

TO THE INSTRUCTOR

One-Hour Practice Tests for the TOEFL® iBT prepares students for the TOEFL® iBT through six mini-tests. Each can be completed in about an hour. Mini-test preparation is both effective and pragmatic. This book includes these distinctive features:

- authentic, TOEFL®-like reading and listening passages
- TOEFL®-style questions and answer options
- two lower-level, pre-iBT level tests
- one near-iBT level test that emphasizes vocabulary questions
- three iBT-level tests
- scoring sheets

The reading and listening passages in these mini-tests are substantive and engaging. They offer material you may use in your classes even beyond the tests.

Why Mini-Tests?

Many teachers want to offer realistic TOEFL® practice but cannot do it because of time constraints in their classrooms. The actual iBT takes about four hours. Few classes allow for four solid hours of testing. The teacher could assign a four-hour practice iBT for homework, but not many students have that kind of unscheduled time at home.

One-Hour Practice Tests for the TOEFL® iBT provides a flexible, academically credible solution. The mini-tests have been calibrated to condense a wide range of iBT-like tasks into about an hour.

How Does a Shorter Test Approximate a Full-Length Test?

The six mini-tests in this book reflect the content, style, and format of the actual iBT. The skills exercised—reading, listening, speaking, and writing—are the same. The number of items and their length have been adjusted to fit into a shorter time period.

These adjustments do not take away from the academically challenging nature of the reading and listening input. The reading passages are based on actual, published academic materials. They relate to the academic disciplines covered in the actual iBT, such as biology, psychology, history, and anthropology. The listening passages are likewise faithful to the content and style of those in an iBT.

To keep each mini-test to about one hour, we have made some adjustments to the time allowed for certain test items. Here are some notable timing changes:

- **Reading:** To complete each passage and its questions—18 minutes. The iBT allows 20 minutes but has from 2 to 7 more questions.
- **Listening:** To answer the questions after each listening passage—8 minutes. The passages themselves vary from about 3 to about 5 minutes, making a total of 11 to 13 minutes. The iBT does not specify a time for each listening passage, giving instead a section total of 60 to 90 minutes. This averages about 15 minutes per iBT listening passage and its questions.
- **Speaking:** For independent speaking responses—15 seconds to prepare and 45 seconds to respond. For integrated read-listen-speak responses—30 seconds to prepare and 60 seconds to respond. For integrated listen-speak responses—20 seconds to prepare and 60 seconds to respond. These are the same times as allowed on the iBT.
- **Writing:** For independent writing responses—20 minutes. For integrated writing responses—also 20 minutes. The iBT allows 30 minutes for an independent response. The shorter time in these mini-tests is necessary to keep the test as a whole close to one hour. Teachers are free to allow up to 30 minutes for an independent writing response, if they have the time.

Are These Mini-Tests as Difficult as the Real iBT?

Tests 1 and 2 are somewhat easier than the level of an actual TOEFL® test. Pre-iBT level students need to work with accessible, but still challenging, material to train for the actual test. Test 3 offers a stepping stone from the first two mini-tests to the last three. It is closer to the level of the actual iBT, but it contains fewer questions than Tests 4, 5, and 6.

Tests 4, 5, and 6 are at the same level of difficulty as the actual TOEFL®. These iBT-level tests are shorter than the four-hour test, but their language level is similar to that of an actual iBT.

How Does Practice at Different Levels Help?

Teachers and students have often approached us to complain that the iBT is too hard. Of course, we have no control over how difficult the iBT is, but we do sympathize with students who feel they are not yet ready for such a difficult test. A book that includes mini-tests at several levels provides test-preparation support for students as their academic English skills improve.

A collection of leveled tests offers multiple advantages:

- Easier tests help students build their language skills. In particular, they offer scaled practice in all four of the skill areas.
- Lower-level tests allow all students, regardless of language ability, to get more accustomed to the test format.
- Practice tests help students build stamina. One of the great challenges in a long test like the iBT is to maintain a high level of performance despite physical and mental fatigue. This requires incremental training. Just as runners do not prepare for a marathon by repeatedly running 26 miles, TOEFL® candidates should train up to the iBT with shorter tests.

How Were the Levels Created?

In leveling the material for Tests 1 and 2, we controlled several features—sentence length, number of clauses in a sentence, difficulty of vocabulary, and complexity of grammar. Also, distracting sentence elements were kept to a minimum. These include such features as parenthetical comments, phatic phrases (e.g., *not to put too fine a point on it*), chains of prepositional phrases, and editorial commentary as examples.

