

Performance Descriptors for the *TOEFL® Essentials™* Test

Performance descriptors illustrate the knowledge, skills and abilities expected by *TOEFL® Essentials™* test takers. These descriptors have been selected from the CEFR (2001, 2020) with minor modifications. Test takers receiving higher band scores are also expected to be able to demonstrate the performance described at lower band scores.

| CEFR Level | Section Band Score (1–12) | Listening | Reading | Writing | Speaking |
|------------|---------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| C2 | 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can make appropriate inferences when links or implications are not made explicit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can understand a wide range of long and complex texts, appreciating subtle distinctions of style and implicit, as well as explicit, meaning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can exploit a comprehensive and reliable mastery of a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity. No signs of having to restrict what they want to communicate. Can convey finer shades of meaning precisely by using, with reasonable accuracy, a wide range of qualifying devices (e.g., adverbs expressing degree or clauses expressing limitations). Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire, including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. Shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can express themselves at length with a natural, effortless, unhesitating flow. Pauses only to reflect on precisely the right means to express their thoughts or find an appropriate example or explanation. Can exploit a comprehensive and reliable mastery of a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity. No signs of having to restrict what they want to say. Can provide clear, smoothly flowing, elaborate and often memorable descriptions. |

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| C1 | 10–11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is skilled at using contextual, grammatical and lexical cues to infer attitude, mood and intentions as well as anticipate what will come next. Can recognize a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts; may, however, need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar. Can follow most lectures, discussions and debates with relative ease. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is skilled at using contextual, grammatical and lexical cues to infer attitude, mood and intentions as well as anticipate what will come next. Can understand in detail a wide range of lengthy, complex texts likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life, identifying finer points of detail, including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can use a broad range of complex grammatical structures appropriately and with considerable flexibility. Layout, paragraphing and punctuation are consistent and helpful. Can qualify opinions and statements precisely in relation to degrees of, for example, certainty/uncertainty, belief/doubt or likelihood. Can frame critical remarks or express strong disagreement diplomatically. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language. Can use a broad range of complex grammatical structures appropriately and with considerable flexibility. Can employ the full range of phonological features in the target language with sufficient control to ensure intelligibility throughout. Uses less common vocabulary idiomatically and appropriately. |
| B2 | 8–9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can follow extended discourse and complex lines of argument, provided the topic is reasonably familiar and the direction of the argument is signposted by explicit markers. Can distinguish main themes from asides, provided the lecture or talk is delivered in standard language or a familiar variety. Can recognize the point of view expressed and distinguish this from facts being reported. Can identify the main reasons for and against an argument or idea in a discussion conducted in clear standard language or a familiar variety. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including watching out for main points and checking comprehension by using contextual clues. Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes and using appropriate reference sources selectively. Has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low-frequency idioms. Can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which particular stances or viewpoints are adopted. Can recognize when a text provides factual information and when it seeks to convince readers of something. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can produce text that is generally well-organized and coherent, using a range of linking expressions and cohesive devices. Has a good command of simple language structures and some complex grammatical forms, although tends to use complex structures rigidly with some inaccuracy. Can develop a clear description or narrative, expanding and supporting main points with relevant supporting detail and examples. Lexical accuracy is generally high, though some confusion and incorrect word/sign choice does occur without hindering communication. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo. Although can be hesitant while searching for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses. Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding. Is intelligible throughout, despite a few systematic mispronunciations. Can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue, giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can develop a clear description or narrative, expanding and supporting main points with relevant detail and examples. |

