

TOEFL: SPEAKING SECTION – PART 1

OVERVIEW OF THE SPEAKING SECTION

The Speaking section of the TOEFL test is often the most difficult for students. There are several reasons for this: nervousness, lack of practice, a very short preparation time before the student is required to answer, and inability to construct an argument/answer in a logical form. Practice is the key to overcoming all of these problems. Talk with native speakers of English as much as possible.

The Speaking section is divided into six separate tasks. In this article, we will cover the first two. On the first task, you will first hear and (simultaneously) read a question regarding your opinion about something. On the second task, you will hear and read (again simultaneously) a question giving you two points of view on a subject. You will then need to select one of the points of view and argue for that perspective. You will have 15 seconds to prepare a response and 45 seconds to respond on both tasks.

Here are some examples:

QUESTION TYPE 1

If you had three days to visit any city in the world, which city would you visit? Use examples to support your selection.

SAMPLE RESPONSE

If I could go to anyplace in the world, I would choose Reykjavik, in Iceland. I would go there because I have never been there before, and I would like to go to any city in Scandinavia. It would be nice to get to know the culture, and I think it would be interesting. The landscape and geology, especially, is interesting. There are many bays and coves, geysers, glaciers, mountains, and small rivers and creeks. It also has some interesting plantlife and wildlife, and for these reasons, I'd like to go to Reykjavik.

QUESTION TYPE 2

Some people believe schools should require students to take classes on civics (the social science dealing with the rights & duties of citizens), while others believe civics has no place in the classroom and should be reserved for personal study and experience. Which point of view do you agree with? Why? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.

SAMPLE RESPONSE

I agree with the first option – that civics should be studied in the classroom. Some students might think it's not important, but it is. It could be important in the future to know about things like laws and voting privileges, and everyone on the planet should know their own human rights. Also, students can always still study civics on their own. Civics is not just a subject, but an important piece of society.

Here are two more questions for your own practice:

QUESTION TYPE 1

Who is your favorite writer, and why? Use details and reasons to support your answer.

QUESTION TYPE 2

If you had enough money to purchase and build any type of residence (house, apartment, cottage, etc.) you wanted or to open and operate your own business, which would you choose to do, and why? Use specific reasons & examples to support your choice.