

TOEFL Speaking Success

- 3x sample tests
- classroom activities
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- question templates
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The Ultimate Guide to the TOEFL
Speaking Section for Students
and Teachers



Josh MacPherson

About the Author

Author of *TOEFL Speaking Success* and *The Vocabulary Ninja Handbook*, Josh MacPherson is a seasoned language professional with over a decade of experience teaching English language learners in New York, Korea and Japan. He holds a BA in Secondary Education and an MA in ESL Curriculum and Instruction.



He has served as English language instructor at ECC language schools in Japan, academic coordinator of the Intensive English Program at ASA College of Manhattan, and currently owns and operates two websites:

www.VocabularyNinja.com

www.TOEFLSpeakingTeacher.com

He also acts as an officer of the Osaka division of the Japanese Association for Language Teachers and teaches children English on the weekend. When Josh isn't teaching students or developing curriculum, he enjoys spending quality time with his wife Naomi and their children, Lea and Jin.

A Note From the Author

This book is meant to be a comprehensive guide for any student preparing for the TOEFL speaking section, or any teacher who is looking for a new approach to TOEFL speaking. What I love about the TOEFL exam —yes, shocking as it may be I do love the TOEFL— is that it's a test that proves you're fluent in the language. Many English language learners dream of fluency, and your TOEFL test score is the proof.

For the TOEFL speaking section in particular, if you score a 26 or higher, it means that you are fluent English speaker. That should motivate you to read through this book carefully and take my advice seriously.

Even though *TOEFL Speaking Success* is packed with all of the information you need to get a high score on the TOEFL speaking, it still may not be enough. Just like a professional athlete, you might require a coach, who knows how to bring out your strengths and work on your weaknesses, which is exactly what we do at the [TOEFL Speaking teacher website](#). You can find our additional services on the following page. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need additional help with the TOEFL speaking.

We, at TOEFL Speaking Teacher are devoted to help you achieve the TOEFL score you need so you can stop studying English, and start living it.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions: contact@toeflspeakingteacher.com

Stay hungry. - Josh

TST Products and Services Page



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Speaking Success Layout

I was originally inspired to write this book because of the lacklustre material currently available for TOEFL preparation. Most TOEFL books are very dense and difficult for a non-native English speaker to read. I wanted to create a book with plenty of color, fonts, pictures and space to make it easier for students to follow and understand. However, it may be a little confusing to read at first. As far as I know, no other book is designed quite this way. So let me explain a little about it:

SAMPLE PAGE

Sometimes you'll see images of my own handwriting, like this one. These images are usually included in the text when I talk about taking notes and note structure.

On some pages you'll find questions in a large, bold font like the one written around the bottom third of this particular page. These are questions I imagine my students asking after I introduce new information. Of course, I can't imagine every single possible question that may arise, but from experience I can make a good guess about what you, the student, may find confusing.

You'll find these little images scattered throughout the book. Some think it's childish, but I find it hard to concentrate when there are only words on a page. Images help break up the monotony and provide visual stimuli to accompany new knowledge.

THE READING SECTION:

The article will basically be a 100 word definition of the title and maybe a bit of further explanation. Write down as much as you can, but be sure to write these two things:

1. Copy Title
2. Find Definition

T:	
D:	
AN:	

T = Title

D = Definition

AN = Additional Notes

Is that all I have to write down for the reading passage?



Yes, that's all you have to do. Some books go into the different methods of note-taking depending on the style of the reading — maybe it's explaining a theory or describing a process — but they all follow a similar format, they simply introduce a new piece of information and describe it.

This is what your notes for the reading should look like. Remember, the reading passage goes away and you only get to hear the listening once, so take very, very good notes. At first, you want to copy the title, after that, find the definition. If there's time remaining, add some details you think might be important.

SAMPLE PAGE

The box at the top of the page is a TOEFL test question. Almost all of the integrated TOEFL questions will be presented in an off-white colored box, which is slightly indented.



Probably the most common color you'll see in the book is the light blue color found in the middle of this particular page. Sentences highlighted in blue are important pieces of information, so you should pay close attention to their content. They're usually written in a slightly larger font size as well.



The bright yellow boxes with bold borders are 'tip boxes'. In each box are bits and pieces of useful information that will help you prepare for the exam.



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Task #4 Lecture Script

Directions: Now listen to part of a lecture on the topic in a psychology class.

This happens all the time with kids, in schools. Say there's a little boy or girl who's just starting school. Well, they're not really used to the rules about proper behavior for a classroom, so at the beginning, they might, I don't know, interrupt the teacher, walk around the classroom when they're supposed to be sitting down. You know just misbehaving in general. OK, but what happens? Well, the teacher gets angry with them when they act this way. They might get punished—they have to sit at their desks when everyone else is allowed to go outside and play. And they certainly don't like that. Soon they'll learn that this kind of behavior gets them in trouble. They'll also learn that when they raise their hand to talk to the teacher, and sit quietly and pay attention during class ... they're rewarded. The teacher tells them she's proud of them, and maybe puts little happy-face stickers on their homework. Now that their behavior gets a good reaction from the teacher, the kids learn to always act this way in class ... and not behave the way they used to.

Question: Using the example from the lecture, explain what behavior modification is and how it works.

