

The 2026 TOEFL task and scoring-route reference

INTENDED USE

A planning reference. Each statement below is quoted from the claims record behind this site, which names the source it was read from. It is not a scoring rubric: the published rubrics are ETS material and are not reproduced here, and how this software reaches its own practice estimates is written up at reach120.com/methodology instead.

The current version of this file, and the rest of the kit, is at <https://www.reach120.com/teaching-kit>

TEACHING KIT

How to read this sheet

Every statement in the boxes below is quoted, not summarized. The wording is read straight from the claims record this site publishes, so what you hand a class is the sentence that was checked against the specification rather than one written for a handout.

Under each quote is a line about what it changes in a lesson. That half is ours, and it is teaching judgment rather than a fact about the test. Treat the quote as the source and the line under it as a colleague talking.

You will not find a level label anywhere in this kit. The specification does list a band for each task type, but the claims record does not license that row on a printable file, and a level printed without its source is the kind of thing that gets repeated for years. Where you need one, read the specification directly using the source line on the sheet.

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The shape of the test

What the specification lists overall. Useful when a student asks how long the day is, or why the reading felt harder than the practice they did last week.

The 2026 specification lists 120 total items, 145 total raw points, and an estimated total test time between 1 hour 23 minutes and 1 hour 29 minutes.

In a lesson: This is the answer to "how long is it" in one line. Worth writing on the board in the first class, because a student who thinks the test is a full morning plans their revision around a day that does not exist.

The 2026 Reading and Listening sections use multistage adaptive designs; Speaking and Writing are linear.

Source: <https://www.ets.org/content/dam/ets-india/pdfs/toefl/toefl-ibt-test-specifications-2026.pdf>

In a lesson: The adaptive half matters more than it sounds. A student who found the second block hard may have found it hard because they did well in the first, and telling them so is the difference between a discouraged learner and an encouraged one.

Reading and Listening items are machine-scored selected responses; the Write an Email, Write for an Academic Discussion, and all Speaking tasks are AI-scored constructed responses, per the specification's item-type notes.

In a lesson: Decides what feedback is worth giving. On the machine-scored items the only thing that matters is the answer; on the constructed responses the shape of the response is the lesson.

The 2026 specification lists estimated section times of 18–21 min router plus a 9 min module (Reading), an 18 min router plus a 7 or 11 min module (Listening), 23 min (Writing), and 8 min (Speaking), in a two-stage router-plus-module adaptive design for Reading and Listening.

In a lesson: The per-section timings are what to set a timer to in class. Practicing an untimed reading and a timed reading are different skills, and only one of them is the one being examined.

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Reading and Listening

Both sections are selected-response and machine-scored, so class time is better spent on why a wrong answer looked right than on the answer itself.

The 2026 specification lists the Reading section at 50 items and 35 raw points, with task types Complete the Words, Read in Daily Life, and Read an Academic Passage.

Source: <https://www.ets.org/content/dam/ets-india/pdfs/toefl/toefl-ibt-test-specifications-2026.pdf>

In a lesson: The task-type names are the useful part: they let you set homework by task rather than by section, which is how the practice material on this site is filed as well.

The 2026 specification lists the Listening section at 47 items and 35 raw points, with task types Listen and Choose a Response, Listen to a Conversation, Listen to an Announcement, and Listen to an Academic Talk.

In a lesson: Listening carries the same raw-point weight as Reading, which surprises students who treat it as the easy section and do no work on it.

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Writing

The section where a lesson changes the most, because these are the tasks a teacher can actually model on a board.

The 2026 specification lists the Writing section at 12 items and 20 maximum raw points.

In a lesson: The point total is what makes the arithmetic below worth doing: a task that carries half the section deserves half the class.

The current Writing section lists 12 items: 10 Build a Sentence items, one Write an Email task, and one Academic Discussion task.

Source: <https://www.ets.org/content/dam/ets-india/pdfs/toefl/toefl-ibt-test-specifications-2026.pdf>

In a lesson: Read this next to the point total and the priority falls out on its own. Most of the items in the section are the short ones.

Build a Sentence represents 10 of the 20 listed maximum raw points in the Writing specification.

In a lesson: Here is the arithmetic. A task many teachers treat as a warm-up carries half the raw points in the section, and it is also the most teachable thing in the kit.

Per the 2026 specification, the maximum points per Build a Sentence item is 1.

In a lesson: Per item the stake is small, which is exactly why it works as board work. Nobody is afraid of getting one of these wrong in front of a class.

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Speaking

The shortest section on the clock and the one students avoid practicing.

The 2026 specification lists the Speaking section at 11 items and 55 raw points, with task types Listen and Repeat (7 items) and Take an Interview (4 items).

In a lesson: Both task types reward rehearsal out loud rather than reading about them, which makes Speaking the strongest argument for class time over homework in the whole kit.

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What the score report says

The reporting change catches out teachers as much as students, especially anyone working from material written before it.

For TOEFL tests taken on or after January 21, 2026, official score reports use a 1–6 scale in half-band increments.

Source: <https://www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/scores/understand-scores.html>

In a lesson: If your course materials still talk in the old numbers, this is the sentence to correct them against.

Before January 21, 2026, TOEFL iBT reported scores as 'Reading (0–30) Listening (0–30) Speaking (0–30) Writing (0–30) Total (0–120).'

Source: <https://www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/scores/understand-scores.html>

In a lesson: Keep this beside the line above when a student brings you an older score report or a university page that has not been updated.

During ETS's transition through January 2028, reports also include a comparable overall estimate on the previous 0–120 scale.

In a lesson: The overlap is why a student can be handed a pair of different-looking numbers for the same sitting and think something has gone wrong.

ETS states that its mock-test scores come from a system it calls TOEFL AI Lite — 'built for speed and immediate feedback, helping you identify strengths and weaknesses in real-time' — and that 'when you take the real test, it is scored by a different system called TOEFL AI Deep', which 'takes a more comprehensive approach' and 'integrates with advanced security protocols with a human in the loop, to ensure your official score is accurate, fair, and recognized by institutions worldwide.' ETS also states: 'You might see some small differences between your mock test scores and your real test scores, and that's totally normal.'

Source: <https://www.ets.org/toefl/blog/why-toefl-uses-two-ais.html>

In a lesson: Worth reading aloud to any student who compares a practice result with a real one and concludes the practice was broken. It is ETS describing its own systems, not us explaining a gap in ours.

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