

# **A Teacher's Guide to TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test Preparing Your Students for Success**

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Oxford University Press

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Listening and Reading Test  
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All test question examples are taken from *Tactics for TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test*,  
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# Introduction

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC®), Listening and Reading Test is used to assess non-native English proficiency and is currently used in many countries as a standard measure of English ability. Even for teachers with many years experience, teaching test preparation courses for the first time can be a daunting experience. Unlike general conversation, writing, or business courses, the things that need to be taught and, to a large extent how they are taught, depend largely on the content of the test and the way it is assessed. Understanding of student motivation, course formats, lesson procedures, and even the question of what to look for in a course book are all likely to be new and unknown territory.

This guide will look at what the TOEIC test is, what it is used for, and how it is changing. More importantly, it will examine how to plan a course, how to choose appropriate study materials, and how to prepare students to succeed on the test. If you are new to TOEIC teaching, this guide aims to answer your questions and respond to your concerns. More experienced teachers will hopefully find it useful as a resource of fresh ideas and approaches for providing effective lessons.

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## 1 What is TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test?

### Background

Educational Testing Service (ETS) began developing the TOEIC test in 1978 as a way of measuring the communicative ability of business people. Their intention was that the test:

- Assess everyday English as used in a working environment
- Be easy to administer
- Allow large numbers of test takers to participate in a minimum of time
- Require no specific preparation

The first TOEIC test was administered in December 1979 and was taken by 2,773 people. The average score was 578. Since those early days the test has seen a dramatic increase in test taker numbers. It is currently used in over 60 countries and taken by more than 4.5 million people per year.

Every year, a great deal of investment goes into test item creation, piloting, and analysis. The results of each test sitting are statistically analyzed and adjusted to ensure consistent scores between sittings.

## TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test: Test details

TOEIC Listening and Reading Test consists of 200 multiple-choice questions divided between four listening and three reading parts and takes two hours to complete. The test is paper-based, with students using a pencil to mark their answers on a special machine-readable answer sheet.

In May 2006 ETS made the first significant change to the test since its introduction. ETS President and CEO Kurt Landgraf noted that...

...a decade of ETS research on the English language and how people communicate in practical, everyday circumstances has confirmed the need for assessments that reflect more authentic tasks such as those encountered in the global business environment. This new TOEIC test will make the exam even more valuable to the thousands of organizations worldwide that already rely on the test to measure proficiency in business English.

(ETS press release, December 2005)

### Test structure and timing (old and new versions)

Although the overall timing and number of test parts and questions remains unchanged, some significant alterations have been made to the individual test parts.

Part	Old name	New name	Old number of questions	New number of questions	Changes
<b>Listening Section (45 minutes)</b>					
1	Photographs	Photographs	20	10	Half the number of questions.
2	Question-Response	Question-Response	30	30	No change.
3	Short Conversations	Conversations	30	30	Some conversations are longer and each features 3 questions rather than 1.
4	Short Talks	Talks	20	30	10 more questions. Some talks are longer. 10 talks with 3 questions each.
<b>Reading Section (75 minutes)</b>					
5	Incomplete Sentences	Incomplete Sentences	40	40	No change.
6	Error Recognition	Text Completion	20	12	New part features questions similar to Part 5, but within a context. 12 questions: 3 reading texts with 4 questions each.
7	Reading Comprehension	Reading Comprehension (single and double passages)	40	28 based on single passages 20 based on double passages	New questions based on double passages. Some texts are longer.

## Test scoring

The test is scored from 10 to 990 and there is no pass or fail mark. The following chart showing the approximate correlation between TOEIC scores and levels of ability is based on ETS research. It is intended to help organizations set their own standards.

TOEIC Score	Level	Evaluation Guidelines	
860	<b>A</b>	Can usually communicate adequately as a non-native speaker.	<p>Within his/her own realm of experience, the individual is capable of sufficient understanding and can typically respond with appropriate expressions even about topics outside his/her field of specialization.</p> <p>Although speech is not equivalent to that of a native speaker, the individual has a strong grasp of vocabulary, grammar, and structure and the ability to use the language relatively fluently.</p>
		Is capable of communicating appropriately in most situations.	<p>Understands ordinary conversation well and can respond naturally. The individual also has the ability to respond in some fashion, even when the topic relates to specialized fields. There are typically no great barriers to communicating in usual business situations.</p> <p>While grammatical and structural mistakes sometimes occur and some isolated disparities exist in terms of correctness and fluency, they are not so frequent that speech is misunderstood.</p>
730	<b>C</b>	Has sufficient knowledge for daily activities and conducting business within certain limits.	<p>Can understand the gist of ordinary conversation and has no trouble forming responses. However, the individual shows some disparities in the ability to respond correctly and making himself/herself understood in more complicated situations.</p> <p>The individual has acquired a fundamental knowledge of grammar and structure and has the vocabulary to communicate essential information, even when lacking expressive power.</p>
		Is capable of the minimal communication in ordinary conversation.	<p>Can understand simple conversations when the other party speaks slowly and repeats or rephrases what is said. Is capable of responding to familiar topics.</p> <p>Knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and structure is generally inadequate. However, if the other party is used to dealing with non-native speakers, the individual can manage to get a point across.</p>
470	<b>D</b>	Is not able to communicate adequately.	<p>Even simple conversation at a slow pace is only partially understood.</p> <p>Is able to communicate with isolated phrases but not in full, grammatically correct sentences and does not effectively serve to make himself/herself understood.</p>
220	<b>E</b>		

(www.toEIC.or.jp)

## Who takes the test?

Since its relatively humble beginnings in 1979, test taker numbers have steadily increased and today the TOEIC test is one of the most common internationally recognized English proficiency exams in the world. The reason for this is that TOEIC is increasingly being seen as a reliable standard measure for making both employment and academic decisions.

**Business test takers** – An increasing number of companies worldwide use the TOEIC to set targets for English proficiency for the purposes of hiring new workers, transfers to different companies, or for promotion to management positions. This is especially true of large multinational corporations, or companies that export their products internationally.

Although each company sets its own score requirements, a survey of score requirements of a range of major international companies shows the following ranges to be typical.

International hotel bartender/food staff	300 - 400
Airline flight attendant	600 - 700
Promotion to section chief	600 - 730
Assignment to overseas offices	650 - 750
Executive managers	800+

**Academic test takers** – Although originally aimed at English use within a business context, TOEIC Listening and Reading Test is increasingly being used within academic contexts. In Japan, a significant proportion of the universities and colleges surveyed used the test for purposes of accreditation, course placement, and measuring progress within a curriculum. A growing number of universities around the world have adopted TOEIC as a way of screening candidates for their graduate programs, especially in the fields of business or international studies. In some institutions candidates who achieve high TOEIC scores also earn the right to be recommended for scholarships or for special certification.

At Sungkyunkwan University in Korea, for example, candidates who score 900 points or more are certified as having “outstanding international awareness” and earn the right to be recommended for scholarships. In Japan, a significant proportion of the universities and colleges surveyed used the test for purposes of accreditation. Other uses included course placement and measuring progress within a curriculum. The University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce in Thailand has adopted TOEIC as a way of screening candidates for their MBA program. Prince of Songkhla University, also in Thailand, has set a prerequisite TOEIC score for receiving credits in its hotel and tourism program.