30 seconds



PREPARE

60 seconds



SPEAK

How did it go? How was it different from task #3?

Believe it or not, this is a fairly easy question. Usually on the TOEFL this question is more difficult, but let's talk about it together.

T i p

When I ask a question, like I just did above, actually answer it! Don't just keep reading. I became a better learner once I started to become actively involved in my learning. Don't let this information passively drift through you. Stop, think about the questions and the examples. Decide if you agree or disagree with me or try my ideas out on another TOEFL question. The biggest step in improving your TOEFL score is by improving the way you study. Get active!

SAMPLE PAGE

About halfway through every chapter of the book is a little quiz. One overarching theme of the book is to become active in the learning process. When you read a book, it's usually a passive experience: you sit and read and the words wash over you. However, it's hard to retain information when you don't test your knowledge. Use these quizzes to review what you learned and go back and reread pieces of information you didn't completely understand. Do not skip the quiz section. Take an active role in the learning process and test your knowledge. You'll retain much more information if you use the quizzes.

Also, at the end of every quiz I ask you to make predictions about future material. Your brain retains more information when you predict what's going to come next. Use this strategy to your advantage and actually guess what kind of information might come in the future.

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Quiz Time

We've talked a lot about the independent speaking section of the exam. Actually, let me rephrase that, I've talked a lot about the independent speaking portion of the exam. But you're the person who's going to have to take the exam, so it's much more important to figure out what you know and what you don't know. As you read this book, you should be actively participating in the material. Instead of underlining, circling and rereading, the information will sink into your head at a much deeper level if you constantly quiz yourself.

And don't look back for the answers! On the TOEFL all you have to rely on is your mind, so do the same here.

1. What's the difference between the two independent speaking tasks? How long do you have to prepare for each question? How long do you have to speak for each question?
2. How should you prepare your notes for each independent speaking task? What's the note structure?
3. What information should you include in your introduction? How long should your introduction be?
4. What are some transition words you've learned so far? Can you think of any other useful transition words?
5. What's the time structure for the two-example response? How long should it take to complete your introduction, first reason, first example, second reason, second example and conclusion?
6. Approximately how many words should be included in your response? Why is it important to connect your examples back to the topic?



The future...

Another way to be actively involved in the learning process is to predict the future. So, what do you think the rest of this chapter will be about? What do you think is the difference between a one and two-example response? What are some ways you can make your examples longer? How do you think the TOEFL graders judge your independent speaking responses?

Josh MacPherson®

SAMPLE PAGE

Self - Assessment		16
<p>At the end of each speaking task you'll find a self-assessment. The self-assessment questions change depending on the question type, therefore, for each task you should make multiple photo copies of the assessment. When you prepare for the TOEFL speaking, you <u>must</u> record yourself speaking. After you record yourself, listen back and fill out one of these self-assessment handouts. The questions are designed to help you target your weaknesses so you can work on improving specific areas of your English speaking. This is very similar to the criteria the TOEFL graders use to judge your speaking performance. Be honest with yourself and use the information to make a plan for improvement.</p>		
<p>Directions: After you finish each practice task ask yourself the questions listed below. Be honest with yourself and identify your weaknesses. After that, look through the Independent Speaking Appendix for helpful strategies and exercises that'll assist in targeting those weaknesses.</p>		
Questions	Your Answers (explain and score yourself on a scale from 1-10)	
1. Did I understand the question completely?		
2. Before I began speaking, did I formulate my own opinion?		
3. In my notes, did I write down two reasons for my opinion and at least one example?		
4. Did my first speaking sentence include a rephrasing of the question, my opinion and my first reason?		
5. Did I finish my introduction within 10-15 seconds?		
6. Did I give at least one personal example?		
7. Did I speak with emotion that matched the content? Did I finish the question on time?		
8. Did I speak without too many pauses, vocal fillers or repetitions?		
9. Did I follow the structure and speak in a clear and concise manner?		
10. What's something I did well?		
11. What's something I didn't do well?		
12. Think of a plan. How can I improve?		

TOEFL Independent Speaking Section



Independent Speaking Tasks

Introduction

When you get to the speaking section of the TOEFL, you will have just finished your 10-minute-break. That's the first and last break of the exam. You've been taking the test for about an hour and a half at this point. The reading and listening sections are over. You return to your computer and your first two tasks are the independent speaking tasks.

Speaking Tasks #1 and #2

Topic: The first independent speaking task question is a free-choice question. In other words, you have to choose one of many possible choices. In speaking task #2, there are only two choices and you have to pick one. There's no use trying to prepare for the subject because the question could be about anything.

Structure:

1st - The directions and the question will be read.

2nd - You have 15 seconds to prepare your response.

3rd - You have 45 seconds to speak.

Let's just jump right in with an example and see how you do.

T i p

This tip is the most important: always record yourself when you speak. It's hard to judge how well you speak without listening to it from a recording device. It's strange to hear the sound of your own voice at first, but you have to get used to it. Assessing a recording of your own voice is much, much more effective than assessing your speaking through memory.

1. What's the best way to learn a foreign language?

15 seconds

SPEAK

45 seconds...

STOP

2. Would you prefer to live in the countryside or in the city?

15 seconds

SPEAK

45 seconds...

