



TOEFL SKILLS FOR TOP SCORES

MASTER THE ~~TEST~~ TAKING SKILLS
YOU NEED TO SUCCEED ON THE TEST
OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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TOEFL SKILLS FOR TOP SCORES

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**TO MICK AND JOHN
FOR THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT
AND SUPPORT**

WHY THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN

There are many TOEFL books for sale. Most of them give you practice tests, vocabulary lists, and grammar exercises. These are all important, of course. But—they aren't enough. This book, besides giving you practice tests and exercises, gives you another look at the TOEFL, the inside look.

In this book you will learn how to answer such common questions as:

- What study techniques can help me pass the test?
- Why do some people who can speak, read, and understand English still get a low score?
- How can I reduce my fear of taking the test?
- How can I work well under such great pressure?
- How can I increase my speed in answering the questions?
- What can I do if I hear the tape and understand the speakers, but don't have enough time to choose the correct answer?
- How can I learn the immense amount of vocabulary on the test?
- How can I understand the American cultural questions on the test if I haven't lived in the USA?
- How can I finish in time if I am a very slow reader?

The Chinese author of this book was once in just your situation. When she arrived in the United States, she had to take the TOEFL in order to be admitted to the university. She felt, however, that her background in English was not good enough. She took several practice tests, and studied hard. But she was still afraid of the test. When she finally did take it, she did not get a score high enough to enter the university. She looked around at other students and wondered why some of them did well on the test and some did poorly, even though they all seemed to know English quite well. Then she changed her study habits and began working on test-taking skills. As a result, she did pass the TOEFL, and was accepted as a graduate student. In the process of preparing again and again for the TOEFL, she learned many things about test-taking. You could probably learn these things if you took the test many times, but that takes a lot of time and money, and it is often difficult to arrange. By following the advice and exercises in this book, you will learn about test-taking skills that will help you improve your score as you prepare for the TOEFL.

We see three major areas that help determine how well you do on the test. They are:

1. your knowledge of the English language (vocabulary, reading, structure, and listening comprehension)
2. your skills at taking a standardized timed test
3. the amount of anxiety you have when you take the test

This book prepares you to answer the TOEFL questions not only by increasing your knowledge of English, but also by increasing your knowledge of test-taking skills and strategies. By learning to analyze the questions and the testing points, you will become more confident in your test-taking skills. Your anxiety will lessen as you learn more about the test. We suggest that you prepare for the TOEFL as you might prepare for a competitive game or sport. Practice the skills of the game, but also become familiar with the rules of the game. For the TOEFL, the "rules of the game" include knowledge of test-taking skills.

As people with two very different backgrounds, we bring together two approaches to studying for the TOEFL. One of us has been an instructor of English and TOEFL techniques for many years in many countries; the other has been a student of English and a taker of the TOEFL many times. We both want you to pass the TOEFL. We want you to be able to do your best. We would also like to hear about either problems or successes you have with this book. You can write to us at Arco Books, One Gulf + Western Plaza, New York, NY 10023. We hope to hear from you.

Patricia N. Sullivan
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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each part of this book has a different purpose. The parts can be used in any order, but we suggest the following:

TWENTY-ONE SECRETS TO PREPARE FOR THE TEST

Read through Secrets One through Fourteen and do all the suggested exercises. After reading Secret Fourteen, take Practice Test 1. Correct it, using the answer key and the explanatory answers. Then go back and read Secrets Fifteen through Twenty-one. At the same time, begin the Exercise Workbook.

EXERCISE WORKBOOK

Do the exercises in the Exercise Workbook after you have taken Practice Test 1 and corrected it. Do the exercises in any order. You may do all of them or choose only the ones that help you the most. While you are doing this part of the book, continue reading Secrets Fifteen through Twenty-one to prepare you for the day you take the real test. The Exercise Workbook also contains a TOEFL essay section. Read and practice the exercises in this part any time.

TOEFL ESSAY

Read and practice the exercises in this part any time.

PRACTICE TESTS

Take Practice Test 1 after you have read Secrets One through Fourteen. Correct your test and make notes about the errors you made. Then turn back to the Exercise Workbook, and do the exercises in the areas that you

need to work on. Take Practice Test 2 whenever you feel you are ready. Don't write your answers on the test. Write your answers only on the answer sheets in the back of the book. By doing this, you can take the Practice Tests again. Even though you may remember some of the answers, the process of taking the test will help you improve your test-taking skills. Each time you take the Practice Tests, you can try to answer the questions more quickly.