## Test formats: SP and IP

There are two main formats to the TOEIC test, the Secure Program (SP) and the Institutional Program (IP). The differences between these relate primarily to the way they are administered.

**Secure Program (SP)** – This is the standard and most common form of the test. SP tests are administered directly by the TOEIC Steering Committee or their local representatives.

**Institutional Program (IP)** – IP tests are not administered according to the terms and conditions specified by the TOEIC Steering Committee, but by individual companies and schools on days and at locations decided by the institutions that conduct them. Score results are usually reported to the institution within five working days of receipt of the answer sheets.

IP tests are generally used for assessment of new employees, as a placement test for in-company English lessons or for self-development.

### **TOEIC Bridge®**

The TOEIC Bridge test aims to provide an easier, shorter version of the standard TOEIC test to be used...

...as a first step for those who are about to climb the stairway to higher English proficiency with the eventual aim of taking the TOEIC test, or as a motivator for those who have already taken the TOEIC test but have yet to achieve a satisfactory score.

([www.toEIC.or.jp](http://www.toEIC.or.jp))

It is aimed primarily at junior/senior high school, college/university students and any other test takers of beginner to pre-intermediate level who would score under 450 points on the regular TOEIC test (Levels D and E on the TOEIC proficiency scale). This roughly equates to the score of the average university graduate entering the workforce.

### **Applying for TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test**

Individual applications can be made online, by mailing an application form, or at designated convenience stores. The test results are mailed to the examinee in the form of an Official Score Certificate.

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## **2 Preparing Students for TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test**

Many of our students are studying for the TOEIC test because they have a very real need to improve their scores. Getting that 650 score can mean a transfer to the New York office or a promotion. The concrete payoffs that can result from a sizeable improvement means that TOEIC students can be some of the most motivated learners we ever encounter. While this means teaching TOEIC classes can be an engaging and rewarding experience, there is also a heavy burden of responsibility. The quality and effectiveness of our lessons directly impacts the lives and careers of the students. For this reason, it is essential that TOEIC instructors:

- Are able to help students set reasonable goals for themselves
- Have a good understanding of what students need to develop in order to improve their scores
- Are able to design a course that will make effective use of the available study time
- Use their knowledge of the test to help students overcome the challenges resulting from the test design
- Provide concrete strategies for handling each individual part of the test
- Give guidance and support on how to develop English skills and knowledge outside of class

## Setting realistic goals

TOEIC students often have a very clear idea of exactly what they want to achieve. However, lack of realistic expectations is one of the biggest problems facing TOEIC candidates. Many are under the impression that like the exams they faced in high school and college, a short intensive cram session can deliver the push they need to achieve their score target.

Such students are in for a shock. In a large-scale study of students in courses of study over 200 hours the average gain was just 110 points (Saegusa 1985). The chart below shows a rough estimate of the average number of hours of study time necessary to raise a student's current score to a given target level:

Current score	Target score						
	350	450	550	650	750	850	950
250	200	425	700	950	1150	1450	1750
350		225	450	700	950	1225	1550
450			225	450	700	975	1300
550				225	450	725	1050
650					225	500	825
750						275	600
850							325

(Table adapted from Saegusa 1985)

Unlike college exams, the TOEIC test doesn't measure knowledge of a few key topics or subject areas. Doing well demands an extensive vocabulary (English has over 600,000 non-technical words excluding idioms, phrases, and collocations), highly-developed listening skills, and a solid grammatical model. To make major gains on the test a student must develop their overall knowledge of English. There are no tricks, secrets, or shortcuts. Helping students appreciate the magnitude of the challenge is one of your major responsibilities as a TOEIC teacher.

## Student needs

The first step in helping students improve their scores is understanding the challenges that the TOEIC test presents. This knowledge is essential not only in planning and running your lessons, but also in helping you select the most effective textbook for your course.

### Test taking skills

- **Familiarity with the test format, instructions, and question types** - Although all the instructions are printed and exemplified at the start of each test part, familiarity with these will help the test taker avoid confusion on test day.
- **Time management** - The tight timings of the TOEIC test are one of the most challenging factors for many learners. In the Reading Section, students not accustomed to dealing with long texts in a short time often have difficulty completing all the questions. Encouraging students to monitor their time carefully and teaching skills such as skimming (quick reading to get a general idea) and scanning (quick reading to pick out specific details) can help students budget their time effectively and allow them to allocate more time to those places with the best potential score payoff.



- **Efficiency of information processing** - The lengthy listening and reading passages make it essential that students are able to read and listen efficiently. Ways of doing this include previewing the questions and answer choices before listening or reading to allow them to predict what they will hear/see and focus their attention only on what is needed to answer the question.
- **Awareness of features that can make incorrect answer choices attractive** - As with any multiple-choice test, incorrect answer choices that are in some way attractive to learners are included. Being aware of the common forms these ‘distracters’ take will enable students to avoid them and choose the right answer.

## Linguistic skills

- **Familiarity with the different native speaking accents** - The Listening Section of the TOEIC test includes US, Canadian, British, and Australian speakers. Many students develop a bias for a given variety of English and have difficulty understanding speakers with other accents. To overcome this it is important that students be exposed to a variety of English accents.
- **Awareness of the sound changes that occur in natural English speech** - Many learners are unaware that the sound of words spoken in natural conversation can differ dramatically from words spoken in isolation (e.g. *going to* and *gonna*). In the past, students may have had instructors who shielded them from exposure to such natural language on the grounds that it was only suitable for advanced learners or even that it was representative of slang or ‘lazy’ English. This has led to learners who have little difficulty in understanding what their instructors say in the classroom but find it very hard to follow natural conversation. Helping students become aware of the ways that sounds are combined, dropped, and changed in natural speech can significantly improve their listening comprehension, both for the TOEIC test and in the real world.
- **Understanding language in use (conversational English)** - The English used in the TOEIC test reflects everyday usage as encountered in offices, shops, and on the street in English speaking environments around the world. In the test this is apparent in the use of natural responses in the Listening Section that may at first seem grammatically unrelated to the question the speaker asks. Here’s an example from Part 2:

Q. ‘How many people applied for the sales position?’

A. ‘Well, we haven’t received as many résumés as we wanted.’

In order to do well on the test students must be given exposure to English as it is really used.

- **Vocabulary and grammatical understanding** - Success on the TOEIC test requires an extensive range of vocabulary and knowledge of how these words change and are organized grammatically. Vocabulary is arguably the single most significant factor in doing well on the test, and any effective study program should include an organized system for noting and reviewing words and phrases that students encounter as they study (see ‘Building Vocabulary’ (p. 20) for more ideas).

## Selecting an appropriate textbook

The choice of course materials will have a major impact on the overall effectiveness of the course and the amount of additional work required from you. If you are responsible for textbook selection in your school, consider the following:

**Course duration vs. amount of text material** – Try to choose a textbook that contains roughly the amount of material required for your course.