STOP

How did it go? Was there any difference between the way you answered the first and second question?

These questions are fairly easy. On the TOEFL they'll be a bit more complicated, but let's talk about it together.

If you're like most people, you probably gave a simple answer to each question. For number one, you might have said, "I think the best way to learn a foreign language is to live in a place where they speak the language... finished." That takes about 5 seconds to say.

Or...

For the second question you might have said, "I prefer to live in the city... finished." That takes just 2 seconds to say. So how can you expand upon these questions and stretch them out for 45 seconds? Think about it. Before you move on, try these questions again and figure out a way to stretch out your response to 45 seconds. What will you do? How will you expand your answers on the TOEFL?

Tip

During the break, find someone to talk to or talk to yourself. Exercise your voice. You've been quietly sitting and taking the TOEFL for at least an hour and a half. Get ready to talk!

THE QUESTIONS:

Some TOEFL teachers put a great amount of emphasis on the difference between speaking task #1 and speaking task #2. For me, the way you answer each question is exactly the same, so there's no use in worrying about the question style. Just be aware that speaking task #1 will provide you with many options to choose from while speaking task #2 will only give you two choices. Besides that, the questions could be about anything. The only common characteristic of all the independent speaking section questions is that they all ask for your opinion. Most of the questions fit under one of the following five categories:

Qualities/Characteristics

What are some important qualities of a good supervisor (teacher/neighbor/roommate/friend)? Use specific details and examples to explain why these qualities are important.

Compare/Contrast

When people move to another country, some of them decide to follow the customs of the new country. Others prefer to keep their own customs. Compare these two choices. Which one do you prefer? Support your answer with supporting details.

Agree/Disagree

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Telephones and email have made communication between people less personal. Use specific examples to support your opinion.

Advantages/Disadvantages

The city council of your hometown has decided to add a new tax on plastics to reduce pollution. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this and whether you believe it's a good decision.

General Opinion

What do you consider to be the most important room in the house where you grew up? Why was this room more important to you than any other room? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Tip

Don't try to anticipate the question. Once you learn how to answer the speaking question, you won't need to worry about what the question might be. You'll be prepared for any type of question!

PREPARING YOUR NOTES:

So the question remains:

How can I extend my independent speaking responses so they take up more time?

Remember, every independent speaking question is an opinion question. When you have an opinion about something, you have to explain why you have your opinion; you have to have reasons for your opinion. So the first step is to state your opinion and two reasons for your opinion. Let's try the following question:

What do you consider to be the most important room in the house where you grew up? Why was this room more important than any other room? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Opinion?

Reason 1?

Reason 2?

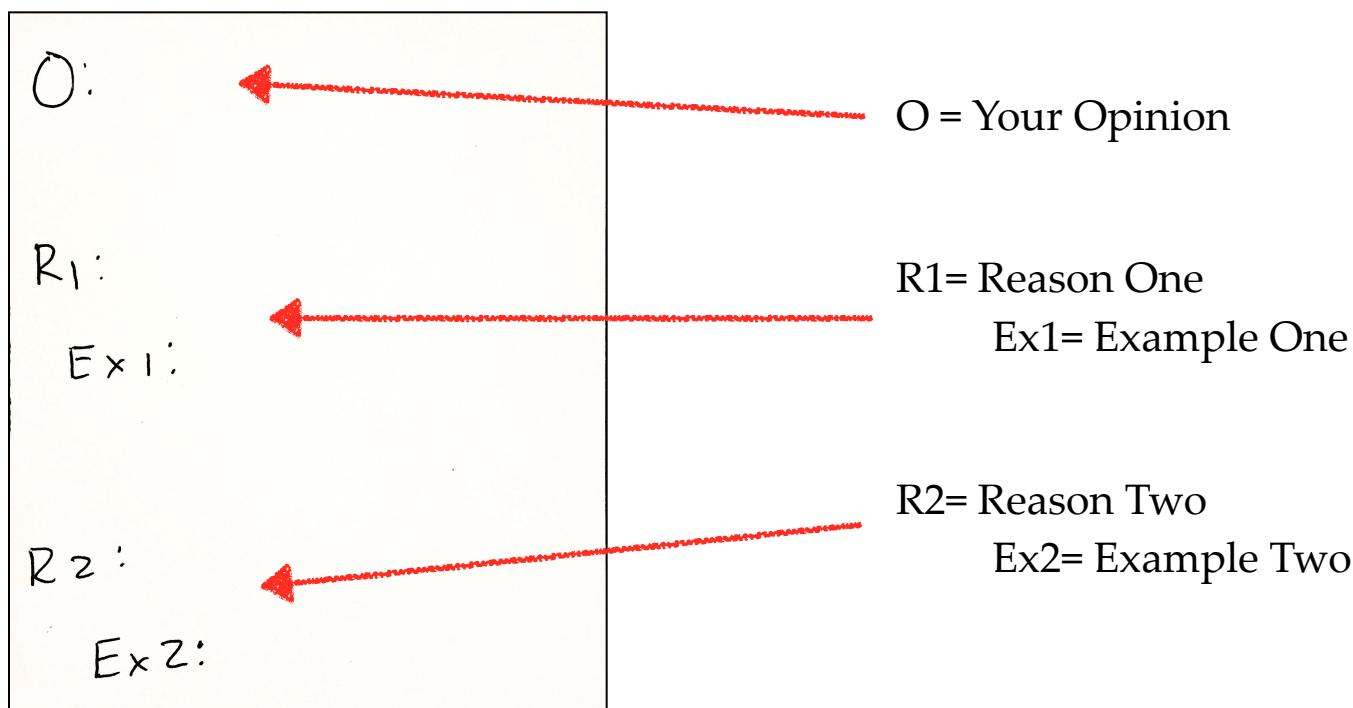
If you added reasons to your opinion, you've probably extended your response from 5 seconds to about 15 seconds. That still leaves approximately 30 seconds of time you need to fill. The best way to support your opinion, and your reasons for your opinion, is through personal examples. Can you think of any for this particular question?

