3 Listening Section

Read this chapter to learn

- The 8 types of *TOEFL iBT*® Listening questions
- How to recognize each Listening question type
- Tips for answering each Listening question type
- Strategies for preparing for the Listening section

In the *TOEFL iBT*® Listening section you will listen to four to six lectures and two to three conversations. There will be six questions per lecture and five questions per conversation. You will have a total of 60 to 90 minutes to answer all of the Listening questions.

Listening Materials

There are two types of Listening materials on the *TOEFL iBT*® test, conversations and lectures. Both are based on the actual speech that is used in colleges and universities in which English is the medium of instruction.

Each lecture or conversation is 3–6 minutes long and, as far as possible, represents authentic academic language. For example, a professor giving a lecture may digress somewhat from the main topic, interactions between students and the professor can be extensive, and explanations of content can be elaborate. Features of oral language such as false starts, misspeaks with self-corrections, and repetitions are included. You should take notes during the lectures and conversations. The questions are not meant to test your memory, but rather your understanding of the conversation or lecture.

Conversations

There are two types of conversations in the Listening section:

- office hours
- service encounters

These conversations are typical of those that occur on university campuses in which English is the primary language spoken. Office hour conversations are interactions that take place in a professor's office. The content may be academic or related to course requirements. For example, in an office hour a student could request an extension on a due date (nonacademic content), or a student could ask for clarification about the content of a lecture (academic content). Service encounters are interactions that take place on a university campus and have

nonacademic content. Examples include inquiring about a payment for housing and registering for class. Each conversation is followed by five questions.

Lectures

Lectures in the Listening section represent the kind of language used when professors teach in a classroom. The lecture excerpt may include just a professor speaking, or it may include students interacting with the professor, such as a student asking the professor a question or the professor calling on one student for a response. Each lecture is approximately 5 minutes in length and is followed by six questions.

The content of the lectures reflects the content that is presented in introductory-level university courses. Lecture topics cover a broad range of subjects. You will not be expected to have prior knowledge of the subject matter. The information you need to answer the questions will be contained in the lecture. The lists below are provided to give you an idea of the kinds of topics that typically appear in the Listening section.

- Arts
- Life Science
- Physical Science
- Social Science

Arts lectures may be on topics such as:

- Architecture
- Industrial design/art
- City planning
- Crafts (weaving, knitting, fabrics, furniture, carving, mosaics, ceramics, folk and tribal art)
- Cave/rock art
- Music and music history
- Photography
- Literature and authors
- Books, newspapers, magazines, journals

Life Science lectures may be on topics such as:

- Extinction of or conservation efforts for animals and plants
- Fish and other aquatic organisms
- Bacteria and other one-celled organisms
- Viruses
- Medical techniques
- Public health
- Physiology of sensory organs
- Biochemistry
- Animal behavior (migration, food foraging, defenses)
- Habitats and the adaptation of animals and plants to them
- Nutrition and its impact on the body
- Animal communication

Physical Science lectures may be on topics such as:

- Weather and atmosphere
- Oceanography
- Glaciers, glacial landforms, ice ages
- Deserts and other extreme environments
- Pollution, alternative energy, environmental policy
- Other planets' atmospheres
- Astronomy and cosmology
- Properties of light, optics
- Properties of sound
- Electromagnetic radiation
- Particle physics
- Technology of TV, radio, radar
- Chemistry of inorganic things
- Computer science
- Seismology (plate structure, earthquakes, tectonics, continental drift, structure of volcanoes)

Social Science lectures may be on topics such as:

- Anthropology of nonindustrialized civilizations
- Early writing systems
- Historical linguistics
- Business, management, marketing, accounting
- TV/radio as mass communication
- Social behavior of groups, community dynamics, communal behavior
- Child development
- Education
- Modern history (including the history of urbanization and industrialization and their economic and social effects)

Listening Questions

Most of the Listening questions that follow the lectures and conversations are traditional multiple-choice questions with four answer choices and a single correct answer. There are, however, some other types of questions:

- multiple-choice questions with more than one correct answer (for example, two answers out of four choices or three answers out of five choices)
- questions that require you to put in order events or steps in a process
- questions that require you to match objects or text to categories in a table

Some questions replay a part of the lecture or conversation. You will then be asked a multiple-choice question about what you have just heard.

