

ESL Critical Reading/TOEFL

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Course objectives:

The primary aim of this course is to prepare you for the TOEFL exam by strengthening your academic and communication skills, and by giving you opportunities to practice various exam tasks. In class, special attention will be given to „critical reading skills“ and vocabulary work, and you will need to work on reading and writing assignments at home.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students will have

- become familiar with the special requirements of the TOEFL iBT exam
- gained practice in structuring and timing their spoken and written responses
- gained practice in argumentation and summarizing skills
- gained practice in coping with the various types of reading comprehension tasks
- significantly extended their vocabulary
- been able to objectively view their own performance

Students will be required to

- actively take part in the lessons
- complete their reading assignments
- complete and hand in their written assignments, in printed form or by email

Course material: READER

Course evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

Preparation, participation	20%
Writing assignments	20%
Midterm exam	30%
Final exam	30%

What students can expect from the course

Focus on/Practice in

- critical reading skills (understanding, analyzing, outlining and summarizing texts, establishing logical connections, etc.
- vocabulary
- logical thinking, argumentation
- planning and summary skills
- basics of short essay writing
- Learning about exam strategies, budgeting your time

Regular home assignments will be corrected and commented on

(Grammar issues will be touched upon according to need)

Please remember that attendance is mandatory. More than 3 unexcused absences will lead to grade reduction, more than 5 unexcused absences will result in failing the class. (Note that missing a double class counts as double absence)

About the TOEFL iBT exam

How is it different from other exams?

IN METHOD

It is an Internet based, computerized exam, without the presence of a traditional “examiner”. Written and oral responses are evaluated “long-distance”.

Timing is crucial – there is a strict time limit to every task.

IN “PHILOSOPHY”

The purpose of the test is to demonstrate the test taker’s ability to survive in an academic environment, through the active use of basic academic and academically focused communication skills

Rather than a conventional language exam, this test puts **special emphasis** on clear, logical and purposeful thinking, planning, making connections, argumentative and summary skills.

The build-up of the exam

The exam has 4 parts

Reading (60 minutes)– Multiple choice comprehension questions on 3 texts (about 1 printed page long each) , with topics chosen from popular science, social sciences or arts and literature. Some of the question types are unique to the test!

Listening (about 50 minutes) – Multiple choice comprehension questions about conversations and lectures related to academic life and studies

Speaking (about 50 minutes) – (responses get recorded to be evaluated later)

Independent Tasks – Questions about personal experiences and opinions on certain issues

Integrated Tasks – the test taker should summarize and make connections between information and views put forward in short written passages and lectures/conversations

Writing (about 60 minutes – pure writing time: 40 minutes)

Independent Task – 1 essay question about the test taker’s personal experiences and views on a certain topic

Integrated Task – Summarizing and making connections between information and views expressed in a written passage and a lecture/conversation, on a certain academic issue.