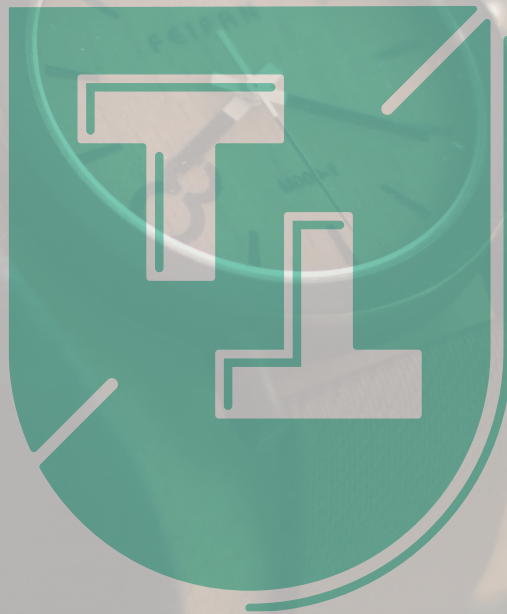




Your Guide to Time Management for the TOEFL® Reading Section



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**Updated for the new TOEFL Format*



Introduction to Time Management for the TOEFL® Reading Section

One of the hardest parts of the TOEFL reading is time management. Not anymore. This unique system, developed by Josh MacPherson and exclusively available at [TST Prep](#), will provide you with a detailed system for answering every single question in the TOEFL Reading within 36 minutes. There are four rules to follow, and we will go over each one in detail.

After you go through this handout, be sure to visit the [TST Prep website and download a free and complete practice test](#) so you can try this time management system on your own.

Before we start, one important part of the TOEFL Reading to note is that you do not have to start reading the passage first. You can start answering the questions immediately. Usually, on test day, you will not have enough time to leisurely read the passage and then answer the questions.

Rule #1: Take Notes and Circle

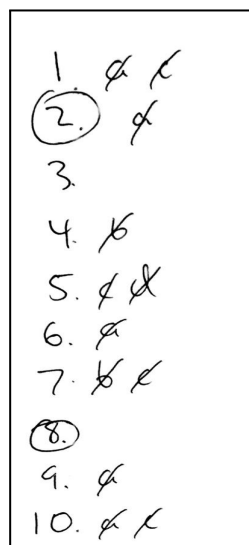


Figure 1.1

On test day, the only tools at your disposal -- besides your brain -- are a pencil and a few pieces of paper. You will use this paper to take notes. Most students do not use this paper for the reading section, but you will.

Notetaking is a skill few take advantage of. Many students struggle to listen and take notes at the same time. Luckily, there are very few notes that you need to take for the TOEFL Reading. It is not necessary to write about the content of the reading passage. You will only jot down information about the questions and answer choices. You can see a copy of the type of notes I expect you to write on the left-hand side (Figure 1.1).

Here is how you do it.

Before you start to read a passage, write down the numbers one to ten. As of August 1st, 2019, each TOEFL Reading passage is followed by ten questions. Next, answer the questions. While answering the questions, eliminate choices you believe are incorrect. After you eliminate a choice, you can cross it out next to the question number in your notes. This is an easy way to narrow your focus on the remaining choices. For example, in question one, I eliminated *a* and *c*, so I crossed them out on my scrap paper. You do not have to do this for every question. You can see that for question three I haven't eliminated anything, and that is because the question was easy. Feel free to do the same on questions you find easy.



The most important component of this notetaking system, however, is the question numbers that I have circled, numbers two and eight in *Figure 1.1*. On test day, circle the questions you would like to go back and think more about. When you are answering the reading questions, you will encounter situations where you are not certain whether your answer is correct or not, but you are taking too much time, and you must move on. Answer the question, circle the number in your notes, and go to the next question. **Do NOT skip the question.** Skipping questions puts pressure on you to allocate enough time, in the end, to go back and answer it. Answer the question and circle it in your notes so you can pinpoint the exact questions you need to reconsider after you have finished answering everything.

Rule #2: Watch the Clock

When you work through the TOEFL Reading section, you will notice that some questions take longer than others. For example, vocabulary questions are rather simple and straightforward, so they should take you no more than 60 seconds to complete. Negative detail questions, on the other hand, could take up to 120 seconds to answer. Below is a breakdown of **the maximum amount of time** you can spend on a given question based on its type.