**Student ability vs. text difficulty** – As with any course, choosing materials appropriate for your students' level is an important factor in course success. Many TOEIC texts are aimed at a set student score range and you should generally aim for the closest match possible. Be aware that some textbooks aimed at low-level students aim to be level appropriate by simplifying the practice test material. Though this will definitely make the lessons easier for you and the students, you may be doing your students a disservice by taking this approach. Students who study with simplified test-style questions and practice tests can be overwhelmed when they take the real test. Failure to practice with authentic reading/listening texts will hinder the development of time management and test taking skills required on the day. Furthermore, lack of exposure to the level and type of vocabulary actually required by the test will prevent students developing the language stocks they require. It is strongly recommended that you choose materials that provide scaffolded strategy exercises appropriate for your students' level, but only use materials for test condition practice that reflect the exercises used in the real test.

**Text content vs. student needs** – The test taking and linguistic skills outlined in 'Student needs' (pp. 6-7) should all receive ample coverage: use them as a 'shopping list' when choosing your textbook. As all of those factors will play a part in your students' success, you will have to provide any missing element yourself. Appropriate textbook choice can save you a lot of extra work.

## **Designing a course**

If your institution does not have a pre-set course of study for TOEIC, course design is the first issue you must face. Unless you are teaching a long-term intensive course, you will have to make some decisions about what things to cover. If you don't plan ahead, you may find that you have one week left in the course and haven't covered Part 7 or that your students have forgotten the test parts they covered months earlier. To avoid problems like this, you need to design a course outline that distributes the available lesson time appropriately and effectively recycles and reviews the key points.

Effective TOEIC courses generally consist of 2 main parts:

**The lesson component** – This is the content the student actually studies in class. Lesson time should be spent on raising the student's awareness of the features of the test, developing their test taking strategies, building relevant language skills, and giving them practice of the types of questions they will encounter.

**The homework component** – In most TOEIC classes the number of lesson hours available falls far short of the amount of time that our estimates in 'Setting realistic goals' (p. 5) indicate is necessary. If students wish to have a chance of achieving score gains of over 50 points, they will need to supplement the in-class work with additional practice at home. As an instructor or teacher it is important that you guide them towards activities focused on developing the skills and knowledge they will need.

One important thing to keep in mind when choosing homework assignments, especially for larger classes, is that whatever you assign will require follow-up if it is to be of any use. Unless you plan on spending large amounts of time correcting homework, it is advisable to assign tasks that can be self-marked or allow for peer correction.

## Short courses

In classes of under about 30 hours it is crucial to allocate course time in a way that ensures the maximum benefit for students. With single student or small classes the best way to achieve this is to have students take a diagnostic test before the start of the course to identify the test parts they experience most difficulty with and allocate lesson time proportionally. In courses of more than a few students or where a pre-course diagnostic test is not an option, the following generic distribution is recommended:

Suggested lesson allocation (in order of priority)

<b>25-30 %</b>	Reading Part 7	This is a part that most students struggle with. Study time invested here can pay big dividends.
<b>20-25 %</b>	Listening Part 4	Also a major challenge for many students. It only receives less time than Part 7 because it has 18 less questions.
<b>15-20 %</b>	Listening Part 3	The stimuli in this section are slightly shorter than those in Part 4. The same basic strategies apply to both Parts 3 and 4, so in shorter courses study of these Parts can be combined.
<b>10-15 %</b>	Listening Part 2	In spite of the fact that this part is quite challenging and accounts for almost a third of the points in the Listening Section, it is not very teachable. The absence of written questions or answer choices means that success depends almost entirely on having highly developed listening skills. The need to allocate precious lesson hours where they can bring the greatest point reward places this fairly low on the time allocation list.
<b>5-10%</b>	Reading Part 5 Reading Part 6	The fact that these parts are so similar in content in the new test format allows us to deal with them as a single large section. Success in these two sections is based entirely on the depth and accuracy of the candidate's internal knowledge of the vocabulary, structure, and usage of English. In courses where lesson time is at a premium the majority of work on these sections may be assigned as homework.
<b>5%</b>	Listening Part 1	Generally considered one of the easiest parts of the Listening Section. Since the number of questions in the new format has been reduced to only ten it is difficult to justify spending a significant amount of class time here unless you are teaching a particularly long course.

## Long courses

If the duration of the course is between 30 and 50 hours, a typical textbook should usually provide enough material. You should be able to start at the beginning of the book and work your way right through.

Courses of more than 50 hours will require supplementary material. If you are only short by 10-15 lessons worth of material, one option is to use additional practice tests that can be purchased

individually or in packs. One test can be divided into blocks of 10–20 items each taken from a particular part. For example:

- Part 1: 1 block (Qs 1–10)
- Part 2: 2 blocks (Qs 11–25 and Qs 26–40)
- Part 3: 2 blocks (Qs 41–55 and Qs 56–70)
- Part 4: 2 blocks (Qs 71–85 and Qs 86–100)
- Part 5: 2 blocks (Qs 101–120 and Qs 121–140)
- Part 6: 1 block (Qs 141–152)
- Part 7: 2 blocks (Single passages (Qs 153–166 and Qs 167–180)  
1 block (Double passages (Qs 181–200))

Each block can provide up to 30 minutes of material for use in reviewing specific parts of the test. A suggested way of using these blocks is to allocate them to your course schedule at regular intervals, and use as follows:

- Do a quick overview of the test strategies and techniques you have covered up to that point for the test part you have chosen to review.
- Have your students complete the block of questions you have selected using the same timings as the actual test.
- Use the remaining time to go through their answers, give feedback and explain any items they got wrong, explain and have them note any vocabulary items that caused problems, and confirm that they used the test strategies you have covered.

If you are short by more than 15 hours of material, you may have no choice other than to select an additional textbook. In this case, apply the same criteria used for selecting the initial text.

## Deciding the lesson order

Textbooks typically start with a block of units on Part 1 of the test, move on to Part 2, and so on through to Part 7. The problem here is that by the time students reach the end of the course it may have been several months since they saw or heard anything about the earlier parts of the Listening Section. All those great strategies you taught them on dealing with Parts 1–3 have been forgotten. For this reason, it is recommended that you focus on test parts in cyclical rotation, with each succeeding lesson focused on a different part of the test.

For example, the first ten lessons for a course of lower ability students (TOEIC 400 and below) might progress like this:

Lesson	Focus	Lesson	Focus
1	Part 7	6	Part 6
2	Part 4	7	Part 1
3	Part 3	8	Part 7
4	Part 2	9	Part 4
5	Part 5	10	Part 3

### 3 Teaching the Lessons

Assuming you now have a basic course plan and a textbook, you are ready to get in the class and start helping your students improve their scores. If you are new to teaching TOEIC preparation courses, one thing you will notice immediately is that the average TOEIC textbook looks very different from anything you may have used before in general or business English courses. The nature of the TOEIC test and the type of tasks it requires means that the lesson format will also differ significantly from that of regular classes.

In this section we look at the key elements of an effective TOEIC course as well as specific techniques and approaches for each part of the test.

