

Frequently Asked Questions About the Shorter TOEFL iBT® Test

Why is the TOEFL iBT® test being shortened?

Our goal has always been to provide the best academic English test, both for students who take the test and for institutions that rely on the scores to make important decisions.

For test takers, a shorter TOEFL iBT test will make for a better testing experience. It could lessen fatigue and improve focus and performance, helping them to show their best.

Most important, the shorter test maintains its quality. A test should only be as long as is necessary to provide accurate information about the critical abilities being measured, but not longer. Over time we have been able to gather a wealth of TOEFL iBT test taker performance data. After careful review of the data, we determined the test could be shortened without sacrificing test quality or score validity. This was done by applying research to maintain test quality through various statistical procedures and application of advanced assessment technology.

Does ETS research show that the changes do not affect the high quality of the test?

Yes. To support the continued high quality of the reported scores, ETS researchers conducted a study to evaluate the psychometric properties of the shortened test using several typical administrations of the TOEFL iBT test at different time points throughout 2018. A comparison of the reliability estimates for the TOEFL iBT test in its previous longer version and in its shorter version revealed that there is no meaningful effect on test reliability as a result of shortening the test. In other words, the high quality of the TOEFL iBT test scores has been maintained.

Are any question types being removed from the Reading and Listening sections?

No question types are being eliminated from the Reading and Listening sections. For the new shortened test, as with tests prior to August 1, 2019, any of the existing question types could appear with any Reading or Listening passage.

Which two questions are being removed from the Speaking section?

Independent question #1 (express a personal preference) and integrated question #5 (campus situation; problem/solution) are being removed. The remaining questions will be renumbered 1 to 4 in the shortened version.

Is there still a break during the test?

Yes. The 10-minute break between the Listening and Speaking sections remains the same.



Should universities change their TOEFL iBT score requirements?

There is no need for universities to change their TOEFL iBT score requirements. The new, shortened version measures the same language skills in the same ways using the same question types, just with fewer questions. Also, the score scales for the four test sections and the total score remain the same. We recommend that test takers always confirm university and program requirements before applying.

Will the shortened test affect the mapping of TOEFL iBT scores to CEFR levels?

The shortened test will not impact the CEFR mapping. The score scale remains the same and the same language skills are being measured.

Can existing preparation materials be used for the shorter test?

Yes. Existing materials can continue to be used for test preparation since the shortened test will measure the same skills as the current test, using the same question types, but with fewer test questions. Only the test structure will change (i.e. how many questions in each section and the timing of each section). In effect, existing preparation materials will have extra practice questions for the Reading, Listening and Speaking sections of the shortened test.

Will preparation materials be revised?

Yes, official TOEFL iBT preparation materials will be revised over the next several months. In the meantime, all existing official materials can still be used for preparation, since the test content has not changed.

Is the online course, *TOEFL® Test Preparation: The Insider's Guide* (offered on the edX platform), changing to reflect the revised test format?

The version of the course that uses the longer test format will close on June 11, 2019. A new version of the course that uses the shorter test format will open on June 12, 2019.

Do I need to change the materials for the test prep course I teach?

The only change you will need to make is the information you provide related to the structure of the test, specifically:

- The Reading section will have fewer questions per passage (now 10, from 12-14).
- The Listening section will have one or two fewer lectures.
- The Speaking section will have four questions instead of six. Questions 1 and 5 are being removed, and the remaining questions renumbered 1 to 4.

If you have additional questions, please contact us at TOEFLnews@ets.org or at +1.609.683.2008