There are eight types of questions in the Listening section. These types are divided into three categories as follows:

TOEFL® Listening Question Types

Basic Comprehension questions
1. Gist-Content
2. Gist-Purpose
3. Detail

Pragmatic Understanding questions
4. Understanding the Function of What Is Said
5. Understanding the Speaker's Attitude

Connecting Information questions
6. Understanding Organization
7. Connecting Content
8. Making Inferences

The following sections will explain each of these question types. You will find out how to recognize each type and see examples of each type with explanations. You will also find tips that can help you answer each Listening question type.

Basic Comprehension Questions

Basic comprehension of the lecture or conversation is tested in three ways: with Gist-Content, Gist-Purpose, and Detail questions.

Type 1: Gist-Content Questions

Understanding the *gist* of a lecture or conversation means understanding the general topic or main idea. The gist of the lecture or conversation may be expressed explicitly or implicitly. Questions that test understanding the gist of a lecture or converation may require you to generalize or synthesize information from what you hear.

How to Recognize Gist-Content Questions

Gist-Content questions are typically phrased as follows:

- What problem does the man have?
- What are the speakers mainly discussing?
- What is the main topic of the lecture?
- What is the lecture mainly about?
- What aspect of X does the professor mainly discuss?

Tips for Gist-Content Questions

- Gist-Content questions ask about the *overall* content of the lecture or converation. Eliminate choices that refer to only small portions of what you just listened to.
- Try to summarize the topic of the lecture or conversation in one phrase or sentence.

Example Excerpt from a lecture:

Professor

. . . So the Earth's surface is made up of these huge segments, these tectonic plates. And these plates move, right? But how can, uh, motion of plates, do you think, influence climate on the Earth? Again, all of you probably read this section in the book, I hope, but, uh, uh, how—how can just motion of the plates impact the climate?

. . . when a plate moves, if there's landmass on the plate, then the landmass moves too, okay? That's why continents shift their positions, because the plates they're on move. So as a landmass moves away from the equator, its climate would get colder. So, right now we have a continent—the landmass Antarctica—that's on a pole.

So that's dramatically influencing the climate in Antarctica. Um, there was a time when most of the landmasses were closer to a pole; they weren't so close to the equator. Uh, maybe 200 million years ago Antarctica was attached to the South American continent; oh, and Africa was attached, too, and the three of them began moving away from the equator together.

. . . in the Himalayas. That was where two continental plates collided. Two continents on separate plates. Um, when this, uh, Indian, uh, uh, plate collided with the Asian plate, it wasn't until then that we created the Himalayas. When we did that, then we started creating the type of cold climate that we see there now. Wasn't there until this area was uplifted.

So again, that's something else that plate tectonics plays a critical role in. Now, these processes are relatively slow; the, uh, Himalayas are still rising, but on the order of millimeters per year. So they're not dramatically influencing climate on your—the time scale of your lifetime. But over the last few thousands of—tens of thousands of years, uh—hundreds of thousands of years—yes, they've dramatically influenced it.

Uh, another important thing—number three—on how plate tectonics have influenced climate is how they've influenced—we talked about how changing landmasses can affect atmospheric circulation patterns, but if you alter where the landmasses are connected, it can impact oceanic, uh, uh, uh, circulation patterns.

. . . Um, so, uh, these other processes, if, if we were to disconnect North and South America right through the middle—say, through Panama—that would dramatically influence climate in North and South America—probably the whole globe. So suddenly now as the two continents gradually move apart, you can have different circulation patterns in the ocean between the two. So, uh, that might cause a dramatic

change in climate if that were to happen, just as we've had happen here in Antarctica to separate, uh, from South America.

What is the main topic of the lecture?