#### **Classroom dynamics: Teaching TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test interactively**

The usual view of TOEIC lessons is that they have to be tight and controlled. Traditional study material, with lengthy explanations and pages of multiple-choice questions, reinforces this view. However, the things we need to accomplish to help our students do well in the test are not that different from the aims of any language class: develop active and practical reading and listening skills, raise student awareness of natural English usage, build vocabulary, etc. It makes sense that the techniques that prove effective in other sorts of classes be pressed into service here: pair and small group work to complete language tasks, comparing answers, speculating on the possible contents of upcoming listening tasks (based upon the answer choices provided), and peer explanation of vocabulary and expressions.

Although it may at first seem strange to use speaking and discussion work to prepare for a test that is restricted to receptive skills (listening and reading), the bottom line here is that we want students to retain a number of techniques and learn a large quantity of vocabulary. The best way to do this is to have the students interact with the techniques and language in as many ways as possible. Oral production and the types of interaction common to group work, though not directly tested, are natural and powerful ways to practice and reinforce the key information and skills students will need in order to do well on the TOEIC.

#### **Mixed-ability classes**

In a corporate environment, TOEIC classes are often grouped by student availability at a given time, rather than by level. Although this does raise some issues, it is much less of a problem than for similarly grouped classes focused on conversation. Test taking is by nature an individual activity and lower ability students will rarely expect to perform as well as their higher ability classmates on practice tests and activities. But they will expect to have an equal opportunity to participate in the lesson, and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure this expectation is met. Teachers should consider the following elements:

- **Task set-up and monitoring** – In mixed-ability classes you have to tailor your instructions to the lowest common denominator as it is essential that every student understands what they are expected to do. In addition to oral instructions it is a good idea to demonstrate the task with a stronger student. Even then, do not assume that weaker students have understood. After your set-up, move around the class monitoring to ensure that the less able students are actually doing what you intended.
- **Activity timing** – Students of differing ability will complete tasks at different times. Prepare

contingency activities for those who finish early. Monitor class progress carefully and when the top 20% of your class are approaching completion, throw out an extra task: 'If you finish early, write one more question.'

- **Grouping and group activities** - Try to pair weaker and stronger students together to complete a task. Studies have shown that in such mixed pairings, both the weaker and stronger student communicates more than if paired with a similar level partner. This tactic can also reduce the problem of students finishing an activity at different times.
- **Feedback** - There are two main ways to confirm student answers and their success at a task. The most controlled method involves the teacher moving around the room monitoring progress and noting points for feedback, then after the task has been completed, reading out the answers and giving a summary to the class of some of the points noted earlier. Another approach is to have students discuss and compare their answers in mixed-ability pairs first, then for the teacher to request answers from the pairs and confirm.
- **Homework (and preparation assignments for weaker students)** - In some cases the disparity in abilities leaves some students really struggling. One possibility is to encourage these students to read ahead in the book and pre-learn vocabulary. Some teachers may worry about students answering listening questions before they have been used in class. Remember that the teacher's role is not to test the students but to teach them and help them prepare. If students are struggling in the class, it saps motivation and self-esteem and this in turn has a detrimental effect on their ability to acquire the strategies and language required in the test. If weaker students read ahead and learn some useful vocabulary in advance they will be more comfortable and productive during the class. In my opinion, this is well worth the trade-off that they may have a slight advantage during a class listening practice.

## Lesson content

We have looked at the various test taking and linguistic skills that students require to do well on the TOEIC test. This variety of skills requires an equally varied set of lesson elements and teaching techniques.

### Strategy Practice

This lesson element focuses on developing the test taking skills and strategies necessary to tackle the test effectively and efficiently. Basically, strategy practice consists of making students aware of the exact steps they should follow every time they do a particular question type, and having them practice these steps until the process becomes habitual.

By reinforcing basic but effective strategies you can help a candidate avoid the problems inherent in the test design and allow them to concentrate on using their knowledge of English to score points. Familiarizing students with the structure of the test and a basic set of test taking strategies can make small but significant gains possible. Even in very short courses of 10-15 hours improvements of 50-75 points are not unusual. However, unless a candidate has particularly poor test taking skills, the gains that can be made here are limited. There is no way around the fact that unless a student knows a lot of English they can't score highly on the TOEIC test. The first 50 points may come quite easily but every point after that must be earned by intensive study.

For some effective general test strategies please refer to the Appendix. Here, we take a closer look at how your students should approach each part of the test.



## Part-specific techniques

### Listening Section

Because the timings on the Listening Section are largely determined by the recording, most of the test taking skills and strategies for this section focus on using the information presented in the test booklet to help students predict what they will hear. This will focus students' listening on the information needed to answer a question.

#### Part 1



(Tapescript)

- (A) The man is making coffee.
- (B) The man is sitting near the boats.
- (C) The cup is resting on the boat.
- (D) The man is pouring a hot drink.

(All test question examples: *Tactics for the TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test*, © Oxford University Press, 2007)

Students see ten pictures. For each, they will hear four statements and they must select the statement that best matches the picture.

There are two main strategies we should encourage our students to follow:

First and foremost, students should use the picture to try to predict vocabulary and statements they might hear. By first picking out the key focus of the picture (small background details are never tested) and quickly brainstorming related vocabulary and possible statements, they will be much better prepared when they actually listen.

The second strategy is to listen and eliminate incorrect answer choices. Statements in this section generally follow a subject-verb (-object) pattern (e.g. The man (S.) is looking (V.) at the monitor. (O.)). In most cases 'distracter' answers feature one or more words that are true to the picture, but will also have at least one that is incorrect. Hearing a word that is obviously incorrect is almost as useful as identifying the correct answer

because every option eliminated raises the chances of choosing the correct answer by 25%.

#### Part 2

Students hear a question or statement followed by three possible responses. They must choose the response that best matches the question.

(Tapescript)

- Is anyone sitting here?
- (A) No, It's not here.
  - (B) Sorry, I'm waiting for a friend.
  - (C) She's sitting over there.

This part of the test is a pure listening challenge as there are no clues students can use to predict what they are going to hear. Students should not expect the kind of set-pattern responses they may have studied in school. Responses here are authentic and students must often listen for the

implied meaning of a response to realize it is the correct one (as in the example here). Exposing students to questions and answers of this sort and focusing attention on the interrelation between the two is essential to helping them tackle this part of the test.

### Part 3

Students hear a short, three or four part conversation, and then answer three questions about it.

(Tapescript)

**Questions 1-3** refer to the following conversation.

**MA:** Do you think you could mail off these packages for me. They have to get out by the 6:00 courier and I am late for a meeting as it is. I will really owe you a favor.

**WA:** Yeah, OK, I have some time now. Where do you want me to send them?

**MA:** The list with the customers' addresses is in this document and the number of the courier service is at the top of the page. I really appreciate this.

