
STRUCTURE AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION

The second section of the TOEFL test is the Structure and Written Expression section. This section consists of forty questions (some tests may be longer). You have twenty-five minutes to complete the forty questions in this section.

There are two types of questions in the Structure and Written Expression section of the TOEFL test:

1. **Structure** (questions 1–15) consists of fifteen sentences in which part of the sentence has been replaced with a blank. Each sentence is followed by four answer choices. You must choose the answer that completes the sentence in a grammatically correct way.
2. **Written Expression** (questions 16–40) consists of twenty-five sentences in which four words or groups of words have been underlined. You must choose the underlined word or group of words that is *not* correct.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

1. **Be familiar with the directions.** The directions on every TOEFL test are the same, so it is not necessary to spend time reading the directions carefully when you take the test. You should be completely familiar with the directions before the day of the test.
2. **Begin with questions 1 through 15.** Anticipate that questions 1 through 5 will be the easiest. Anticipate that questions 11 through 15 will be the most difficult. Do not spend too much time on questions 11 through 15. There will be easier questions that come later.
3. **Continue with questions 16 through 40.** Anticipate that questions 16 through 20 will be the easiest. Anticipate that questions 36 through 40 will be the most difficult. Do not spend too much time on questions 36 through 40.
4. **If you have time, return to questions 11 through 15.** You should spend extra time on questions 11 through 15 only after you spend all the time that you want on the easier questions.
5. **Never leave any questions blank on your answer sheet.** Even if you are not sure of the correct response, you should answer the question. There is no penalty for guessing.

THE STRUCTURE QUESTIONS

Questions 1 through 15 in the Structure and Written Expression section of the TOEFL test measure your knowledge of the correct structure of English sentences. The questions in this section are multiple-choice questions in which you must choose the letter of the answer that best completes the sentence.

Example

_____ greeted me enthusiastically at the front door.

- (A) Parental
- (B) If
- (C) My friends
- (D) Them

In this example, you should notice immediately that the sentence has a verb, *greeted*, and that the verb needs a subject. Answers (A), (B), and (D) are incorrect because *parental*, *if*, and *them* are not subjects. The correct answer is answer (C).

STRATEGIES FOR THE STRUCTURE QUESTIONS

1. **First study the sentence.** Your purpose is to determine what is needed to complete the sentence correctly.
2. **Then study each answer based on how well it completes the sentence.** Eliminate answers that do not complete the sentence correctly.
3. **Do not try to eliminate incorrect answers by looking only at the answers.** The incorrect answers are generally correct by themselves. The incorrect answers are generally incorrect only when used to complete the sentence.
4. **Never leave any answers blank.** Be sure to answer each question even if you are unsure of the correct response.
5. **Do not spend too much time on the Structure questions.** Be sure to leave adequate time for the Written Expression questions.

The following skills will help you to implement these strategies in the Structure section of the TOEFL test.

SKILL 1: SUBJECTS AND VERBS

You know that a sentence in English should have a subject and a verb. The most common types of problems that you will encounter in the Structure section of the TOEFL test are related to subjects and verbs; perhaps the sentence is missing either the subject, or the verb, or both; perhaps the sentence has an extra subject or verb.

Example I

_____ was ringing continuously for hours.

- (A) Loudly
- (B) In the morning
- (C) The phone
- (D) The bells

In this example, you should notice immediately that there is a verb, *was ringing*, but there is no subject. Answer (C) is the best answer because it is a singular subject that agrees with the singular verb *was ringing*. Answer (A), *loudly*, and answer (B), *in the morning*, are not subjects, so they are not correct. Although answer (D), *bells*, could be a subject, it is not correct because *bells* is plural and it does not agree with the singular verb *was ringing*.

Example II

Newspapers _____ every morning and every evening.

- (A) delivery
- (B) are delivered
- (C) on time
- (D) regularly

In this example, you should notice immediately that the sentence has a subject, *newspapers*, but that there is no verb. Because answer (B), *are delivered*, is a verb, it is the best answer. Answers (A), (C), and (D) are not verbs, so they are not correct.

Example III

The plane _____ landing at the airport in five minutes.

- (A) it is
- (B) it really is
- (C) is descending
- (D) will be

This sentence has a subject, *plane*, and has part of a verb, *landing*; to be correct, some form of the verb *be* is needed to make the verb complete. Answers (A) and

(B) are incorrect because the sentence already has a subject, *plane*, and does not need the extra subject *it*. Answer (C) is incorrect because *descending* is an extra part of a verb that is unnecessary because of *landing*. Answer (D) is the best answer; *will be* together with *landing* is a complete verb.

The following chart outlines the key information that you should remember about subjects and verbs.

SUBJECTS AND VERBS
A sentence in English must have at least one <i>subject</i> and one <i>verb</i> . The first thing you should do as you read a sentence in the Structure section of the TOEFL test is to find the <i>subject</i> and the <i>verb</i>.

EXERCISE 1: Underline the subjects once and the verbs twice in each of the following sentences. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- I 1. My best friend always helpful with problems.
- C 2. The bus schedule has changed since last week.
- ___ 3. Accidentally dropped the glass on the floor.
- ___ 4. The customer paying the clerk for the clothes.
- ___ 5. The professor handed the syllabus to the students.
- ___ 6. Each day practiced the piano for hours.
- ___ 7. The basketball player tossed the ball into the hoop.
- ___ 8. The new student in the class very talkative and friendly.
- ___ 9. Walking with the children to school.
- ___ 10. The whales headed south for the winter.