Example 1?

Example 2?

Once you've thought of your opinion, your two supporting reasons and two personal examples, you'll have more than enough content to fill up 45 seconds.

Before every single task you should have a note structure memorized and written out on the scrap paper provided by the proctor of the TOEFL exam area. For independent speaking tasks #1 and #2, you should have your notes look exactly like this:



Do I have to take notes before I speak?

Yes, you have to write notes. I know that 15 seconds isn't a lot of time, but you still have to get into the habit of writing out your notes before you speak. This is probably the hardest task to take notes for because you have such little time to prepare. However, your notes are a crucial aspect of your score. They will be an indispensable tool for you to use as you speak. On the following page is a copy of my own notes, written out in 15 seconds, to the same question:

What do you consider to be the most important room in the house where you grew up? Why was this room more important than any other room? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

T i p

If you understand the question, don't wait until the audio finishes reading before taking notes. You can start preparing your response before they finish reading. This will give you a couple of extra seconds to prepare.

After 15 seconds, this is what my notes looked like:

O: live rm

R1: sofa

Ex1: bro/seat

R2: TV

Ex2: p-Rangers

-After they read the question, they usually say "use specific reasons and..." I almost always start to write while they read this part of the question.

-For my opinion, I wrote, "live rm," but you don't have to write anything in the opinion part. Your reasons and examples will clue you into your opinion. If you want to conserve time, you might try to skip writing down your opinion and just fill in the reasons and examples.

-You probably don't understand what my notes mean, but I know what they mean, and that's what matters.

-I only wrote 7 words and they're all either nouns or verbs. They're key words that will help guide me as I speak.

It takes practice and patience to get used to the time and the structure. Make sure when you practice, you write out the note structure (O, R1, Ex1, R2, Ex2) exactly the same every time. Most of my students do it once or twice and then get lazy and just write without the structure. When you have the structure written out, you naturally organize both your notes and your thoughts. Be sure to practice on your own. Take a look at the *Question List* handout located in the Independent Speaking Appendix. Have a friend read a question aloud and time yourself: 15 seconds to prepare and 45 seconds to speak. If you can't prepare something in 15 seconds, give yourself 30 seconds or even a minute to prepare. Take your time and be patient. When you first start to practice, your comfort is most important. As you continue in your studies, slowly reduce the amount of time you take to prepare until you can do it the same way you'll encounter it on the TOEFL.



Time management is crucial.

PREPARING YOUR INTRODUCTION:

Since there's no way to anticipate the question, we should focus on structure.

How do you think we should begin our response?

The question again:

What do you consider to be the most important room in the house where you grew up? Why was this room more important than any other room? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Now, we want to have a transition word that we're going to use to start every single response we practice before taking the exam.

Why?

You should try to use the same transition word every time because you don't have a lot of time to think after you're asked a question. You only have 15 seconds. If you know how you're going to start, you don't have to worry about it. The phrase I think works best is:

"To me..."

You can say other things like, "**In my opinion...**", "**If I were asked...**", "**I think...**" "**I believe...**" and so on. However, beginning with "**To me...**" or "**For me...**" sounds the most natural. If you begin your response with:

"In my opinion, the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up for a couple of reasons."

That sounds a lot like a script someone memorized and it doesn't sound very natural. You want to find a balance between natural and academic. You want to sound comfortable, natural and professional. You want to sound like you're fluent in English; that's what this test is all about. Here's my sentence:

"To me, the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up because it had a big, comfortable sofa."

Doesn't that sound more natural?

Your first sentence is very important. We need to spend time thinking about it. If you noticed, I did three things in my first sentence:

1. I restated the question.
2. I gave my opinion.
3. I provided one reason for my opinion.

"To me, the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up because it had a big, comfortable sofa."

In one little sentence I did three different things. I restated the question, gave my opinion and gave a specific reason. Also, you might have noticed that I didn't say "for a couple of reasons" and instead described one specific reason immediately. If you look at my notes, I wrote down two reasons, but in your introduction sentence you should end it with one specific reason only. I'll explain why a little later.

Let's look at one more example:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Telephones and email have made communication between people less personal. Use specific examples to support your opinion.

"For me, I agree that telephones and email have made communication less personal because you no longer have to look someone in the eye when you talk with them."

T i p

Your introduction should last about 12 seconds.