NOTE

The listening comprehension exercises and practice tests in this book are recorded on a cassette tape. To order your tape, fill out the order blank at the back of the book and mail it to the address indicated.

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TWENTY-ONE SECRETS TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR THE TEST

The word "secret" is usually used for information shared by only a few people. The secrets on the next pages, however, are known by many good test-takers. Now they can be part of your knowledge, too.

SECRET ONE: PLAN YOUR TIME WELL

Studying for the TOEFL is hard. There may be many other things that you would rather do. But in order to do well on the exam, you must make extra time for studying. You must organize your time.

ORGANIZE YOUR TIME

You are adding something new to your daily schedule. You need to figure out the best time for a regular study period. First of all, write the answers to these questions:

What day do you plan to take the TOEFL? _____

How much time is there until that day? _____

Now figure out the best time of the day for you to study. Answer these questions:

What time do you usually get up? _____

What do you do in the morning? _____

What time do you have lunch? _____

What is your afternoon schedule? _____

What time do you eat dinner? _____

What do you usually do after dinner? _____

Look at your daily schedule and figure out the best time for you to plan on a regular time for studying.

The best time for me to study for the TOEFL is from _____
TIME
 to _____ on _____
TIME DAYS

SECRET TWO: NOTICE DIFFERENCES IN TESTING DATES

Even though the TOEFL tests are basically the same on every test date, there are some differences. You should be aware of some possible differences so that they won't surprise you while you are taking the test. You can also use your knowledge of testing date differences to help you decide on the best date for you to take the test.

First of all, if there are any major changes, they will be announced in the Bulletin of Information for the TOEFL that you use for registration. Be sure to read that booklet carefully.

The Format of the Answer Sheet: There are two different ways that TOEFL test answer sheets are organized:

horizontally A B C D

or vertically A
 B
 C
 D

You won't know which form is used until you see the test. And when you begin the test, you have only a few seconds to choose and mark each answer. You don't want to waste even one second by wondering where to mark your answers. You need to save all possible time for concentrating on choosing the answers. In the back of this book, you will find both styles of answer sheets. Use a different one for each practice test so that you are familiar with both styles.

The Length of the Test: In the description of the TOEFL test sections in this book, you will read about the standard number of questions (Listening Comprehension = 50; Structure and Written Expression = 40; Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension = 60. Total number of questions = 150).

On some test dates, however, you might find more questions and more time for marking your answers. When you are allowed to open your test booklet for each section, look quickly ahead to see how many questions there are. Then you can plan your time better. On some past dates there have been 80 Listening Comprehension questions, 60 Structure and Written Expression questions, and 90 Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension questions. If you get this long form, don't be worried. All tests vary a little. This is the reason for converted scores (see Secret Fifteen). Your raw score will be adjusted so that the value of the tests is equal, no matter how many questions you have or how hard they are.

Keeping Your Test Booklet: On certain days that are announced in the Bulletin, you will be allowed to keep your test booklet. Check your Bulletin for information on how you can receive it. If the test booklet is mailed, you must bring a 6-inch (15.3 cm) by 9-inch (22.8 cm) self-addressed, stamped envelope to the test center. Having the test booklet can be helpful. You can also buy the tape and your own answer sheet for a short period of time after you take the test.

Test of Written English (TWE): The Test of Written English is not given on every test day. In the past, it has been given four times a year, but this may change each year. On the days it is given, you are required to write a short essay. Check the current Bulletin to see which specific test days offer the writing test. Many universities want to see your essay score.

Cost: There are international test dates (usually on Saturdays) and special test dates (usually on Fridays). The special test days cost more. Try to plan your schedule so that you can take the cheaper test.

NOTE

Always read the most recent Bulletin of Information carefully so that you can take advantage of all the options in choosing a test date. The standard (shorter) test form, the TWE, and the chance to receive your own test booklet usually happen on the same test-taking day. Look for the stars (*) beside the dates in the Bulletin of Information.

