

TOEFL SPEAKING 4 OVERVIEW

Like the last section, TOEFL Speaking section 3, section 4 is also what is called an integrated task, meaning that it is composed of three separate parts: first, reading; next, listening; and, finally, speaking. You will be given a short passage on an academic topic. You have 45 seconds to read this passage. You will then hear a lecture, somehow related to the reading, which typically is about 90 seconds long. Immediately following this, you will hear the question. You then have 30 seconds to prepare your response, and 60 seconds to respond. Remember to take notes!

Here is an example of a task from Speaking Section 4.

Read the passage about cryptozoology:

Although mainstream science has ignored it, there is much evidence to support the existence of the Loch Ness Monster and other lake monsters. Sightings of the Loch Ness Monster have been recorded since the sixth century, long before scientists began to deny the monster's existence. The fact that the sightings reach back so far into history, and continue to the present, is, for some, enough reason to believe in the monster. There have been photographs of, and sonar contact with, large animals in the loch. Now, it is true that there is a small amount of food in the loch, and perhaps not enough to feed a large population of monsters. But the existence of the Loch Ness Monster, or Nessie, remains a very real possibility.

Now have a friend or classmate read you this lecture given in a zoology class:

So, we've been discussing mainstream zoology for about a month now. Let's turn to a topic that some find more interesting, although very controversial, than, say, anatomy, physiology, species classification, or evolutionary biology. That topic is cryptozoology, and I'm not going to spend much time on it, because, candidly, it is usually considered pseudoscience, that is, a body of knowledge that claims to be scientific, but is not actually based on the scientific method or reliable evidence, or lacks plausibility. One well-known example of a pseudoscience is parapsychology: the study of ghosts, ESP, and other psychic phenomena.

Ok, I said cryptozoology is a pseudoscience, but why? Well, first, cryptozoology is the study of, and search for, unidentified or supposedly extinct animals. Some of the most famous of these are Bigfoot, the Yeti, and various "living" dinosaurs. But probably the most famous cryptid, which is the name for one of these animals, is the Loch Ness Monster. Despite many sightings and even some photographic evidence, I will explain why the Loch Ness Monster almost certainly does not exist.

To begin with, there is a problem regarding the most typical explanation – that the Loch Ness Monster is a living dinosaur: probably a plesiosaur. But, as science has proven, plesiosaurs could not lift their heads up out of the water. Yet many descriptions and at least one photograph of the animal portray an animal with a long, serpentine neck, like a swan. The osteology of the neck of the plesiosaur makes this impossible. A more likely explanation is that the sightings and photos are of misidentified animals, logs, or boat wakes. Secondly, if the cryptid is a plesiosaur or other dinosaur, or a seal, or a whale – other frequent explanations – these are all air-breathing species. Now, the Loch Ness Monster just isn't sighted that often, only a few times a year. Would that be possible if the creature were an air-breather? And, lastly, there is simply not enough food in the loch to sustain a group of large aquatic animals.

The professor argues that the Loch Ness Monster does not exist. Explain how the points brought up in the lecture relate to the reading.