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| B1 | 5–7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can understand the main points made in clear standard language or a familiar variety on familiar matters regularly encountered at work, school, leisure, etc., including short narratives. Can extrapolate the meaning of occasional unknown words from the context and deduce sentence meaning, provided the topic discussed is familiar. Can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job-related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided people articulate clearly in a generally familiar variety. Can follow a lecture or talk within their own field, provided the subject matter is familiar and the presentation is straightforward and clearly structured. Can follow much of everyday conversation and discussion, provided it is clearly articulated in standard language or in a familiar variety. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can follow a line of argumentation or the sequence of events in a story by focusing on common logical connectors (e.g., however, because) and temporal connectors (e.g., after that, beforehand). Can deduce the probable meaning of unknown words in a text by identifying their constituent parts (e.g., identifying roots, lexical elements, suffixes and prefixes). Can understand descriptions of places, events, explicitly expressed feelings and perspectives in narratives, guides and magazine articles that employ high frequency everyday language. Can find and understand relevant information in everyday material, such as letters, brochures and short official documents. Can scan through straightforward, factual texts in magazines, brochures or on the web to identify what they are about. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can compose basic emails/ letters of a factual nature (e.g., to request information or ask for and give confirmation). Can exploit a wide range of simple language to flexibly express most intended meanings. Can express the main point comprehensibly. Shows good control of elementary vocabulary but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts or handling unfamiliar topics and situations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production. Can express a main point comprehensibly. Is generally intelligible throughout, despite regular mispronunciation of individual sounds and less familiar words. Can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions. Has sufficient vocabulary to express themselves with some circumlocutions on most topics pertinent to everyday life, such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel and current events. |
| A2 | 3–4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment), provided people articulate clearly and slowly. Can understand and extract the essential information from short, recorded passages dealing with predictable everyday matters which are delivered slowly and clearly. Can exploit their recognition of known words to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words in short expressions used in routine everyday contexts. Can generally identify the topic of discussion around them when it is conducted slowly and clearly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can understand texts describing people, places, everyday life and culture, etc., provided they use simple language. Can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material, such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus, reference lists and timetables. Can exploit their recognition of known words to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words in short expressions used in routine everyday contexts. Can understand short, simple texts on familiar matters of a concrete type, which consist of high-frequency everyday or job-related language. Can understand the main points made in short magazine reports or guide entries that deal with concrete everyday topics (e.g., hobbies, sports, leisure activities, animals). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can produce brief, everyday expressions in order to satisfy simple needs of a concrete type (e.g., personal details, daily routines, wants and needs, requests for information). Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes; nevertheless, it is usually clear what they are trying to communicate. Has sufficient vocabulary for the expression of basic communicative needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can construct phrases on familiar topics with sufficient ease to handle short exchanges, despite very noticeable hesitation and false starts. Pronunciation is generally intelligible when communicating in simple everyday situations, provided the interlocutor makes an effort to understand specific sounds. Can give short, basic descriptions of events and activities. Can explain likes or dislikes about something and why they prefer one thing over another, making simple, direct comparisons. |

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| A1 | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can recognize concrete information (e.g., places and times) on familiar topics encountered in everyday life, provided it is delivered slowly and clearly. • Has a basic vocabulary repertoire of words and phrases related to particular concrete situations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can get an idea of the content of simpler informational material and short, simple descriptions, especially if there is visual support. • Can recognize familiar names, words and very basic phrases on simple notices in the most common everyday situations. • Can find and understand simple, important information in advertisements, programs for special events, leaflets and brochures (e.g., what is proposed, costs, the date and place of the event, departure times). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can compose a short, very simple message (e.g., a text message) to friends to give them a piece of information or ask them a question. • Has a very basic range of simple expressions about personal details and needs of a concrete type. • Can produce simple isolated phrases and sentences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words and repair communication. • Has a very basic range of simple expressions about personal details and needs of a concrete type. • Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort by interlocutors used to dealing with speakers of the language group. |
| Below A1 | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can recognize words, names and numbers that they already know in simple, short recordings, provided these are delivered very slowly and clearly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can find information about places, times and prices on posters, flyers and notices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can use isolated words and basic expressions in order to give simple information about themselves. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can use isolated words and basic expressions in order to give simple information about themselves. |