When you begin your speaking in this manner you sound confident and concise. You shouldn't spend too long on your introduction. You only have 45 seconds to speak and in that time you have to explain your reasons and examples to help illustrate your opinion. The sooner you get into your reasons and examples, the more you'll be able to explain and the higher your score will be.

Do I have to start with "To me..." or "For me..." every single time?

Yes, you should start with the same transition word every single time. It may sound repetitive and you may feel like it isn't creative, but you have plenty of room for creativity in the rest of your response. Do yourself a favor and give yourself one less thing to think about, start the same way every time. It'll help you organize the rest of your response.

If you need more help practicing your introduction, refer to the *Introduction Practice* handout located in the Independent Speaking Appendix.

PREPARING YOUR RESPONSE:

Now that you know how to begin your response, you can start to think about how to organize the rest of it. Let me remind you of our introduction sentence again:

"To me, the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up because it had a big, comfortable sofa."

I've all ready stated my first reason for my opinion in the introduction sentence. Now that I've stated my opinion and first reason, the next part of my response is the first example.

How should I introduce a personal example? What transition word or phrase can I use to start?

My Intro and First Example

"To me, the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up because it had a big, comfortable sofa."

"I remember growing up with two brothers and we always fought, but not about the sofa. The sofa was big enough for all of us to sit and share it together. We even had our own designated place. So the living room was one of the few places where we didn't fight."

-The first sentence we went over all ready. By the time I finish saying it there should be about 35 seconds left.

-When I give the example, I usually always begin with the transitional phrase "I remember when..."

-Notice how my last sentence connects the example back to the topic.

-This is 76 words. This should take me about 25 seconds to say, which leaves me 20 seconds to discuss my other reason and example.

Two-Example Response Time Structure:

Content	Key Phrases	Time (45 seconds)
1. Rephrase the question, state your opinion and provide a reason	To me...	45-35 seconds
3. Discuss example 1	I remember when...	34-22 seconds
4. State reason 2	Also...	21-17 seconds
5. Discuss example 2	For instance...	16-4 seconds
6. Conclusion	That's why...	4-0 seconds

Here's my entire response:

To me, the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up because it had a big, comfortable sofa.

I remember growing up with two brothers and we always fought, but not about the sofa. The sofa was big enough for all of us to sit and share it together. We even had our own designated place. So the living room was one of the few places where we didn't fight.

Also, the only TV in the house was in the living room. Everyday, after school, my brothers and I would sit on the sofa and watch Power Rangers together. It was so much fun!

That's why the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up."

Other teachers say that a conclusion isn't necessary, but I disagree. Thoughts sound strange when they're not completed. Be sure to leave yourself enough time to state a conclusion.

This example is 127 words, which is a perfect length. You should get used to saying approximately 125 words in 45 seconds. Practice reading this example out loud and record yourself. Can you say everything in 45 seconds? Are you pausing, stuttering or repeating yourself? If you are, then you need to practice speaking. Look in the Independent Speaking Appendix for the Independent Speaking F.A.Q handout. Towards the end of that handout is a homework assignment which will help improve your speaking speed.

And one more important thing...

Always connect your example back to the topic.

Let me show you how I connect my examples back to the topic in my own response:

My Body Paragraphs

"I remember growing up with two brothers and we always fought, but not about the sofa. The sofa was big enough for all of us to sit and share it together. We even had our own designated place. **So the living room was one of the few places where we didn't fight.**"

"Also, the only TV in the house was in the living room. Everyday, after school, my brothers and I would sit on the sofa and watch Power Rangers together. **It was so much fun!**"

-After I explain my example in further detail I conclude by reminding the listener why I brought up this particular example in the first place. It's important to conclude an example before moving on to another one.

-This second example doesn't seem like much of a conclusion sentence, but it does add some closure to my example. In this situation, my example was short, so I didn't think I needed a proper conclusion sentence because my conclusion to the entire speaking will come up next and that will connect everything back to the topic.

Quiz Time

We've talked a lot about the independent speaking section of the exam. Actually, let me rephrase that, I've talked a lot about the independent speaking portion of the exam. But you're the person who's going to have to take the exam, so it's much more important to figure out what you know and what you don't know. As you read this book, you should be actively participating in the material. Instead of underlining, circling and rereading, the information will sink into your head at a much deeper level if you constantly quiz yourself.

And don't look back for the answers! On the TOEFL all you have to rely on is your mind, so do the same here.

1. What's the difference between the two independent speaking tasks? How long do you have to prepare for each question? How long do you have to speak for each question?

2. How should you prepare your notes for each independent speaking task? What's the note structure?

3. What information should you include in your introduction? How long should your introduction be?

4. What are some transition words you've learned so far? Can you think of any other useful transition words?

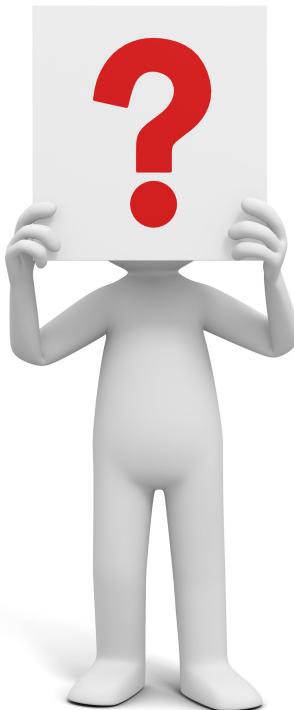
5. What's the time structure for the two-example response? How long should it take to complete your introduction, first reason, first example, second reason, second example and conclusion?

