)A diastolic measurement of 140 is normal.

TOEFL SKILL: IMPLIED DETAIL QUESTIONS

Implied detail questions may be found on both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test. In this type of question, you will be asked to answer a multiple choice question about a reading passage by drawing a conclusion from a specific detail or details in the passage. Questions of this type contain the words *implied*, *inferred*, *likely*, or *probably* to let you know that the answer to the question is not directly stated. In this type of question, it is important to understand that you do not have to "pull the answer out of thin air". Instead, some information will be given in the passage, and you will draw a conclusion from that information. Look at a multiple choice example of an implied detail question from the paper test TOEFL.

Example from the Paper TOEFL Test

The number of rings in a tree can be used to determine how old a tree really is. <u>Each year</u> a tree produces a ring that is composed of <u>one</u> light-colored <u>wide band</u> and <u>one</u> dark-colored <u>narrow band</u>. The wider band is produced during the spring and early summer when tree stem cells grow rapidly and become larger. The narrower band is produced in fall and early winter when cell growth is much slower and cells do not get very large. No cells are produced during the harsh winter and summer months.

The question:

It is *implied* in the passage that if a tree has <u>100 wide bands</u> and <u>100 narrow bands</u>, then it is

- (A)a century old
- (B)two centuries old
- (C) fifty years old
- (D)two hundred years old.

EXERCISE

Until 1996, the Sears Tower was the tallest building in the world, with more than a hundred stories. It is located in Chicago, whose nickname is the Windy City. The combination of a very tall building in a city with such weather conditions leads to a lot of swaying in the breeze.

On a windy day, the top of the building can move back and forth as much as three feet every few seconds. The inside doors at the top of the building open and close, and water in sinks sloshes back and forth.

The Sears Tower is probably

- (A)as tall as the Empire State Building
- (B)no longer the tallest building in the world
- (C)taller than any other building
- (D)still the highest building in the world

On both paper and computer tests

It is **implied** in the passage that ...
It can be **inferred** from the passage that...
It is most **likely** that...
What **probably** happened...?

TOEFL SKILL: PRONOUN REFERENTS

Reference questions ask what noun (called the **referent**) a pronoun or some other expression refers to. The correct answer is not always the noun that is closest to the pronoun in the passage. Incorrect choices are usually other nouns that appear in the passage. If you are unable to decide immediately which answer is correct, substitute the four choices for the word that is being asked about. Which one is the most logical substitute?

Example from the Paper TOEFL Test

was influenced by the works of Chagall and other artists.

Yasuo Kuniyashi was born in Japan in 1883 and studied art at the Los Angeles School of Art and Design. He also studied art in New York City, where he gave his first one-man show. In 1925 he moved from **there** to Paris where he

The question:

It is the pronoun "there" in line 4 refers to

- (A)Japan
- (B)Paris
- (C)Los Angeles
- (D)New York City

PRONOUN REFERENTS

The **pronoun** "..." in line **X refers** to which of the following?

EXERCISE

Although they had been used to haul freight and passengers between the Eastern seaboard and the Ohio Valley since 1812, wagon trains were first used extensively in the 1820's on the Santa Fe Trail long trains of covered wagons drawn by oxen or mules carried manufactured goods to trade for fur, gold, and silver in Santa Fe. The independent traders who pooled their resources to form these trains elected a captain and several lieutenants who commanded the parallel columns in which the wagons usually moved. They enforced the rules, selected the routes, and designated stopping places.

To what does the word "they" in line 1 refer?

- (A)The Eastern Seaboard and the Ohio Valley
- (B) Wagon trains
- (C)Freights and passengers
- (D)Oxen and mules

FIND DEFINITIONS FROM STRUCTURAL CLUES

When you asked to determined the meaning of a word in the Reading Comprehension section of the TOEFL test, it is possible (1) that the passage provides information about the meaning of the word and (2) that there are structural clues to tell you that the definition of a word is included in the passage.

Example

One of the leading schools of psychological thought in the twentieth century is <u>behaviorism</u> – the belief that the role of the psychologist to study <u>behavior</u>, <u>which is observable</u>, <u>rather than conscious or unconscious thought</u>, <u>which is not</u>. Probably the best known proponent of <u>behaviorism</u> is B.F. Skinner, who is famous for his research on how rewards and punishments influence behavior. He came to believe that positive reinforcements such as praise, food, or money were more effective in promoting good behavior than negative reinforcement, or punishment

In "behaviorism" in line 2, a psycholigist is concerned with

- (A)Conscious thought patterns
- (B)Unconscious thought patterns
- (C)Observable actions
- (D)Unobservable actions

STRUCTURAL CLUES

- What is . . .?
- What is the **meaning** of . . .?
- What is true about . . .?

EXERCISE:

 Read each item. Then mark the answer choice that could best be used inplace of the underlined expression as it appears in the sentence.