- ⬭ The differences in climate that occur in different countries
- ⬭ How movement of the Earth's plates can affect climate
- ⬭ Why the ocean has less effect on climate than previously thought
- ⬭ The history of the climate of the region where the university is located

Explanation

Choice 2 is the answer that best represents the main topic of the lecture. The professor uses Antarctica and the Himalayas as examples to make the general point that climate is affected by plate tectonics, the movement of Earth's plates.

Note that for Gist-Content questions the correct answer and the incorrect choices can sometimes be worded more abstractly than occurs in this example.

The following Gist-Content question refers to the same lecture:

What is the main topic of the lecture?

- ⬭ A climate experiment and its results
- ⬭ A geologic process and its effect
- ⬭ How a theory was disproved
- ⬭ How land movement is measured

Explanation

Once again, the correct answer is choice 2. Even though the wording is very different, it basically says the same thing as choice 2 in the previous example: a geologic process (movement of Earth's plates) has an effect (changes in climate).

Type 2: Gist-Purpose Questions

Some gist questions focus on the purpose of the conversation or lecture rather than on the content. This type of question will more likely occur with conversations, but Gist-Purpose questions may also occasionally be asked about lectures.

How to Recognize Gist-Purpose Questions

Gist-Purpose questions are typically phrased as follows:

- Why does the student visit the professor?
- Why does the student visit the registrar's office?
- Why did the professor ask to see the student?
- Why does the professor explain X?

Tips for Gist-Purpose Questions

- Students visit professors during office hours for various reasons, including cases in which a professor invites a student in to discuss the student's performance on an assignment. To answer a Gist-Purpose question, look in your notes for information that identifies the reason that the student visited the professor in the first place.
- The purpose of a conversation is not always related to the conversation's main topic. For example, a student might visit her professor for the purpose of asking a question about the professor's grading policy. After answering her question, the professor might spontaneously ask how the student is progressing on a research project, and the rest of the conversation is about that project.
- In service encounter conversations, the student is often trying to solve a problem. Understanding what the student's problem is and how it will be solved will help you answer the Gist-Purpose question.

Example

Narrator

Listen to a conversation between a professor and a student.

Student

I was hoping you could look over my note cards for my presentation . . . just to see what you think of it.

Professor

Okay, so refresh my memory: what's your presentation about?

Student

Two models of decision making . . .

Professor

Oh, yes—the classical and the administrative model.

Student

Yeah, that's it.

Professor

And what's the point of your talk?

Student

I'm gonna talk about the advantages and disadvantages of both models.

Professor

But what's the point of your talk? Are you going to say that one's better than the other?

Student

Well, I think the administrative model's definitely more realistic. But I don't think it's complete. It's kind of a tool . . . a tool to see what can go wrong.

Professor
Okay, so what's the point of your talk? What are you trying to convince me to believe?

Student
Well, uh, the classical model—you shouldn't use it by itself. A lot of companies just try to follow the classical model, but they should really use both models together.

Professor
Okay, good. So let me take a look at your notes here . . . Oh, typed notes, . . . Wow you've got a lot packed in here. Are you sure you're going to be able to follow this during your talk?

Student
Oh, sure; that's why I typed them, because otherwise . . . well, my handwriting's not very clear.

Why does the student visit the professor?

- ⬭ To get some note cards for his presentation
- ⬭ To show her some examples of common errors in research
- ⬭ To review the notes for his presentation with her
- ⬭ To ask for help in finding a topic for his presentation

Explanation

While much of the conversation is concerned with the content of the student's presentation, the correct answer to the question "Why does the student visit the professor?" is choice 3: "To review the notes for his presentation with her."

Type 3: Detail Questions

Detail questions require you to understand and remember explicit details or facts from a lecture or conversation. These details are typically related, directly or indirectly, to the gist of the conversation or lecture, by providing elaboration, examples, or other support. In some cases where there is a long digression that is not clearly related to the main idea, you may be asked about some details of the digression.

How to Recognize Detail Questions

Detail questions are typically phrased as follows:

- According to the professor, what is one way that X can affect Y?
- What is X?
- What resulted from the invention of the X?
- According to the professor, what is the main problem with the X theory?