SKILL 2: OBJECTS OF PREPOSITIONS _____

An object of a preposition is a noun or a pronoun that comes after a preposition such as *in*, *at*, *of*, *to*, *by*, *behind*, and *on* to form a prepositional phrase.

The trip (to the *island*) (on *Saturday*) will last (for three *hours*).

This sentence contains three objects of prepositions. *Island* is the object of the preposition *to*; *Saturday* is the object of the preposition *on*; *hours* is the object of the preposition *for*.

An object of a preposition can cause confusion in the Structure section of the TOEFL test because it can be mistaken for the subject of a sentence.

Example

To Mike _____ was a big surprise.

- (A) really
- (B) the party
- (C) funny
- (D) when

In this example, you should look first for the subject and the verb. You should notice the verb *was* and should also notice that there is no subject. Do not think that *Mike* is the subject; *Mike* is the object of the preposition *to*, and one noun cannot be both a subject and an object at the same time. Because a subject is needed in this sentence, answer (B), *the party*, is the best answer. Answers (A), (C), and (D) are not correct because they cannot be subjects.

The following chart outlines the key information that you should remember about objects of prepositions.

OBJECTS OF PREPOSITIONS

A *preposition* is followed by a noun or pronoun that is called an *object of the preposition*.
If a word is an *object of a preposition*, it is not the *subject*.

NOTE: A list of prepositions and exercises to practice recognizing these prepositions can be found in Appendix B at the back of the text. You may want to complete these exercises before continuing with Exercise 2.

EXERCISE 2: Each of the following sentences contains one or more prepositional phrases. Underline the subjects once and the verbs twice. Circle the prepositional phrases that come before the verb. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- C 1. The name (of the baby) (in the crib) is Jack.
- I 2. (By the next meeting) (of the class) need to turn in the papers.
- ___ 3. The directions to the exercise on page 20 unclear.
- ___ 4. Because of the heavy rain throughout the night, the walkways are muddy.
- ___ 5. During the week eat lunch in the school cafeteria.
- ___ 6. In the morning after the concert was tired.
- ___ 7. In the summer the trip to the mountains is our favorite trip.
- ___ 8. In a box on the top shelf of the cabinet in the hallway of the house.
- ___ 9. With her purse in her hand ran through the door.
- ___ 10. At 1:00 in the morning the alarm clock on the table beside the bed rang.

EXERCISE (Skills 1-2): Underline the subjects once and the verbs twice. Circle the prepositional phrases that come before the verb. Then indicate if the sentences are correct (C) or incorrect (I).

- ___ 1. During the meeting in the office discussed the schedule.
- ___ 2. The doctor gave the patient a prescription.
- ___ 3. The tall evergreen trees along the road.
- ___ 4. The watch in the jewelry box needs a new battery.
- ___ 5. Pleasantly greets everyone in all the offices every morning.
- ___ 6. In the office of the building across the street from the park on the corner.
- ___ 7. The dishes in the sink really need to be washed as soon as possible.
- ___ 8. In a moment of worry about the problem with the cash in the account.

- _____ 9. The plane from New York circling the airport.
- _____ 10. On a regular basis the plants in the boxes under the window in the kitchen are watered and fed.

TOEFL EXERCISE (Skills 1–2): Choose the letter of the word or group of words that best completes the sentence.

1. Mark Twain _____ the years after the Civil War the “Gilded Age.”
 - (A) called
 - (B) calling
 - (C) he called
 - (D) his calls
2. Early _____ toes instead of hooves on their feet.
 - (A) horses
 - (B) had horses
 - (C) horses had
 - (D) horses having
3. _____ grow close to the ground in the short Arctic summer.
 - (A) Above tundra plants
 - (B) Tundra plants
 - (C) Tundra plants are found
 - (D) For tundra plants
4. In 1867, _____ Alaska from the Russians for \$7.2 million.
 - (A) purchased the United States
 - (B) to purchase the United States
 - (C) the United States’ purchase of
 - (D) the United States purchased
5. Between 1725 and 1750, New England witnessed an increase in the specialization of _____.
 - (A) occupations
 - (B) occupies
 - (C) they occupied
 - (D) it occupied them
6. The large carotid artery _____ to the main parts of the brain.
 - (A) carrying blood
 - (B) blood is carried
 - (C) carries blood
 - (D) blood carries
7. _____ radio as the first practical system of wireless telegraphy.
 - (A) Marconi’s development
 - (B) The development by Marconi
 - (C) Developing Marconi
 - (D) Marconi developed
8. In 1975, the first successful space probe to _____ beginning to send information back to Earth.
 - (A) Venus
 - (B) Venus the
 - (C) Venus was
 - (D) Venus it was
9. The two biggest resort _____ Arkansas are Hot Springs and Eureka Springs.
 - (A) in
 - (B) towns in
 - (C) towns are
 - (D) towns are in
10. NASA’s Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center _____ control center for the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo space flights.
 - (A) it was at the
 - (B) it was the
 - (C) was the
 - (D) the