The planet Mercury is visible to the <u>naked</u> eye but is not the easiest planet to spot.

- Unclothed
- Unaided
- Unarmed

DETERMINE MEANINGS FROM WORD PARTS

When you are asked to determine the meaning of a long word that you do not know in the reading Comprehension section of the TOEFL test, it is sometimes possible to determine the meaning of the word by studying the word parts.

Example

Ring Lardner himself was born into a wealthy, educated, and cultured family. For the bulk of his career, he worked as a reporter for newspaper in South Bend, Boston, St. Louis, and Chicago.

However, it is for his short stories of lower middle-class Americans that Ring Lardner is perhaps best known. In these stories, Lardner <u>vividly creates</u> the language and the ambiance of this lower class, often using the misspelled words, grammatical errors, and incorrect diction that typified the language of the lower middle class.

The word "vividly" in line 5 is closest in meaning to

- (A)in a cultured way
- (B)in a correct way
- (C)in a lifelike way
- (D)in a brief way

A SHORT LIST OF WORD PARTS

PART	MEANING	EXAMPLE	PART	MEANING	EXAMPLE
CONTRA	(against)	contrast	DIC	(say)	dictate
MAL	(bad)	malcontent	DOMIN	(master)	dominant
MIS	(error)	Mistake	JUD	Judge)	judgment
SUB	(under)	Subway	MOR	(death)	mortal
DEC	(ten)	Decade	SPEC	(see)	spectator
MULTI	(many)	Multiple	TERR	(earth)	territory
SOL	(one)	Solo	VER	(turn)	divert
TRI	(three)	triple	VIV	(live)	revive

EXERCISE

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was a portuguese-born explorer who is credited with the exploration of the coast of what is today the state of California. Sketchy military records from the period show that early in his career he served with the Spanish army from 1520 to 1524 in Spain's quest for subjugation of the people in what are today Cuba, Mexico, and Guatemala. Little is known of his activities over the next decades, but apparently he succeeded in rising up through the ranks of the military; in 1541, he was ordered by Antonio de Mendoza, the Spanish ruler of Mexico, to explore the western coast of North America. Cabrillo set out in June 1542 in Command of two ships, the *San Salvador* and the *Victoria*; he reached San Diego bay on September 28, 1542, and claimed the terrain for Spain. The peninsula where he landed is today named Cabrillo Point in his honor; the are has been established as a national monument and park, and local residents each year hold a celebration and reenactment of Cabrillo's landing.

The word "subjugation" in line 4 is closest in meaning to

- (A)religion
- (B)flag
- (C)control
- (D)agreement

READING COMPREHENSION IN TOEIC

There are directions for Part VII of the TOEIC test. Study them now. If you understand these directions now, you will not have to read them during the test. In this section, you will read the most common types of passages found on the TOEIC test:

- Advertisements
- business correspondence
- forms, charts, and graphs
- articles and reports
- announcements and paragraphs

READING STRATEGIES

- Read the questions BEFORE you read the passage.

 If you know what a question asks, you will have a specific purpose when you read. Look for the answer to the question as you read.
- Do not read the answers before you read the passage.
 Save yourself some time. You will probably find the answer to the question yourself.
- If you cannot answer a question, scan the passage and look for the answer options.
 - If you cannot answer a question, read the four answer options. Scan the passage, looking for these four options. Be careful. The option may be a synonym or paraphrase of the correct answer.
- Be prepared for three common question types on the TOEIC test: detail questions, main idea questions, and inference questions. Specific passages generally have specific question types.

Advertisements

How much is (a product)? *detail*

What is being advertised? main idea

Business correspondence

When was the fax sent? detail

What is the purpose of the letter? main idea

What is the tone of the memo? *inference*

Forms, charts, and graphs

What percentage of users are over 30? *detail*

What is the purpose of the circle graph? main idea

Articles and reports

What dates are critical? detail

What is the main idea of this article? main idea

Announcements and paragraphs

Who is (name or title)? *detail*

What is the announcement about? main idea

What is the writer's opinion? *inference*

PRACTICE

Advertisement

Small computer software company is looking for an office manager. College degree not required, but applicant must have at least two years experience at a similar job. Call Ms. Chang (director) at 348-555-0987.

What kind of job is advertised?

- (A)Director of a computer company
- (B)Office manager
- (C)Computer programmer
- (D)College professor

Business Correspondence

Market Ptaducts, Jnc.

830 2nd ave, Suite 20B New York, NY 10015

June 7, 20_

Ms. Lucy Harper 2091 W 4th Avenue Apartment 101 Buffalo, NY 12345

Dear Ms. Harper:

Thank you for your letter of April 15 looking for a job at Market Products. You have good experience and an excellent education. I am sorry to tell you, however, that we don't have any job openings at this time. We will keep your resume and contact you if we have any job openings in the future. Good luck. Best regards,

Joan Rogers Human Resources Director Why did Joan Rogers write this letter?