Tips for Detail Questions

- Refer to your notes as you answer. You will not be asked about minor points. Your notes should contain the major details from the conversation or lecture.
- Do not choose an answer only because it contains some of the words that were used in the conversation or lecture. Incorrect responses will often contain words and phrases from the lecture or conversation.
- If you are unsure of the correct response, decide which one of the choices is most consistent with the main idea of the conversation or lecture.

Examples

Professor

Uh, other things that glaciers can do is, uh, as they retreat, instead of depositing some till, uh, scraped-up soil, in the area, they might leave a big ice block, and it breaks off, and as the ice block melts, it leaves a depression, which can become a lake. These are called kettle lakes. These are very critical ecosystems in this region, um, because, uh, uh, they support some unique biological diversity, these kettle lakes do.

The Great Lakes are kettle lakes; they were left over from the Pleist—from the Pleistocene glaciers. Uh, now, as the glaciers were retreating, the Great Lakes underwent a change. Once the weight of the glacier ice decreased, and the pressure decreased, the land at the bottom of the lakes rose. In some places it rose by as much as one hundred feet.

So I just wanted to tell you a little bit more about glaciers . . .

What are kettle lakes?

- ⬭ Lakes that form in the center of a volcano
- ⬭ Lakes that have been damaged by the greenhouse effect
- ⬭ Lakes formed by unusually large amounts of precipitation
- ⬭ Lakes that form when pieces of glaciers melt

How did the glaciers affect the Great Lakes?

- ⬭ They made the Great Lakes less deep.
- ⬭ They made the Great Lakes larger.
- ⬭ They reduced the biodiversity of the Great Lakes.
- ⬭ They deposited excess soil into the Great Lakes.

Explanation

The answer to the first question is found in the beginning of the lecture when the professor explains what a kettle lake is. Choice 4 is correct. Remember that new terminology is often tested in Detail questions. The answer to the second question is found later in the lecture where the professor mentions that the lake bottoms rose. Choice 1 is correct.

Pragmatic Understanding Questions

Pragmatic Understanding questions test understanding of certain features of spoken English that go beyond basic comprehension. In general, these types of questions test how well you understand the *function* of an utterance or the *stance,* or attitude, that the speaker expresses. In most instances, Pragmatic Understanding questions will test parts of the conversation or lecture where a speaker's purpose or attitude is not expressed directly. In these cases, what is directly stated—the surface expression—will not be an exact match of the statement's function or purpose.

What people say is often intended to be understood on a level that lies beyond or beneath the surface expression. To use an often-cited example, the sentence "It sure is cold in here" can be understood literally as a statement of fact about the temperature of a room. But suppose the speaker is, say, a guest in your home, who is also shivering and glancing at an open window. In that case, what your guest may really mean is that he wants you to close the window. In this example, the *function* of the speaker's statement—getting you to close the window—lies beneath the surface expression. Functions that often lie beneath the surface expression include directing, recommending, complaining, accepting, agreeing, narrating, questioning, and others.

Understanding meaning within the context of an entire lecture or conversation is critical in instances where the speaker's *stance* is involved. Is a given statement intended to be taken as fact or opinion? How certain is the speaker of the information she is reporting? Is the speaker conveying certain feelings or attitudes about some person or thing or event? As above, these feelings or attitudes may lie beneath the surface expression. Thus they can easily go unrecognized or be misunderstood by nonnative speakers.

Some Pragmatic Understanding questions involve a replay of part of the lecture or conversation in order to focus your attention on the relevant portion. There are two types of Pragmatic Understanding questions: Questions Related to Understanding the Function of What Is Said and Questions Related to Understanding the Speaker's Attitude.

Type 4: Questions Related to Understanding the Function of What Is Said

The first type of Pragmatic Understanding question tests whether you can understand the *function* of what is said. This question type often involves listening again to a portion of the lecture or conversation.