- *Vocabulary* - 60 seconds
- *Factual Information* - 90 seconds
- *Negative Factual Information* - 120 seconds
- *Sentence Simplification* - 120 seconds
- *Insert Text* - 90 seconds
- *Inference* - 90 seconds
- *Rhetorical Purpose* - 90 seconds
- *Reference* - 60 seconds
- *Summary* - 150 seconds
- *Fill In a Table* - 150 seconds

Even though this time breakdown is good to keep in mind, you do NOT have to look at the clock and count down the seconds for each question. That will only waste time and distract you from focusing on the content of the question. Instead, think of the time in terms of 18-minute chunks. You will have 2 passages, 20 questions, and 36 minutes to answer. You want to complete all the questions for one passage in 18 minutes. So, for example, if you see at the 18-minute mark and you are still on question 8 in the first passage, then you have to start answering the questions a bit quicker.

Here's a chart of where you should be in five-minute intervals (*Figure 1.2*). Try to leave yourself at least three minutes at the end of the reading to go back to the questions you circled (rule #1) and check your answers. Also, remember that this table ends at 35 minutes, but you have 36 minutes to complete a standard TOEFL Reading section.



TOEFL Reading Section Time Breakdown (20 questions)	
5 minutes	3 questions
10 minutes	6 questions
15 minutes	9 questions
20 minutes	12 questions
25 minutes	14 questions
30 minutes	17 questions
35 minutes	20 questions

Figure 1.2

If you are ever unsure of your progress in the reading section, note that on the top middle of the screen will be the question number followed by the total amount. See the image below (Figure 1.3)

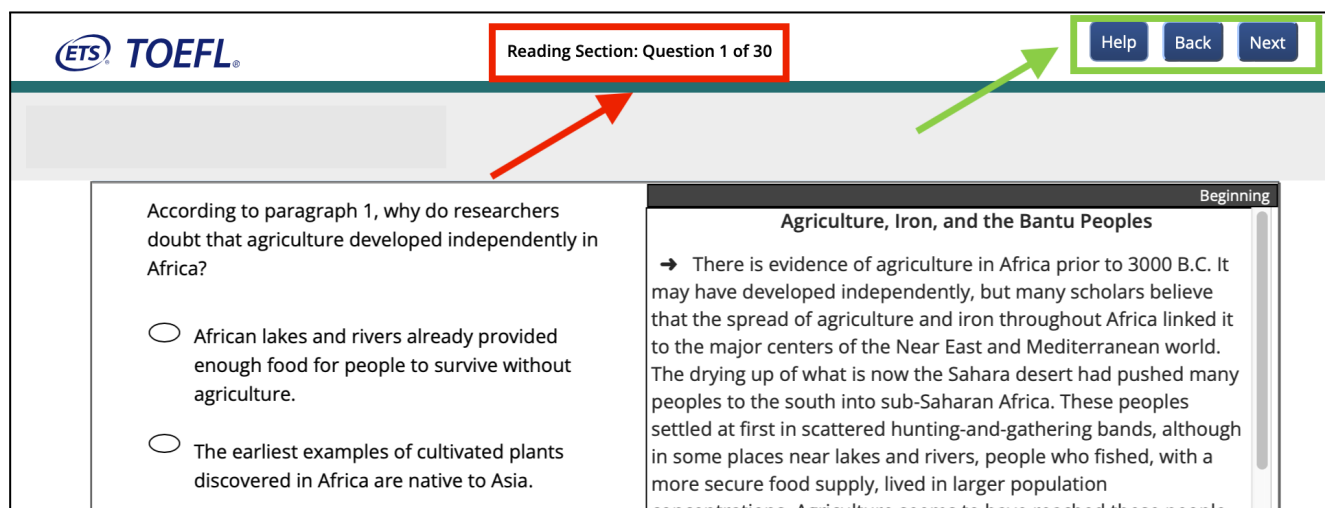


Figure 1.3



Rule #3: Never Skip a Question

This was touched upon in rule #1, but it is so important that I have made it a rule of its own.

Never skip a question.

Our brains like stories. Stories have a beginning, middle, and end. The questions in the TOEFL Reading section go in sequential order, just like a story. When you skip a question, you interrupt the story. It makes the questions that come after the one you skip more difficult to answer. So, instead of skipping questions, you *guesstimate*.

Yes, *guesstimate* is a real word. Basically, you have an idea of what the answer might be, but you are not 100% certain. A guess is a blind chance, a guesstimation is made after some thought. After you guesstimate, circle the question in your notes (like questions two and eight in *Figure 1.1*). Allocate a few minutes at the end of the reading section to go back and check over your answers one more time.