SECRET THREE: LEARN TO CONCENTRATE

Now that you have figured out what test to take and the best time for you to study, you need to be sure to use your time well. You are probably a busy person. By using your time well and concentrating, you will get more done in a shorter amount of time. Do the following:

1. Choose a place to study that has a desk or table with a comfortable chair and a good light.
2. Get all your study materials together on your desk (books, pencils, paper, tape recorder).
3. Tell the people you live with that you do not want to be interrupted.
4. Sit down and allow yourself two minutes to calm down. Relax your body. Breathe deeply. Clear your mind of all the other things you have been thinking about.
5. Check the time that you are beginning to study, and decide how long you will concentrate.
6. Begin your work and don't stop until your break time.

Concentrating means that you think about only one thing (your TOEFL study material). If this is very difficult for you, then start slowly. You might get a timer and set it for fifteen minutes at first. Put your timer where you can't see it while you are studying. Concentrate until the timer goes off. Then take a short break, and let yourself think about anything you want. Stand up and walk around. Talk to someone if you want. But in a few minutes, sit down and set the timer again. Continue this procedure, each time setting the timer for a longer period of time. Continue this over several days or study periods until you can concentrate for an hour.

**SECRET FOUR: PRACTICE,
PRACTICE, PRACTICE**

A person can study all the rules of driving a car, and still be a poor driver. Knowing the rules is not enough. Actual practice is essential. It takes time to develop good skills, no matter what you are learning.

SAMPLE TESTS

Taking a test is a skilled activity. In addition to studying vocabulary and grammar, you must practice the skills of taking the test itself. As you take the practice tests, your test-taking skills get better. This book gives you two practice tests. When you apply to take the TOEFL test, you can also order the TOEFL test kit, which will give you more practice tests. Because of the time limit on the test, you must be efficient. The more you practice, the more efficient you become.

The best practice is under conditions similar to those you will have in the testing situation. Force yourself to stay within the time limitation. Your skills will develop slowly, but will become more reliable with time. Passing the test requires more than saying, "I understand the question." It requires that you respond correctly on paper under stress. It requires a quick, automatic reaction. Many people feel that they have studied enough when they can understand the general question and also the details in the questions. They haven't. There is one more necessary step. You must be able to respond quickly and automatically. If you still need a lot of time to "think over" or "process" what you have heard or read, then you need more practice.

Pay attention to the simple rules and the easy tasks. You will use these simple rules to help you answer complicated questions. Remember, you need to *use* those rules, not just say that you understand them.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Many students consider the listening section of the TOEFL to be the most difficult part of the test. This is true for many because:

1. It comes first on the test.
2. The spoken parts are not repeated.
3. There is only a short time to respond to each question.
4. It is sometimes hard to get good listening practice material.

This book comes with a tape for listening comprehension. (See the order form on page 253.) You should listen to your tape again and again. Spend an hour a day or even two hours a day listening to the tape, especially during the two weeks before you take the test. There are four levels in the development of your listening comprehension skills:

1. You can understand some words, but not the complete sentence.
2. You can understand the complete sentence.

3. You can understand the complete sentence and also figure out the main point that you are being tested on.
4. You can figure out the main testing point and its relationship to the possible answers.

As you practice again and again on the same tape, you will progress through the four levels. As you practice on new tapes, you will also notice your comprehension level getting better. When you reach the fourth level, you will know that you have a reliable listening skill and are ready for the real test. (See Secret Four for more about figuring out the testing point.)

STRUCTURE

One good way to practice and to test yourself on the application of rules is to make your own personal summary of rules. When you work on the practice exercises, do more than just try to get the right answer. Try to think actively of what the rule is, and how to apply that rule to the grammar exercise question. Follow the steps below to make your own personalized rule summary.

Personal Rule Summary

STEP 1: Carefully study the rules, explanations, and examples in the Structure section of this book or of any other grammar book. Then, write each of the rules again in your own words, and write your own example sentence for each rule. The examples in text books are written to help you understand the rules, but you don't need to remember those particular sentences. You do, however, have to know the rules, and writing your own sentences will help you remember the rules. Write a sentence that is true, and that uses the name of someone you know.

EXAMPLE: You want to remember the rule for using "for" and "since." First, write the rule from your grammar book. Then write your own personal true sentence.

Your sentence might be:

"I have been studying for the TOEFL test since March." or

"I have been studying for the TOEFL test for two months." or

"My brother can stand on his head for two minutes."

This step will help you change your thick grammar book into a thin, simple, meaningful collection of information. Begin slowly. Get a separate notebook just for your rule summary. Write a few rules and examples in it each day. Slowly your rule summary will grow.