



# ***Know the score:*** **comparing new TOEFL and IELTS**

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TOEFL and IELTS have historically played a key role in measuring academic readiness due to their well-earned reputation in assessing English for academic purposes. However, the **new TOEFL test construct is significantly different from the old TOEFL test, and, per published materials, these differences include:**



**50% less**  
New TOEFL speaking and writing components have been **reduced by roughly 50%.**



**60% shorter**

New TOEFL reading passages are **approximately 60% shorter**, reduced from 700 words to an average of 15-150 words, with the longest passage of approximately 200 words.



**Shallow**

New TOEFL writing **tasks are less academic.**



These changes mean that **the current alignment with the IELTS Academic test**, as published in 2025 by Clark, Papageorgiou et al. [qrco.de/score-concordance-study](https://qrco.de/score-concordance-study), **is obsolete for the New TOEFL test being administered from January 21, 2026 onwards.**



**The standard, for a reason**

The **IELTS Academic test** has retained **extended academic reading, writing, and speaking tasks** that continue to reflect the **communicative demands of higher education.**



**The risk**

As a result, treating **new TOEFL and IELTS Academic scores as interchangeable** poses **significant validity and admissions risks**; particularly for **postgraduate and research-intensive programs.**

Read **supporting research** here



# The impact on admissions

Admissions policies have not kept pace with TOEFL changes (2019, 2023, 2026). In fact, **40% of admissions policies currently reflect a lower TOEFL 2023 score than IELTS based on the joint 2025 ETS-IELTS research referenced above.** TOEFL 2026 is a shorter and more shallow representation of academic English proficiency. The intensity of TOEFL academic tasks has been reduced:

- reduced text length
- increased reliance on automated scoring
- removal of integrated tasks
- dilution of its speaking component

The updated TOEFL includes **fewer extended and demanding task types**, narrowing the scope of **academic communication skills** assessed.



## Example of WRITING task in new TOEFL

Make an appropriate sentence.



What was the highlight of your trip?

were the was old city showed us around who tour guides



The \_\_\_\_\_ fantastic.

### Sample High-Level Response

The tour guides who showed us around the old city were fantastic



## Example of READING task in new TOEFL

### TOEFL

Fill in the missing letters in the paragraph.

(Questions 1-10)

We know from drawings that have been preserved in caves for over 10,000 years that early humans performed dances as a group activity. We mi \_ \_ \_ think th \_ \_ prehistoric peo \_ \_ \_ concentrated on \_ \_ on ba \_ \_ \_ survival. How \_ \_ \_ it i \_ clear fr \_ \_ the rec \_ \_ \_ that dan \_ \_ \_ was important to them. They recorded more drawings of dances than of any other group activity. Dances served various purposes, including ritualistic communication with the divine, storytelling, and social cohesion.

Text length 73 words (including the words missing letters. NB: It is only necessary to read the first 47 words in order to answer the questions.

Taken from ETS.org (Practice Test 1)

See more new TOEFL test samples: [qrco.de/NewTOEFL](https://qrco.de/NewTOEFL)

Many universities continue to use outdated TOEFL/IELTS Concordance tables. At a minimum, we recommend ensuring your old TOEFL score is correctly aligned with IELTS. Check to **ensure that scores are aligned with our look-up tool:** [qrco.de/IELTS-USA-concordance-tool](https://qrco.de/IELTS-USA-concordance-tool).



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## Recommendations checklist:

- ☐ **Conduct a review of your old TOEFL** (prior January 21, 2026) required score and IELTS Academic score to ensure that scores align using **this look-up tool:** [\[qrco.de/IELTS-USA-concordance-tool\]](https://qrco.de/IELTS-USA-concordance-tool).
- ☐ **Avoid direct equivalency assumptions** between old TOEFL (2023), new TOEFL (2026), and IELTS Academic scores without a close inspection of test structures. **Consult the IELTS Scores Guide** [\[qrco.de/IELTS-score-guide\]](https://qrco.de/IELTS-score-guide) and **ETS website** [\[www.ets.org/toefl.html\]](https://www.ets.org/toefl.html) to inform your understanding of the academic demands of your institution's readiness to support less-prepared students.
- ☐ **Observe the academic preparedness and performance of students** admitted on the basis of New TOEFL scores, and use this evidence to inform admissions and/or student support policies.