The reading and listening passages in Tests 1 and 2 are only about 70–80 percent as long as those in Tests 4, 5, and 6. Likewise, they offer fewer test questions per passage than the three TOEFL®-level tests. The amount of time given for the tasks, however, does not vary from level to level. We assume that students at a lower level will still find it challenging to complete shorter tasks in a standard time period.

Our leveling in these mini-tests focuses on language, not on content. We have not backed away from using substantive, academic reading and listening input at the lower level. True iBT preparation requires conceptually rich material. Where we thought there might be some hurdles, we treated them as language issues, not concept issues. For example, a student may be familiar with the heredity-versus-environment (or nature-nurture) controversy in his or her native language without recognizing it by its usual English names. In such cases, we preserved the concept, but we framed it in more accessible vocabulary.

Teachers can generally think of Tests 1 and 2 as being at a **pre-iBT** level; Test 3 at **near-iBT** level; and Tests 4, 5, and 6 at **iBT** level.

How Should I Use *One-Hour Practice Tests for the TOEFL® iBT* in My Classroom?

Students should first take one of the lower-level mini-tests. Regardless of their English language ability, students will benefit from this opportunity, and you will have some diagnostic data to work with.

After students have completed a mini-test, they should review their work. Ideally, this review should occur in the same class period as the administration of the mini-test. If this is not possible, do the review in the next class period. In your review, refer to the test's answer key and scoring information. As a class, review and discuss the correct responses. Pay particular attention to questions that were missed by several class members. As needed, return to the body of the test itself, the audio CD, or the audio transcript in order to discuss the language that is being tested.

How Can I Score the Tests?

Scoring the reading and listening sections of the TOEFL® test is a straightforward task. An answer key and a scoring worksheet are provided for each test. This worksheet guides you through the process of computing a raw score and a converted score based on the iBT scoring scale. Easy-to-use tables in the scoring worksheets give you these converted scores. While these scores can only approximate an actual iBT score, they do give a picture of how test-takers might perform on an actual iBT.

Scoring the speaking and writing sections of the test is slightly more complicated. The productive tasks, naturally, do not have right and wrong answers. Each test-taker's speaking and writing responses must be individually rated. Scoring charts for grading the four types of productive responses—*independent speaking, integrated speaking, independent writing, and integrated writing*—are provided as needed. Ideally, these scoring charts should be completed by English-proficient raters.

Of course, students are free to rate their own responses or those of other students, but the resulting scores are unlikely to be much like the scores an iBT rater would give.

How Should I Administer the Speaking Part of the Test?

On an actual TOEFL® test, students speak into a microphone on a headset. Each speaking response by a given student is recorded as a discrete sound file on a computer and transmitted to raters via the Internet. Few classrooms have this kind of equipment, but some alternative systems can do an adequate job.

In your classroom, you will face two main problems during the speaking section of a mini-test: (1) How can a room full of students talk simultaneously without seriously distracting each other? (2) To whom or to what will students direct their speech? Let's look at three possibilities.

1. Student-Recorder

This is by far the best option if the proper equipment is available. Each student speaks into a microphone plugged into either a tape recorder or a computer. This would work best in a language lab with a centrally controlled recording system. The student's responses could be saved either as audio files on a computer or on an audiotape for later rating.

2. Student-Teacher

In this system, the entire mini-test EXCEPT the speaking section is administered to the whole class together. Following that, the teacher schedules each student to take the speaking section individually. Unless an audio recording is made, the teacher should rate each response immediately after the student has given it. Rating from memory or even from notes is not a good idea.

3. Student-Student

Students could speak to each other and then rate each other's performances. This system is less time consuming than the student-teacher option. Also, it will yield scores that are unlikely to be much like what iBT raters would give.

Do Mini-Tests Alone Offer Sufficient Practice for the TOEFL® Test?

While the mini-tests in this book offer multiple advantages for test preparation, all TOEFL® candidates are encouraged to take at least one full-length practice test before registering for and taking the actual iBT.

For a full-length TOEFL® or more skills practice, refer to *The Michigan Guide to English for Academic Success and Better TOEFL® Test Scores*. The guide contains practice in building skills for TOEFL® success such as understanding vocabulary from context, listening for pragmatic understanding, taking notes, brainstorming, and using transitions in speech.