How to Recognize Questions Related to Understanding the Function of What Is Said

These questions are typically phrased as follows:

- What does the professor imply when he says this? *(replay)*
- Why does the student say this? *(replay)*
- What does the professor mean when she says this? *(replay)*

Tip for Questions Related to Understanding the Function of What Is Said

- Remember that the function of what is said may not match what the speaker directly states. In the following example, an administrative assistant asks a student if he knows where the housing office is. She is not, however, doing this to get information about the housing office's location.

Example

Excerpt from a conversation between a male student and a female administrative assistant. They are discussing his dorm fees.

Narrator
Listen again to a part of the conversation. Then answer the question.

Student
Okay. I'll just pay with a credit card. And where do I do that at?

Administrative Assistant
At, um, the housing office.

Student
Housing office, all right.

Administrative Assistant
Do you know where they are?

Narrator
What is the woman trying to find out from the student?

- ⬭ Where the housing office is
- ⬭ Approximately how far away the housing office is
- ⬭ Whether she needs to tell him where the housing office is
- ⬭ Whether he has been to the housing office already

Explanation

The pragmatic function of the woman's question is to ask the student whether or not he needs to be told the location of the housing office. The best answer for this question is choice 3.

Type 5: Questions Related to Understanding the Speaker's Attitude

The second type of Pragmatic Understanding question tests whether you understand a speaker's attitude or opinion. You may be asked a question about the speaker's feelings, likes and dislikes, or the reason for anxiety or amusement. Also included in this category are questions about a speaker's degree of certainty: Is the speaker referencing a source or giving a personal opinion? Are the facts presented generally accepted or are they disputed? Occasionally, a question will test your ability to detect and understand irony. A speaker is being ironic when

the intended meaning is the opposite of what he or she is actually saying. For example, the utterance "That's just great" can be delivered with an intonation that gives the utterance the meaning "That's not good at all." Speakers use irony for a variety of purposes, including emphasizing a point being made, bringing humor to a situation in order to win audience sympathy, or expressing disapproval in an indirect way. Listeners must infer the ironic statement's real meaning both from clues provided in the context and from the speaker's intonation.

How to Recognize Questions Related to Understanding the Speaker's Attitude

These questions are typically phrased as follows:

- What can be inferred about the student?
- What is the professor's attitude toward X?
- What is the professor's opinion of X?
- What can be inferred about the student when she says this? *(replay)*
- What does the woman mean when she says this? *(replay)*

Tip for Questions Related to Understanding the Speaker's Attitude

- Learn to pay attention to the speaker's tone of voice. Does the speaker sound apologetic? Confused? Enthusiastic? The speaker's tone can help you answer this kind of question.

Example

Excerpt from a conversation between a male student and his female advisor. In this part of a longer conversation, they are discussing the student's job.

Advisor
Well, good. So, bookstore isn't working out?

Student
Oh, bookstore's working out fine. I just, I—this pays almost double what the bookstore does.

Advisor
Oh, wow!

Student
Yeah. Plus credit.

Advisor
Plus credit.

Student
And it's more hours, which . . . The bookstore's—I mean it's a decent job 'n' all. Everybody I work with . . . that part's great; it's just . . . I mean I'm shelving books and kind of hanging out and not doing much else . . . if it weren't for the people, it'd be totally boring.

Narrator

What is the student's attitude toward the people he currently works with?

- ⬭ He finds them boring.
- ⬭ He likes them.
- ⬭ He is annoyed by them.
- ⬭ He does not have much in common with them.

Explanation

In this example it may be easy to confuse the student's attitude toward his job with his attitude toward the people he works with. The correct answer is choice 2. The student is bored with the job, not the people he works with.

Connecting Information Questions

Connecting Information questions require you to make connections between or among pieces of information in the lecture or conversation. Your ability to integrate information from different parts of the lecture or conversation, to make inferences, to draw conclusions, to form generalizations, and to make predictions is tested. To choose the right answer, you will need to be able to identify and explain relationships among ideas and details in a lecture or conversation. These relationships may be explicit or implicit.

There are three types of Connecting Information questions.