Rule #4: Review Your Answers

In the top right corner of the test, you will see four buttons. The only one you need for most of the test is *NEXT*. However, you can also press *the REVIEW* button to see the questions you have answered.

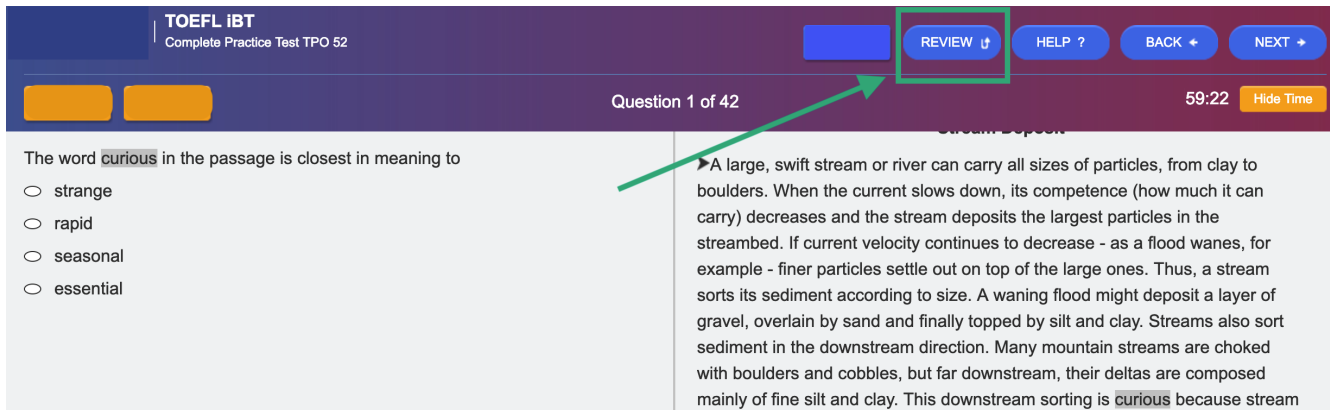


Figure 1.4

Once you press the *REVIEW* button, you will see a screen that looks similar to *Figure 1.5*.



TOEFL iBT
 Complete Practice Test TPO 52

[RETURN](#)
[GO TO QUESTION](#)

33:59
Hide Time

Below is the list of questions in this screen. The question you were looking at last is highlighted when you enter Review. The status column shows if a question has been answered, not answered, or not seen. When a question is worth more than one point, the Status column will indicate that the question has been answered, even if it is only partially answered.

To review a specific question from the list, click on the question to highlight it, then click on Go to Question at the top of the screen. When there are more questions than will fit on the screen, you can use the scroll bar to view the others.

To leave Review and return to where you were in the test, click on **Return**.

- Check to make sure you have answered all questions.
 - Jump to any question.

Number	Description	Status
1	The word curious in the passage is closest in meaning to	Answered
2	According to paragraph 1, the competence of a stream increases as	Answered
3	According to paragraph 1 all of the following are true of stream sorting EXCEPT	Answered
4	The word accumulate in the passage is closest in meaning to	Answered
5	According to paragraph 2, which of the following is true about bars in streams?	Answered
6	Why does the author ask the reader to "Imagine a winding stream" ?	Answered
7	According to paragraph 3, all of the following are true of braided streams EXCEPT	Answered
8	Why does the author include the information that "Glaciers grind bedrock into fine sediment, which is carried by streams flowing from the melting ice" ?	Answered
9	The word simultaneously in the passage is closest in meaning to	Answered
10	The word abruptly in the passage is closest in meaning to	Not Answered
11	According to paragraph 4, what is true about river deltas ?	Not Seen
12	According to paragraph 4, what are engineers trying to accomplish in the Mississippi delta?	Not Seen

Figure 1.5

On the *REVIEW* button page, you will find all of the questions listed. If you did skip a question, it will be mentioned on this screen. In the last few minutes, go back to the questions circled on your scrap paper and double-check your answers. Since you took notes and circled questions you wanted to review, it will be easy to jump around to specific questions from the review page.

In Conclusion:

Now you know exactly what you need to do to organize your thoughts and conserve your time in the TOEFL Reading section. Here are the bullet points:

- *Use your scrap paper to take notes*
- *Circle questions you need to review*
- *Answer 10 questions in less than 18 minutes*
- *Leave a few minutes in the end to review*
- *Guesstimate and review later*