6. Approximately how many words should be included in your response? Why is it important to connect your examples back to the topic?

The future...

Another way to be actively involved in the learning process is to predict the future. So, what do you think the rest of this chapter will be about? What do you think is the difference between a one and two-example response? What are some ways you can make your examples longer? How do you think the TOEFL graders judge your independent speaking responses?

Should I have one reason or two reasons to back up my opinion? How about an example; do I need one or two?



The structure I provide is to help you organize your thoughts and prepare for the exam, but there's more than one way to show fluency in the independent speaking. I just showed you how to do it with two reasons and two examples. However, I think the best way is to have one reason and one example that illustrates your reason. **But this is very difficult.** You should only try to answer with only one-reason and one-example after you've mastered the two-reason and two-example response. Let me show you the difference between these two types of responses. Remember, the question is:

What do you consider to be the most important room in the house where you grew up? Why was this room more important than any other room? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

To me, the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up because it had a big, comfortable sofa.

I remember growing up in our house on Long Island. I had two brothers and we each had our own room. We were all very protective of our space. I wouldn't let my brothers into my room and they wouldn't let me into theirs. However, the one thing we didn't argue about was the sofa. We each had our own designated spot. Greg would sit on the left, Chris in the middle and me on the right. The living room was the only room in the house that brought us together.

That's why the living room was the most important room in the house where I grew up.”

This example is 132 words, but the example is much more detailed. It's hard to get used to speaking in this kind of detail. When you start, you'll most likely practice using two reasons and one or two examples; and that's fine. Eventually, you want to try to speak with one reason and one example in order to get a top score in the speaking section. But you can still earn a great score with a two-example response. When thinking about how to respond, focus on what makes you feel most comfortable.

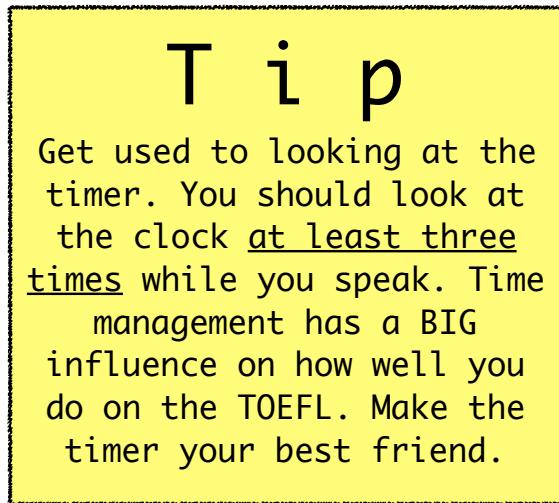
When you're comfortable, you're confident, so stick to what makes you more comfortable at first.

Why is one example better than two?

Good question. Let's compare the body paragraphs of each exercise:

Two-Example Body - EASIER -	One-Example Body - MORE DIFFICULT -
<p>I remember growing up with two brothers and we always fought, but not about the sofa. The sofa was big enough for all of us to sit and share it together. We even had our own designated place. So the living room was one of the few places where we didn't fight.</p> <p>Also, the only TV in the house was in the living room. Everyday, after school, my brothers and I would sit on the sofa and watch Power Rangers together. It was so much fun!</p>	<p>I remember growing up in our house on Long Island. I had two brothers and we each had our own room. We were all very protective of our space. I wouldn't let my brothers into my room and they wouldn't let me into theirs. However, the one thing we didn't argue about was the sofa. We each had our own designated spot. Greg would sit on the left, Chris in the middle and me on the right. The living room was the only room in the house that brought us together.</p>

Take a minute and think about it. What are the differences between the two? Why do you think the one-example essay is better? Write down your ideas.



T i p

Plan on giving a one-example response, but prepare for a two-example response. If you still have time after you state your first reason and example, you want to make sure you have enough content to fill 45 seconds. Your second reason and example is like a spare tire, it's there if you need it, but it's better if you don't.

The one-example response is better for the independent speaking because:

1. When you tell a personal example you tell a story. Every good story should have a beginning, middle and end. It's hard to tell two well-developed stories in less than 45 seconds.
2. If you have just one example you can add more details, which will make your story more interesting.
3. You don't have to rush through the speaking part if you just give one reason and one personal example. It's easier to give a clear and natural introduction which will lead you into a personal example with a beginning, middle and end.

One-Example Response Time Structure:

Content	Key Phrases	Time (45 seconds)
1. Rephrase the question, state your opinion and provide a reason	To me...	45-36 seconds
3. Discuss example 1	I remember when...	36-4 seconds
6. Conclusion	That's why...	4-0 seconds

WARNING: make sure your story doesn't go off topic. It's very important to bring it back to the question and show how it's related, which is what I usually do in the conclusion.