Type 6: Understanding Organization Questions

In Understanding Organization questions you may be asked about the overall organization of the lecture, or you may be asked about the relationship between two portions of what you heard. Here are two examples, along with the correct answer choices:

1. How does the professor organize the information that she presents to the class?
   - ⬭ In the order in which the events occurred
2. How does the professor clarify the points he makes about Mexico?
   - ⬭ By comparing Mexico to a neighboring country

The first of these questions asks about the overall organization of information, testing understanding of connections throughout the whole lecture. The second asks about a portion of the lecture, testing understanding of the relationship between two different ideas.

Some Understanding Organization questions may ask you to identify or recognize how one statement functions with respect to surrounding statements. Functions may include indicating or signaling a topic shift, connecting a main topic to a subtopic, providing an introduction or a conclusion, giving an example, starting a digression, or even making a joke.

Example

Narrator

Listen again to a statement made by the professor. Then answer the question.

Professor

There's this committee I'm on . . . Th-the name of the thing, and it's probably, well, you don't have to take notes about this, um, the name of the thing is academic standards.

Narrator

Why does the professor tell the students that they do not have to take notes?

- ⬭ The information is in their books.
- ⬭ The information may not be accurate.
- ⬭ She is going to tell a personal story.
- ⬭ They already know what she is going to talk about.

The statement preceding the replayed statement is about how bureaucracies work. What follows the replayed statement is a personal story about bureaucracies. The key lies in recognizing that the portion of the lecture following the replayed statement is a personal story. The correct answer is choice 3. With the replayed statement the professor indicates to the class that what she is about to say does not have the same status as what she was talking about previously.

How to Recognize Understanding Organization Questions

Understanding Organization questions are typically phrased as follows:

- How does the professor organize the information about X?
- How is the discussion organized?
- Why does the professor discuss X?
- Why does the professor mention X?

Tips for Understanding Organization Questions

- Questions that ask about overall organization are more likely to be found after lectures than after conversations. Refer to your notes to answer these questions. It may not have been apparent from the start that the professor organized the information (for example) chronologically, or from least to most complex, or in some other way.
- Pay attention to comparisons made by the professor. In the following example the professor is discussing the structure of plants. He uses steel and the steel girders in a new building to make a point. A professor may mention something that is seemingly off-topic in order to explain a concept. The professor will mention something familiar to the students as a way of introducing a new idea.

Examples

Professor

So we have reproductive parts—the seeds, the fruit walls—we have leaf parts, but the great majority of plant fibers come from vasculature within the stem . . . fibers that occur in stem material. And what we do is consider these fibers—basically they're what are called *bast* fibers. Bast fibers. Now, basically bast fibers are parts of the plant that the plant uses to maintain vertical structure.

Think about it this way: what's the first thing you see when you see a building being built . . . uh, what's the first thing they put up? Besides the foundation, of course? The metalwork, right? They put all those steel girders up there, the framework. OK, well, think of—bast fibers basically constitute the structural framework to support the stem of the plant. OK? So as the plant grows, it basically builds a girder system within that plant, like steel, so to speak.

So suppose you cut across the stem of one of these plants . . . take a look at how the bast fibers are arranged, so you're looking at a cross section . . . you'll see that the fibers run vertically side by side. Up and down next to each other, forming a kind of tube, which is significant . . . 'cause, which is physically stronger: a solid rod or a tube? The tube—physics tells you that. What's essentially happening—well, the plant is forming a structural ring of these bast fibers all around the stem, and that shape allows for structural rigidity, but also allows for bending and motion.

Why does the professor talk about steel?

- ⬭ To identify the substance that has replaced fiber products.
- ⬭ To explain a method for separating fibers from a plant.
- ⬭ To compare the chemical structure of fibers to metals.
- ⬭ To illustrate the function of fibers in a plant's stem.

Why does the professor mention a tube?

- ⬭ To explain how some fibers are arranged in a plant.
- ⬭ To show how plants carry water to growing fibers.
- ⬭ To describe an experiment involving plant fibers.
- ⬭ To explain why some plant stems cannot bend.