**WA:** Don't worry. I will take care of it. You can get me a coffee tomorrow.

1. What does the man want the woman to do?  
(A) Pay the money she owes  
(B) Mail some packages  
(C) Attend a meeting  
(D) Give him the addresses
2. What does the woman ask?  
(A) For the destination  
(B) For the time  
(C) Where the meeting is  
(D) If he wants a coffee
3. Why doesn't the man do it himself?  
(A) The woman has the list  
(B) The woman owes him a favor  
(C) He doesn't know the address  
(D) He has to rush to a previous appointment

This is one part of the test where changes to the old format can work to the advantage of students. The increase in the number of questions (from one to three) makes the listening task more manageable, in spite of the additional memory load and increase in text length. This is because the additional two questions on the page increase the amount of information the students can preview and use to predict the likely content of the passage they are going to hear. The test format itself also makes this previewing more manageable: in addition to appearing on the page, each of the three questions is read aloud and followed by an eight second pause. Since students do not have to wait for the question to be read before they answer it, students who have practiced answering the questions as they listen will have up to 40 seconds from the end of one conversation until the start of the next (the time it will take for the questions to be read and the pauses). This leads us to two key test strategies for scoring well here:

- Answer questions as quickly as you can, if possible while the listening text is still being read
- Use the time between conversations to skim the next three questions, predict what you are likely to hear, and isolate exactly what you should be listening for

### Part 4

1. What product is being described?  
(A) A cordless telephone  
(B) An all-in-one printer  
(C) A laptop computer  
(D) A digital camera
2. Which of the following best describes the product?  
(A) It creates a lot of desktop clutter  
(B) It is an older model with many features  
(C) It is quite large  
(D) It is an innovative design
3. What is described as the unique feature?  
(A) The color printer  
(B) The fax machine  
(C) The hard disk drive  
(D) The scanner

As in Part 3, students hear a listening passage, followed by three questions. The difference is that instead of a conversation, the listening features a single speaker giving a talk: a news report, an advertisement, an acceptance speech, etc.

Some of the passage lengths are also considerably longer than they have been in the past.

The similarities to Part 3 mean that students can adopt the same approaches used there. In fact, the significantly longer texts make it even more important that students have an exact idea of what they are listening for in advance - listening first and considering the question later won't work because there is simply too much text to remember.



(Tapescript)

**Questions 1-3** refer to the following talk.

The GX203 is our latest model and includes a lot of new features that we think make it stand out from all the other printers currently on the market. As you can see, it manages to squeeze a full color printer, scanner, and copier into a very compact package, as well as including a fax machine and cordless telephone handset. No more desktop clutter with this. What's more, in an industry first, our printer comes with a 40 gigabyte hard disk, so you can keep your entire photo collection safe and print out your pictures without the need to connect to a computer.

1. What product is being described?
2. Which of the following best describes the product?
3. What is described as the unique feature?

Finally, students should be made aware that answer choices often appear in the listening in a different form to that on the page. For example, the listening may feature some one 'asking for their money back', though the answer choice may note that the person is 'requesting a refund'. Students must learn to recognize such paraphrasing if they are to do well on this part.

## Reading Section

In this section of the test the students are given a lump sum of time (75 minutes) and must allocate this themselves. Time management is the critical skill here and the following test strategies focus on helping students allocate time to the parts of the test that need it most, and dealing efficiently with lengthy texts.

### Part 5

The product was not a commercial success  
\_\_\_\_\_ a lot of money was spent on  
advertising.

- (A) despite
- (B) in spite of
- (C) even though
- (D) because of

Students read a sentence that has a single word or several words replaced with a gap, followed by four answer choices.

This part of the test focuses primarily on the student's range of vocabulary and the integrity of their internal model of grammar and syntax. There is a simple three-part strategy for tackling these questions:

- Read the sentence and try to guess words (and parts of speech) that you think could fit
- Look at the choices, eliminate any that are the wrong part of speech, and then read the sentence (silently) with each remaining word in the gap
- Choose the option that 'sounds' the best

Success here depends largely on the student being familiar with the meanings and uses of answer words and/or the gapped sentence. If the student does not know the key words, there is little they can do about it during the test so they shouldn't waste time.

One recommended approach for handling this part efficiently is called the '2-Pass' technique. On the first pass the student goes through quickly answering all the questions they find easy. If they don't know the answer within ten seconds, they skip to the next question. On the second pass, the student goes back to the more difficult questions left blank. If they still aren't sure of the correct answer after 30 seconds they should guess and move on. This technique ensures that students don't get stuck on the more challenging questions and end up wasting a lot of time.

**Part 6**

Questions 1-3 refer to the following memo.

This is to remind all conference staff that today's 2:15 workshop on elementary bookkeeping \_\_\_\_\_.

1. (A) rescheduled  
(B) will reschedule  
(C) has been rescheduled  
(D) will have been rescheduled

Due to unforeseen circumstances the presenter will be unable to give the workshop as \_\_\_\_\_ noted in the conference program.

2. (A) firstly  
(B) obviously  
(C) definitely  
(D) originally

Please inform attendees who ask that the presentation \_\_\_\_\_ held instead on Wednesday

3. (A) will be  
(B) had been  
(C) is  
(D) was

morning at 10:45 in room G11. This information will also be posted on the notice boards in the foyer.  
Thanks,  
Madeleine

This part of the test brings the same kind of challenges as Part 5. Students should be encouraged to go straight to the first gapped sentence and use the techniques described for Part 5 as these will work for the majority of Part 6 questions. However, at least one item in each passage will not have enough information in the sentence alone to answer the question. In this case, the student must skim the surrounding sentences to help them choose.

## Part 7

Questions 1-5 refer to the following notice.

### Notice to all guests of the Glenvale Inn

The management of the Glenvale Inn would like to apologize to all its guests for any inconvenience caused by our remodeling efforts. We assure you that the greatest efforts are being made to ensure that all public spaces are kept immaculately clean, that all guests are provided with courteous professionalism, and that noise is kept to a minimum.

During the remodeling, we are offering all guests 10% off their bill and 10% off their next stay, when the remodeling is complete.

The remodeled Glenvale Inn will include:

- A 24-hour gourmet coffee bar in the lobby with a menu that will feature all your favorite specialty beverages as well as home-made baked goods.
- An expanded exercise room with spa and sauna to melt away any chill you get on the slopes, plus personal trainers on hand for workouts or lessons in skiing or snowboarding.
- A massage salon to ease any aches from your gym workout or mountain sports.
- 20 log cabins each complete with antique furnishings and bay windows overlooking the scenic valley and the main hotel building that will provide a little extra privacy, but with all the amenities of one of our suites.

Once again, the management thanks you for your patronage and patience.

1. Where is the hotel probably located?
  - (A) In the mountains
  - (B) In a major city
  - (C) By the sea
  - (D) Near a shopping center
2. Why is the management apologizing?
  - (A) There has been a lack of professionalism.
  - (B) The exercise room is too small.
  - (C) Some construction is underway.
  - (D) Guests are being overbilled.
3. What is being offered to current guests?
  - (A) A discount on their stay
  - (B) Personal training
  - (C) Free coffee
  - (D) A massage
4. The word "feature" in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to
  - (A) make
  - (B) include
  - (C) highlight
  - (D) introduce
5. What is stated about the log cabins?
  - (A) They have a good view of the area.
  - (B) They have ultra-modern furniture.
  - (C) They aren't as well equipped as the suites.
  - (D) They are connected to the main hotel.