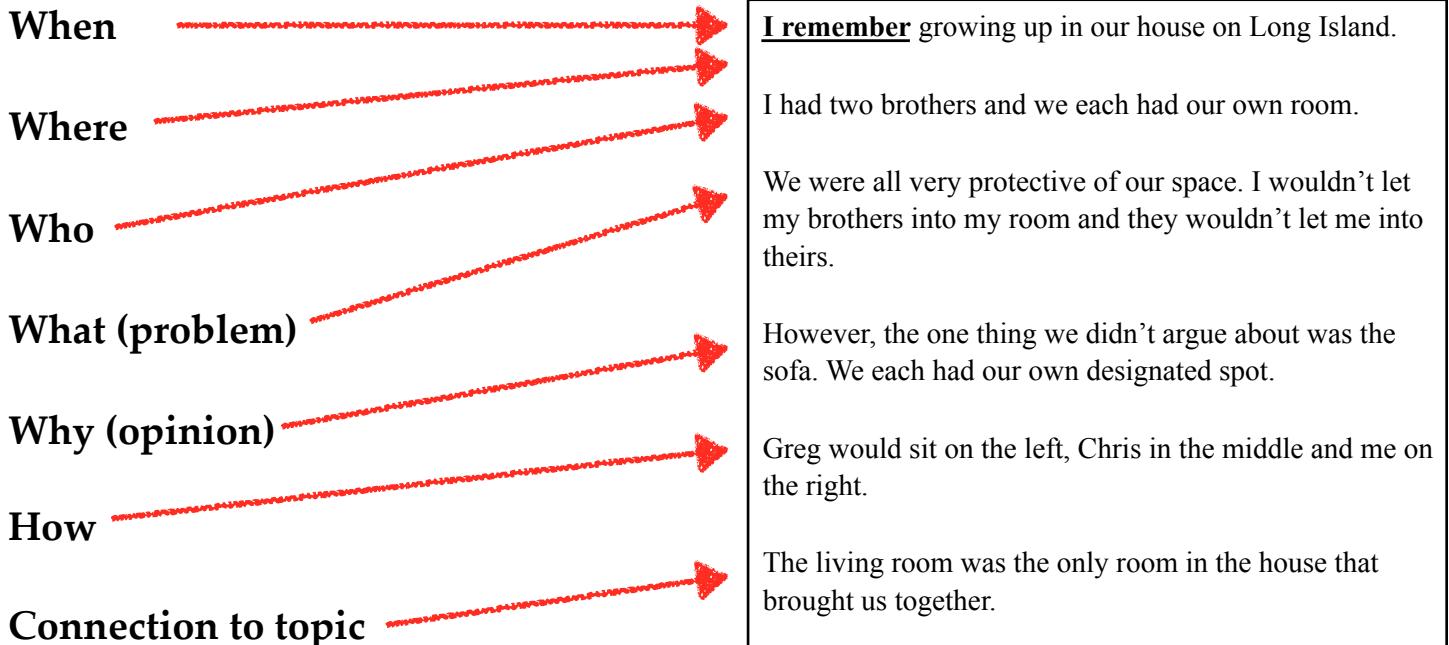
How can I make my examples better and longer?

Let me just say this one more time, your comfort is most important. You can get a score as high as 25 with a speaking response that has two reasons and two examples. However, if you want to get the highest score possible, you should try to have a response that includes just one reason and one example. Over time, if you feel confident with the two-example response, practice doing the one-example response at home.

So to answer the question, you can make your personal examples both better and longer by thinking of more details to add. If you're not sure how to add details, consider the following questions:

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

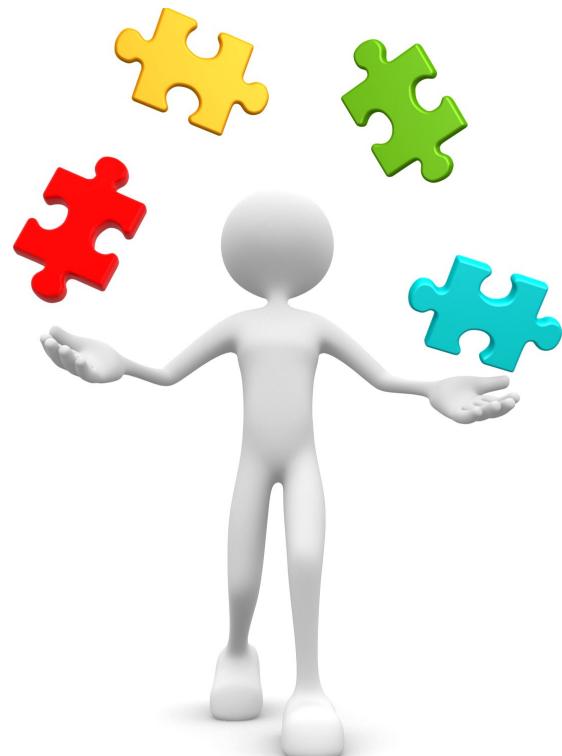
Here's my response to the question again:



Make sure you finish your response somewhere between the 40-45 second mark.

My example is a very clear story with a beginning, middle and end. I address all of the questions and at the end I show how this story is connected to the topic.