- (A)To offer Ms. Harper a job
- (B)To sell products to Ms. Harper
- (C)To reply to Ms. Harper's letter
- (D)To explain the work of Market Products

Forms, Charts, Graphs

ROSIE'S STEAKHOUSE

We care about your service.

Server's

Number of guests: 2

The server was: Excellent Good Fair Poor

The food was: Good Fair <u>Poor</u>

Other comments: Our server was very friendly and polite. She brought our drinks on time. However, we waited a long time for our food. Also, my husband was angry because his fish was not well-cooked. We will not return.

How did the customers rate the food?

- (A)Excellent
- (B)Good
- (C)air
- (D)Poor

USE CONTEXT TO DETERMINE MEANINGS OF DIFFICULT WORDS

• On the TOEFL test you will sometimes be asked to determine the meaning of a difficult word, a word that you are not expected to know. In this case, the passage will give you a clear indication of what the word means.

READING COMPREHENSION IN TOEFL

Reading is tested in the third section on both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test. This section consists of reading passages followed by a number of questions. The paper and the computer reading sections are **similar** in the following ways.

Example

A line in the passage:

. . . . The <u>barges</u> headed across the <u>lake</u> . . .

The question:

A "barge" is probably which of the following?

- (A)A train
- (B)A plane
- (C)A bicycle
- (D)A boat

VOCABULARY QUESTIONS CONTAINING DIFFICULT WORDS

- "What is the meaning . . ?"
- "Which of the following is closest in meaning to . . . ?"
- The word is a difficult word, one that you probably do not know

EXERCISE

The black widow is the most dangerous spider living in the United States. It is most common in the southern parts of the country, but it can be found throughout the country. The black widow got its name because the female has been known to kill the male after mating and, as a result, becomes a widow.

In line 3, the word "widow" means

- (A)a type of poison
- (B)the dead male spider
- (C)the human victim of the spider
- (D)a female whose mate has died

READING COMPREHENSION IN TOEIC

There are directions for Part VII of the TOEIC test. Study them now. If you understand these directions now, you will not have to read them during the test.

PRACTICE

Articles and Reports 1

Maple Plaza, our city's newest mall, will open on October 25. The new mall will have 31 stores and 8 restaurants. It will also have a movie theater, which will open in November. The biggest store at the mall will be McGruder's Department Store. There will be a party to celebrate the new mall on October 26 from noon to 5:00 PM. All members of the public are invited.

What will happen on October 25?

- (A)A movie theater will open.
- (B)McGruder's will have a sale.
- (C)There will be a party.
- (D)A new mall will open.

READING COMPREHENSION IN TOEFL

Reading is tested in the third section on both the paper TOEFL test and the computer TOEFL test. This section consists of reading passages followed by a number of questions. The paper and the computer reading sections are **similar** in the following ways.

USE CONTEXT TO DETERMINE MEANINGS OF SIMPLE WORDS

• You will sometimes be asked to determine the meaning of a simple word, a word that you see often in everyday English. In this type of question, you should **not** give the normal, everyday meaning of the word; instead, the TOEFL test wants to know the meaning of the word **in this situation**.

Example

A line in the passage:

. . . . He <u>put</u> his answer this way . . .

The question:

The word "put" is closest in meaning to which of the following?

- (A)placed
- (B)set
- (C)expressed
- (D)handed

Complete the following sentences by filling in the blanks with vocabulary item (A), (B), or (C) according to the context of the sentences.

Penicillin can have an _____ effect on a person who is allergic it.

- (A)Adverse
- (B)Anxious
- (C)Awkward

EXERCISE

Although the *Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith appeared in 1776, it includes many of the ideas that economists still consider the foundation of private enterprise. The ideas put forth by Smith compose the basis of the philosophies of the school of thought called classical economics.

A "school" in line 3 is

- (A)a common belief
- (B)a college
- (C)a university
- (D)an educational institution

READING COMPREHENSION IN TOEIC

There are directions for Part VII of the TOEIC test. Study them now. If you understand these directions now, you will not have to read them during the test.

Announcements and Paragraphs 1

ATTENTION ALL EMPLOYEES:

We have 20 free tickets for the National Championship tennis match next Friday evening. If you are interested in these tickets, please contact Mr. Green in the accounting office before 5:00 PM on Wednesday. We can allow up to 4 tickets per employee.

When can the tickets be used?

- (A)Before Wednesday
- (B)Wednesday at 5:00 PM
- (C)Friday at 5:00 PM
- (D)Next Friday evening

Review these strategies for Part VII of the TOEIC test.

- •Read the questions BEFORE you read the passage.
- •Do not read the answers before you read the passage.

If you cannot answer a question, scan the passage and look for the answer options.

- •Be prepared for three common question types on the TOEIC exam:
- •detail questions, main idea questions, and inference questions.