The long texts and varied question types in this part generally pose the greatest challenge for test takers. The main problem here is that many students aren't used to dealing with text passages of the length and type found here and often get bogged down reading each one word-by-word, painstakingly trying to grasp the meaning. If time runs out, students are left with a string of blank answers or random guesses. To avoid that happening, time management is critical. The following tips can help students manage their time in this part efficiently:

- Do Part 7 before Parts 5 and 6

There is no rule that parts have to be done in the order presented. If students don't know the key words needed to get the answer to questions in Parts 5 and 6, spending extra time isn't going to help. In Part 7, however, having an extra minute on a difficult question could make a huge difference in the search for the correct answer.

- Don't start by reading the passage

Jumping blindly into the text can be terrifying for lower level students and is inefficient for students of any level. Encourage your students to go straight to the questions and not to look at the passage until they know exactly what they are looking for.

Students should be aware that although each question has an identical point value, some require much less time to answer than others. Questions that request specific information (e.g. Q.157 in the example) or vocabulary questions can be relatively quick and easy. With these, students can scan the passage quickly to find the relevant section of the text and then answer the question without reading the whole passage. Questions that ask about overall meaning or the writer's intention require a deeper understanding of the passage and can be much more time-consuming.

- Identify the easier questions and do those first

There are sound reasons for this approach. If students *do* run out of time, at least they can be certain they haven't missed out on any easy points. Also, by quickly scanning the passage to answer the specific information questions they can pick up a general sense of what the passage is about and how it is organized. By the time they have answered the easier questions they may already have enough information to answer the more challenging ones, or at least they will have a better idea of where to look to find the answer.

### **Timed test-condition practice**

In addition to practicing with the question types and becoming more comfortable with test strategies, it is important for students to apply this experience under conditions that simulate real test time pressures. Ideally this would involve having students take regular full practice tests, but this isn't an option in the typical short-to-medium TOEIC course. A practical alternative is to simulate test conditions in short bursts of 5–10 minutes using the same or reduced timings as those on the actual test. Test condition practice should be used at regular intervals after students have become familiar with the strategies outlined above for dealing with each part of the test.

### **Developing reading skills**

In addition to the test-specific practice outlined above, students will benefit from developing their core reading skills.

**Scanning** – Scanning means reading quickly to find specific details. We scan when we search for a name in a telephone book. For example, if we want to find the name 'Spencer' we first select a key marker (in this case we would probably use the first few letters of the name) and then let our eyes roam until we spot this marker (Spe...). Only at this point do we start to read closely. In the TOEIC test, with time a key factor, this skill is extremely important, both for the specific information and vocabulary questions in the Reading Section and in the Listening Section where we encourage students to quickly scan the answer choices and pick out key words to help focus their attention before the listening begins.

The key to developing this skill is to practice with tight time limits. For example, you could give students ten seconds to note all the key words in three Part 3 answer choices. Initially this may be quite challenging and frustrating for lower level students. As their ability increases with practice, they will gain confidence. Gradually reduce the time allowed.

**Skimming** – Skimming means reading to get the main idea of a text. An example of this would be glancing rapidly at articles in a newspaper to identify the article type; whether they are about sports, business, international news, etc. Test questions that require skimming usually ask about the overall meaning of a text: ‘What is the purpose of this memo?’, ‘What is the main theme of this article?’ etc.

Tips to help students get the gist of a text:

- Look for any titles or headings first
- Quickly read the first and last sentence of each paragraph
- Skim the passage, reading only nouns and verbs

This skill depends to a large extent upon a student’s range of vocabulary, as it demands that they notice a small number of key words and relate these to an overarching theme. Bearing this in mind, it may be useful to have weaker students practice extracting the key elements from each of the answer choices and then brainstorm related vocabulary before they skim the passage. Such practice, if done regularly and under timed conditions, can sharpen their skill and accustom them to spotting the same sort of lexical relationships under test conditions.

**Building a tolerance for longer texts** – Reading passages in Part 7 of the TOEIC test may be much longer than students are used to dealing with (sometimes up to 300 words or more for double passages). Lower level students may panic when faced with this amount of text, so it is important to get your students used to dealing with longer passages in class. Initially, it may be desirable to choose non-TOEIC material that relates to the interests or experiences of the student (e.g. movie magazines, sports articles, etc) especially when doing timed activities.

## Developing listening skills

The listening tasks on the TOEIC test can be extremely challenging. This is especially true for Parts 3 and 4 where students are asked to listen for several different things in several different ways. Some of the questions will require them to listen for specific details: numbers, names, dates, etc. Other questions will ask them for the main idea or to infer things from the overall content.

### **Pre-listening: Know what you are listening for**

The key to handling both general and specific question types is preparation. In Parts 3 and 4 the questions are printed on the test page, so by using the skimming and scanning skills we discussed above for reading, students can identify the question type and what exactly it is asking them to do. Students can start to brainstorm possible related vocabulary (which will help them with the main idea/inference questions as it does in the reading parts) and consider other ways that the key words of the specific information questions might be restated (restatement of key ideas is common on the TOEIC).

### **Pre-listening: Predict the content**

Having some background knowledge about what you are hearing can significantly aid comprehension. This can include such basic facts as who is speaking, where the speakers are, what they are talking about etc. Knowing these things allows a listener to isolate and understand new

information more effectively. The fact that the questions for both Parts 3 and 4 are printed on the page allows students to glean a lot of information about the context and develop an initial 'schema'.

### **Building a tolerance for longer listening passages**

The same factors we discussed for reading apply here. Many students have a certain point at which they seem to shut down and lose the thread of what is being said. Although focusing their listening using the pre-listening techniques above will help to some extent, it is essential that their 'comfort zone' – how much they can listen to at one time – be expanded. Once again, start by using non-test content, close to the interests or experiences of your students and gradually increase the length of the listening passages as confidence increases.

### **Exposure to different accents**

The TOEIC test listening passages include speakers from the US, Canada, Britain, and Australia. Depending on their learning background students may have difficulty in understanding one or more of the accents. Try to expose your students to a variety of different accents during your regular classes. If your institution has course books that include non-American English listening samples and tasks, then using these materials would be a definite help. Otherwise, recordings from BBC UK or Australian internet radio broadcasts can provide useful resources. Note, however, that the Listening Section of the test will never contain words specific to any one country.

### **Connected speech: "Waddidjaduferyer holiday?"**

English is a rhythmic language, meaning that we stress words (usually content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) at regular intervals. Because sentences in English rarely feature equal numbers of words we often end up reducing sounds and cramming them together in order to have them fit comfortably within the rhythmic framework. The result is contractions like *can't* and *don't* and words like *going to* and *would you*, sounding like *gonna* or *woodja*. In fact, the sounds of natural spoken English almost never sound like they would if the individual words were pronounced in isolation.

There are a number of things we can do to help students here:

1. Increase student awareness by explicitly focusing on natural spoken forms regularly in class.
2. Make it clear that these are not examples of slang, or sloppy English but are the direct result of English being a rhythmic, stress-timed language. If they listen to the BBC or CNN (or TOEIC test listening passages) they will hear these forms.
3. Provide students with examples and help them to understand what is happening, e.g. *you* and *to* being reduced to sound like *ya/ja* and *ta*; sounds being dropped so that *her/him* sounds like *'er/'im*; sounds being changed and chained together so that *Is he going to...?* sounds more like *Izzygonna?*

### **Building vocabulary**

As emphasized earlier, vocabulary is probably the single most important factor influencing success on the TOEIC test and in every lesson students will come across many new words and phrases.

