Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Colin Lowther. And I’m Katy Blake. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. Ankit Talwar worked on the streets of Delhi, India. He sold clothes for children. This helped him learn business skills. But this was not Talwar’s main job. He was also an engineering student. Talwar wanted to continue his studies in Europe. So he studied to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language, the TOEFL. Talwar studied very hard. And he won scholarship money to study engineering at a university in Spain. The scholarship paid many of Talwar’s school costs. Talwar won the scholarship for hard work in many areas of his life. But he mainly got it because of his high score on the TOEFL exam. Not all people do as well as Talwar on the TOEFL. But many people around the world take this test every year. Today’s Spotlight is on the TOEFL test. Experts at Stanford University in the Unites States created the TOEFL in 1964. They saw that many people wanted to study in universities in the US and other English speaking countries. But these schools needed to know that people coming from other countries could communicate well in English. The schools wanted to accept international students. And they wanted these students to be successful in English speaking universities. So, they needed to test international students’ English language skills before admitting them. There are different tests to determine a person’s English language skills. Each university decides which test it will give. However, most choose the TOEFL. Another test universities may choose is the International English Language Testing System or IELTS. To get a job or enter a school, most English speaking universities require international students to pass these tests. That way, they can learn well in classes that are taught in English. Most people who take the TOEFL are students. But some people take the TOEFL or the IELTS for other reasons. Some work places require a language test. It can be helpful for moving to an English speaking country. And many professional programs require a test too. For example, a doctor who is moving from India to the US may have to take the TOEFL. This may be needed for approval to do her job in a new country. No matter what a persons’ reason is for taking the TOEFL, he or she takes the same test - the TOEFL is standardized. There are over 4000 places that give the TOEFL. People in over a hundred different countries take it. But every person takes the same test. Experts then mark the test and give the person a score. The experts do not know whose test they are marking. This kind of test is more fair. People taking the TOEFL must go to an official testing site to take the exam. They must pay to take the exam. They usually sit in a room at a small table or at a computer. The room may be very full of other people also taking the test. For many years, students took the TOEFL on paper. Sometimes people still take the TOEFL this way. But since 2005, most people take the test on computers. The TOEFL looks at four different skills in English: reading, listening, speaking and writing. Students read or listen. Then they answer questions about what they have read or heard. They must also record themselves speaking English. And they must write some longer essays in English. It usually takes about four hours to take the TOEFL. But people prepare for much longer than that. Madison is a student from Romania. She spent six months studying for the TOEFL. After the test, she was afraid that she did not do well. She tells her story about studying on the website urch dot com: “I needed to take an English test in order to study for a degree in the United Kingdom. I bought a TOEFL preparation book. I found this book very useful. I honestly could not have prepared without it. Whatever mistakes I made, I do not think they were caused by a lack of preparation. Unfortunately, I am not satisfied with my performance. But me and everybody in the same position: we have to try again. Failure cannot get us down." Madison did not have to try again. One week later she found she had a good score on the TOEFL! But doing well on the TOEFL can be difficult for some people. They may not be as prepared as Madison. Or they may have been distracted in the testing room. Sometimes testing rooms are full of people. Many people are recording themselves speaking. It can be difficult for students to do well in this environment. Studying for and taking the TOEFL can be stressful. But many people must take it. And lots of people have already used the TOEFL to follow their plans for work or study. We end today’s program with some good advice from people who have taken the TOEFL successfully: Kim Min-Woo is a student and scholarship winner from Korea. In the Korea Times he talked about his experience. He told people taking the TOEFL that it is important to practice hearing, reading and speaking English: “Try to hear and see English often. Speak as much as possible. The best way to improve speaking is to practice. Speaking to one’s friends and English teachers would definitely help. Always keep in mind that practice makes perfect.” Ana Barbu from Romania found a way to study while enjoying television shows and films. She told US News: "Subtitles on films helped me increase my understanding of English idioms. I learned how native speakers used the language, rather than just reading whatever English manual we had or listening to a teacher" Alice Chen from Taiwan is a very successful test-taker. She won scholarship money for her TOEFL score. She gives simple but good advice to test-takers: “Take it easy... but be prepared!” What about you? Do you plan to take the TOEFL? If you have already taken it, what was your experience? What is the best advice you have heard? You can leave a comment on our website. Or email us at radio@radioenglish.net. You can also comment on Facebook at Facebook.com/SpotlightRadio. The writer of this program was Rena Dam. The producer was Bruce Gulland. The voices you heard were from the United Kingdom and the United States. All quotes were adapted for this program and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called, ‘Taking the TOEFL’. We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.