Of course, when you're telling a story, don't try to answer each question independently (*who, what, when, where, why* and *how*). Just tell a story with a lot of details and you'll organically answer those questions. You should keep these questions in mind if you feel like all of your examples are too short or uninteresting. If you still need help developing personal examples, you can refer to the *Expansion Practice* handout and the *Example Sheet* handout, which is located in the Independent Speaking Appendix. Both those handouts will provide you with plenty of practice to help you prepare for the actual exam.



FINAL WORDS:

In this chapter we've discussed the independent speaking section of the TOEFL exam. We've reviewed various strategies, techniques and tips that'll help you succeed when you finally take the test. Here's a review of some key points:

1. GIVE PERSONAL EXAMPLES: You should give one or two personal examples to back up your opinion. In American culture you can't just have an opinion without explaining it, you have to have a good reason to back up your opinion. Also, your reason sounds much stronger if you have a personal example.

In regards to the example, I recommend that it's something truthful because you know more about the truth and can add more details to your story. However, if you need to lie that's fine, and the TOEFL grader won't ever find out.

2. ADD DETAILS: Remember to answer as many *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how* questions as possible. But the most important question of the bunch is:

Why

You need to have a reason for your opinion. Every time you answer a question and give your opinion, imagine an obnoxious child standing next to you asking: *Why? Why? Why?*

3. SHOW EMOTIONAL CONNECTION: I haven't mentioned this yet, but make sure you speak like you mean what you say. Don't talk like a robot. Don't give a scripted answer. Understand what you're saying and have an emotional connection with it. You'll sound much more natural that way.

4. TIME MANAGEMENT: Use the timer, use the timer, use the timer. This piece of advice is so important that I can't say it enough. Be sure to look at the clock at least three times during your response. The timer will help guide your speaking, so use it to your advantage. Go back to find the two-example and one-example time management structure and be sure to closely follow it.

5. CONNECT BACK TO TOPIC: I know I've said it a lot, but I'll say it again, use your last sentence to remind the listener of the connection between the story and the topic. This sentence is the most crucial part of both your independent speaking and writing tasks.

6. SPEAK FROM THE HEART: One thing I like to tell my students is that your heart knows more than your memory. The TOEFL graders call this *automaticity*. Basically, it means that you answer in a natural and automatic way, without thinking. I'm teaching you a very detailed structure for you to practice and memorize. However, after you study and practice, when you finally sit down to take the test, you should be so good at answering the speaking questions that your answers come out naturally, with very little thought. That's what I mean when I say speak from the heart.

Are you ready to practice? Go to the Independent Speaking Appendix and find the *List of Independent Speaking and Writing Tasks* handout. There are over 150 different tasks for you to practice.

Self - Assessment

Directions: After you finish each practice task ask yourself the questions listed below. Be honest with yourself and identify your weaknesses. After that, look through the Independent Speaking Appendix for helpful strategies and exercises that'll assist in targeting those weaknesses.

Questions	Your Answers (explain and score yourself on a scale from 1-10)
1. Did I understand the question completely?	
2. Before I began speaking, did I formulate my own opinion?	
3. In my notes, did I write down two reasons for my opinion and at least one example?	
4. Did my first speaking sentence include a rephrasing of the question, my opinion and my first reason?	
5. Did I finish my introduction within 10-15 seconds?	
6. Did I give at least one personal example?	
7. Did I speak with emotion that matched the content? Did I finish the question on time?	
8. Did I speak without too many pauses, vocal fillers or repetitions?	
9. Did I follow the structure and speak in a clear and concise manner?	
10. What's something I did well?	
11. What's something I didn't do well?	
12. Think of a plan. How can I improve?	

Grading Rubric

The highest grade you can get on each speaking exercise is a 4 and the highest grade you can earn on the speaking section is a 30. How do the graders get a score of 30? Basically, $6 \times 4 = 24$ and then they multiply your score by 1.25 to come up with a final score out of 30. Below, you'll find a chart of how your independent speaking performance is scored. This is a description of the criteria needed to get a perfect score. On the right hand side I've reworded the ETS' language to make it easier to understand.

Criteria	According to the ETS website: https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/ toeflSpeakingRubrics.pdf	My Simplified Translation
1. General Description	<p>"The response fulfills the demands of the task, with at most minor lapses in completeness. It's highly intelligible and exhibits sustained, coherent discourse. A response at this level is characterized by all of the following:"</p>	<p>You answered the question in a logical and coherent way. You never went off topic and you were easy for the listener to follow.</p>
2. Delivery	<p>"Generally well-paced flow (fluid expression) Speech is clear. It may include minor difficulties with pronunciation or intonation patterns, which do not affect overall intelligibility."</p>	<p>You spoke in a calm, cool and natural manner. The listener could understand almost everything you said.</p>
3. Language Use	<p>"The response demonstrates effective use of grammar and vocabulary. It exhibits a fairly high degree of automaticity with good control of basic and complex structures (as appropriate). Some minor (or systematic) errors are noticeable but do not obscure meaning."</p>	<p>You were able to speak in a natural way while also varying your sentence structure. You didn't sound nervous and you didn't rely on simple vocabulary.</p>
4. Topic Development	<p>"Response is sustained and sufficient to the task. It is generally well developed and coherent; relationships between ideas are clear (or clear progression of ideas)."</p>	<p>You followed a structure and showed how one idea led to another. You used at least three transition words as well.</p>