It is essential that this new vocabulary be:

**Noted** – Students should keep a vocabulary notebook and bring it to each class. Be sure to show them effective techniques for noting new vocabulary. In addition to the translation, students should write down the sentence in which they encountered the word or phrase

and write at least one new sentence. They should note the part of speech and any synonyms or antonyms. Encourage the use of other memory retention techniques such as word maps, small illustrations, color-coding, and noting a word's phonemic transcription. Basically, the more information students include in their notes the better the chance of retention.

**Assigned for homework** – Words encountered in class are an excellent resource for TOEIC focused homework assignments. For example, having students use key words encountered in class to write short conversations of the type found in Part 2 of the test, is useful review of both the test conventions and the new vocabulary.

**Reviewed** – Keep a list of the words that come up during the course and set aside a few minutes for quick quizzes at a set time each lesson. By making this a routine, you will encourage students to review their notes regularly. If you have assigned the words as part of a homework assignment, then peer homework review will also serve to recycle the vocabulary in a meaningful context.

## Homework

As stated earlier, 50+ point gains require a significant development of the students overall stock of language and expansion of their listening/reading skills. This usually requires hundreds of hours of study to achieve, far more than most students are willing to invest in a TOEIC course. There is no way around it, students who want to jump up a few hundred points in the next six months will have to spend considerable amounts of their free time studying by themselves.

### Selecting homework assignments

First of all, unless you are teaching a particularly long course you are likely to have exercises for parts of the test (most likely Parts 1, 5, and 6) that you won't be able to complete in the available class time. These are ideal homework material.

A lot of useful work can be done using non-textbook, non-test resources and activities. The key is to get students reading. There is no better way to build vocabulary than extensive reading. Depending on the interests of your class, you may wish to assign short articles from *The Economist* or *Newsweek*, short newspaper articles of their own choice, or graded readers. Encourage your students to choose material that interests them and that isn't too difficult. You can ask them to summarize what they read and report back to the class or write a response for peer review in the following lesson. Try to include a combination of written and oral tasks and use a variety of feedback options.

Listening work is also a good homework option. Have students record an English news broadcast, transcribe a short segment, and then deliver it in the next lesson. Alternatively, have them rent English movies, transcribe a scene they like, and then act it out with another student.

For all of these homework activities, be sure to integrate vocabulary review. If you are asking students to read or listen to something and then report back, encourage them to use as many words from their vocabulary notebook as possible.

Assigning students to write their own test-format questions using items from their vocabulary notebooks is an excellent way to review language and test content at the same time.



## 4 TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test FAQs

### ***"What is the difference between TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test and the TOEFL® test?"***

Unlike the TOEIC test, which aims to evaluate English as used in the workplace, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is primarily a placement test for colleges and universities. Currently the test is administered in three main formats:

**Paper Based Test (PBT)** – This is a pencil and paper format completed and marked in a similar way to the TOEIC. It features three sections: Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading. There is also an additional section called the Test of Written English, which is rated separately and is not a requirement for most institutions.

**Computer Based Test (CBT)** – This format of the test features four sections: Listening, Structure and Written Expression, Reading, and Writing. The first three sections are marked by computer, while the Writing section is human rated.

**Internet Based Test (iBT)** – This format of the test also features four sections: Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing. The Reading and Listening sections are marked by computer, while the Speaking and Writing sections are human rated.

The test format students take is determined by where they take the test. The iBT and CBT are generally offered in larger cities while the PBT is more common in smaller cities and towns.

Universities set minimum point requirements for entry depending on the course of study, and scores for all three test formats are accepted.

### ***"What is the difference between the STEP Test and TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test?"***

The Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) test (commonly known as the EIKEN test) is a homegrown Japanese test supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. While it is aimed at evaluating English proficiency, it lacks the business focus of the TOEIC test and is much more general in nature. Like the TOEIC, the STEP Test is also a very widely recognized standard for English proficiency in Japan.

Unlike the TOEIC test, the STEP Test is divided into different ability grades, from 5<sup>th</sup> Grade (Japanese junior high school beginning level) to 1<sup>st</sup> Grade (Japanese college graduate level), each with a separate test. The STEP test also differs from the TOEIC in that each grade has a pass or fail mark. From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade the test is administered in two stages. The First-stage consists of the reading and listening sections. If students pass this, they are eligible to take the Second-stage, an interview test.

### ***"Is TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test useful as a placement test for my class?"***

### ***"Can I use TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test to assess speaking/writing ability?"***

Both of these questions focus on the issue of whether the receptive skills (listening/reading) tested on the TOEIC can be used to assess productive ability. A number of studies have examined this issue. One of the early studies (Woodford 1982) showed a very high correlation between scores on the TOEIC and scores on the Language Proficiency Interview (a coefficient of .83\*). Later studies by Wilson (1989) and Hirai (2002) reported a lower but still quite strong correlation (.71-.80 and .78 respectively). Overall, the research would tend to indicate that the test is a fairly good indicator of

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\* Higher numbers indicate a higher correlation with 1.0 a perfect relationship.



oral ability. My own experience accords with this view and students in classes I have taught where placement was on the basis of TOEIC score had a fairly consistent spoken English ability.

On the issue of written scores there is less consensus. In his study, Woodford noted a high correlation between the TOEIC and a direct writing measure (.83), however Hirai's work noted a significantly lower correlation (.67) between the TOEIC and the Business Language Testing Service (BULATS) writing test. My experience accords with the latter study. At least with Japanese students, I have found there to be a fairly marked variation in the writing ability of students with similar TOEIC scores.

### ***"Should I use TOEIC® Listening and Reading Test to measure student progress in my course?"***

Unless your course is exceptionally long, the answer is definitely 'No'. As emphasized earlier in this guide, making significant gains requires a considerable investment of time and effort. ETS note in their TOEIC User Guide (1999) that, '...research has shown that at least 100 hours of language training is usually required before students are able to demonstrate a real increase in TOEIC® scores.' So unless the course you are teaching is hundreds of hours in duration, you should look for assessment methods other than the TOEIC to judge your students' progress.

## **Student FAQs: Answering common student questions**

### ***"How can I get a better TOEIC score?"***

There are two main recommendations you can give your students to improve their scores. The first is to improve their test taking skills. This guide has provided some ideas on how that can be done, but in most cases students should attend a course taught by a knowledgeable and well-prepared instructor who can help students become more efficient and effective test takers. The second, longer-term recommendation is that students work hard to increase their overall knowledge of English and their receptive skills. Encourage lots of reading, effective notation and review of vocabulary, and extensive listening practice.

### ***"Do I need to join a class to improve my score?"***

The honest answer here is 'no'. Most native speakers would do quite well on the TOEIC test despite never having attended a TOEIC class. Whatever method a student uses, as long as they significantly develop their English ability they will increase their TOEIC score. However, studying in a class can focus a student and provide a supportive environment for study, which can result in more rapid and efficient progress. Additionally, as we have seen, pair and group work can play a valuable role in reinforcing the skills and knowledge that are an essential part of TOEIC test preparation.

### ***"How will I cope with the various types of accents which the (new) TOEIC test contains?"***

There are various ways students can become more familiar with the US, British, Australian, and Canadian accents now found in the TOEIC Listening Section. Students can study using a textbook that comes with audio recorded with a variety of accents (most TOEIC study materials published from 2006 will include such audio). Watching movies from the relevant countries, listening to online radio stations, and podcasts are all good options.

Though at first they may find the different accents a challenge, with repeated exposure things

will get easier. The voice actors ETS employ when recording the Listening Section of the test never feature extremely thick accents.

***"Some of the reading texts now are longer than before? How can I cope?"***

The key here is to read more efficiently. Unless the student is a very fast reader, there just isn't time to read through each passage from beginning to end. Instead what they must do is start, not by reading the passage, but by skimming the questions and answer choices. They should find out first what information is needed to answer the question, then go to the passage and use skimming and scanning skills to focus on finding that information. They may be able to answer all the questions without reading the entire passage.

**The following Appendix can be copied and distributed to your students.**

## Overall test strategies

- **Don't leave any questions unanswered – make your 'best guess'**

If you aren't sure of the correct answer, eliminate any answers you think are wrong then choose the answer that looks best from the remaining choices. Wrong answers are not penalized, and even a blind guess gives you a 25–33% chance of getting the right answer. If you can eliminate even one wrong answer, your odds of success go up as high as 50%!

- **Be familiar with the test format**

Make sure you are familiar with the type of questions you will face on the test day before you sit the test.

- **Use the order of the questions as a guide**

Except for general situation or main idea questions, the answers in the reading or listening will appear in the same order as the questions: the answer to the first question will appear early in the passage, the next question will come after that, and so on.

## Listening strategies

- **Don't wait for all the answer choices to be read out before answering**

If you think you know the answer, mark it immediately. Then begin previewing the next answer choices.

- **Preview and predict**

This applies to all listening parts except Part 2. Before each question is played preview the answer choices or picture and try to predict as much as you can about what you are going to hear and what exactly you are going to be listening for. The better you can predict, the easier the listening will be.

## Reading strategies

- **Keep a watch in front of you**

Time management is the key to the Reading Section and you need to monitor exactly how much time you spend on each question to ensure you don't run out of time. You should spend a maximum of roughly 60 seconds on each Part 7 question and 20–30 seconds on each Part 5 and 6 question. This will allow you some time to check over your answers at the end.

- **Do Part 7 first!**

You do not have to follow the order presented in the test. In Parts 5 and 6 you can answer many questions quickly and effectively. Questions in Part 7 can take much longer, so start here to ensure you don't run out of time.

- **Don't start by reading the whole passage**

In Part 7, move immediately to the questions and focus on what you need to answer.

- **Answer the easy questions first**

You do not have to answer in the order presented in the test so get the easy marks first, then come back later and answer (or make your best guess).

## Study strategies

- **Build your vocabulary**

This is the single most important factor for success. You should:

Keep a vocabulary notebook and note all new words, plus the sentence they occur in.

Read, read, and read! Newspaper stories, business articles, even graded readers can help you expand your vocabulary dramatically.

- **Study outside of class**

Making big improvements on the TOEIC test requires you to improve your overall knowledge of English. To do this in a reasonable amount of time you must be prepared to supplement your class lessons with additional study at home.

- **Learn to use English**

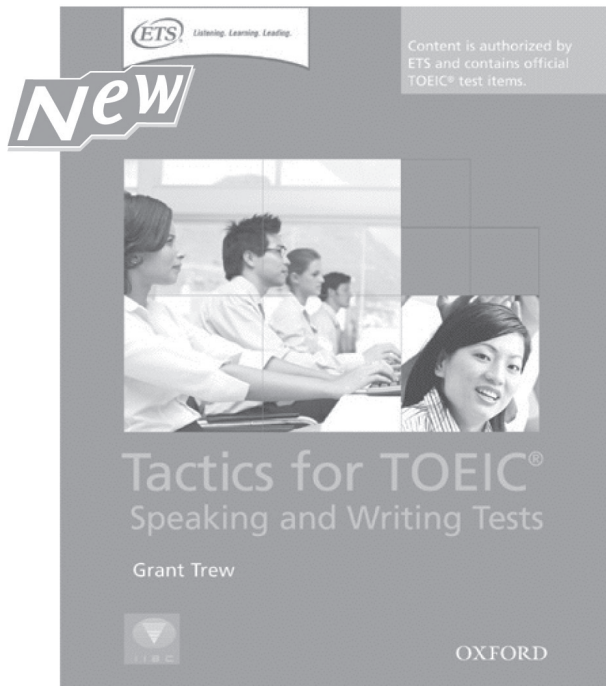
The TOEIC tests your ability to understand English as it is used in everyday work and life situations. The more capable and comfortable you are in using natural English, both spoken and written, the better you will do on the TOEIC test. Make an effort to use English to communicate as much as you can and your score will go up faster than if you do nothing but study test items, grammar, and vocabulary.

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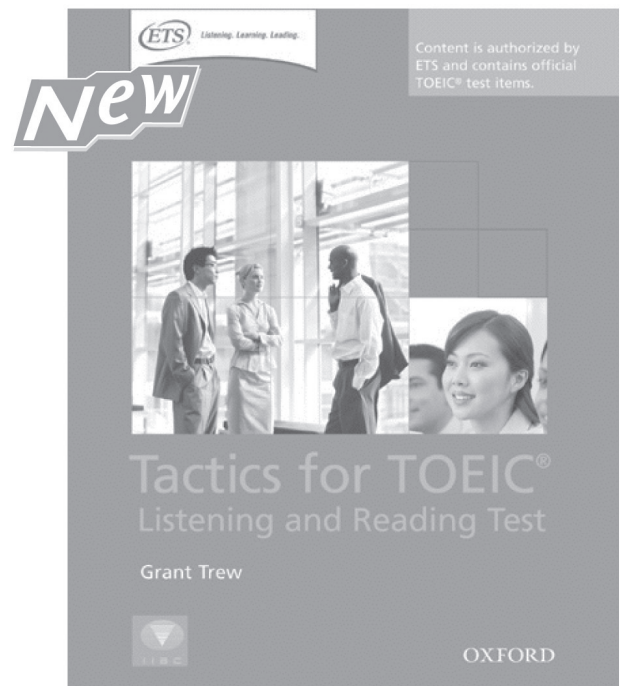
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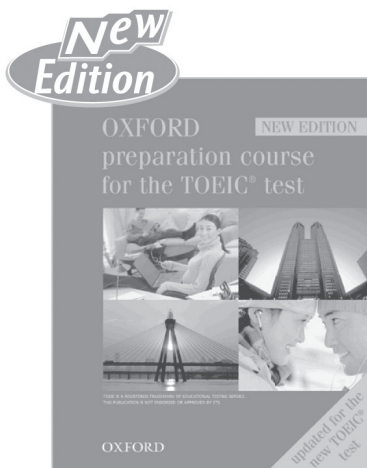
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