Explanation

The lecture is about plants and plant fibers, not steel girders. The professor mentions steel girders only to compare them to the structural framework of fibers in a plant. The correct answer to the first question is choice 4. Likewise, the second question also concerns the professor's attempts to help the students visualize a plant's structure. The correct answer to the second question is choice 1.

Type 7: Connecting Content Questions

Connecting Content questions measure your understanding of the relationships among ideas in a lecture. These relationships may be explicitly stated, or you may have to infer them from the words you hear.

The questions may ask you to organize information in a different way from the way it was presented in the lecture. You might be asked to identify comparisons, cause and effect, or contradiction and agreement. You may also be asked to classify items in categories, identify a sequence of events or steps in a process, or specify relationships among objects along some dimension.

Example

Narrator

What type of symmetry do these animals have? Place a check mark in the correct box.

	Asymmetry	Radial Symmetry	Bilateral Symmetry
Earthworm			✓
Human			✓
Sponge	✓		
Sea Anemone	✓	✓	

In this question you are asked to present information in a different format from that in which it was presented in a lecture.

Other Connecting Content questions will require you to make inferences about the relationships among things mentioned in the lecture. You may have to predict an outcome, draw a logical conclusion, extrapolate some additional information, infer a cause-and-effect relationship, or specify some particular sequence of events.

How to Recognize Connecting Content Questions

Connecting Content questions are typically phrased as follows:

- What is the likely outcome of doing procedure X before procedure Y?
- What can be inferred about X?
- What does the professor imply about X?

Tip for Connecting Content Questions

- Questions that require you to fill in a chart or table or put events in order fall into this category. As you listen to the lectures accompanying this study guide, pay attention to the way you format your notes. Clearly identifying terms and their definitions as well as steps in a process will help you answer questions of this type.

Example

Professor

OK, Neptune and its moons. Neptune has several moons, but there's only . . . we'll probably only worry about two of them, the two fairly interesting ones. The first one's Triton. So you have this little struggle with the word *Titan*, which is the big moon of Saturn, and the name *Triton*, which is the big moon of *Neptune*. Triton: it's, it's the only *large moon* in the solar system to go backwards, to go around its—what we call

its parent planet—in this case Neptune, the wrong way. OK? Every other large moon orbits the *parent planet* in the same counterclockwise direction . . . same as most of the other bodies in the solar system. But this moon . . . the reverse direction, which is perfectly OK as far as the laws of gravity are concerned. But it indicates some sort of peculiar event in the early solar system that gave this moon a motion in contrast to the general spin of the raw material that it was formed from.

The other moon orbiting Neptune that I want to talk about is Nereid. Nereid is, Nereid has the most eccentric orbit, the most lopsided, elliptical-type orbit for a large moon in the solar system. The others tend more like circular orbits.

. . . Does it mean that Pluto and Neptune might have been related somehow in the past and then drifted slowly into their present orbits? If Pluto . . . did Pluto ever belong to the Neptune system? Do Neptune's moons represent Pluto-type bodies that have been captured by Neptune? Was some sort of . . . was Pluto the object that disrupted the Neptune system at some point in the past?

It's really hard to prove any of those things. But now we're starting to appreciate that there's quite a few junior Plutos out there: not big enough to really call a planet, but large enough that they're significant in history of the early solar system. So we'll come back to those when we talk about comets and other small bodies in the fringes of the outer solar system.

What does the professor imply about the orbits of Triton and Nereid?

- ⬭ They used to be closer together.
- ⬭ They might provide evidence of an undiscovered planet.
- ⬭ They might reverse directions in the future.
- ⬭ They might have been changed by some unusual event.

Explanation

In Connecting Content questions you will have to use information from more than one place in the lecture. In this example, the professor describes the orbits of Triton and Nereid. In both cases he refers to events in the early solar system that might have changed or disrupted their orbits. The correct answer for this question is choice 4, "They might have been changed by some unusual event."

Type 8: Making Inferences Questions

The final type of Connecting Information question is Making Inferences questions. In this kind of question you usually have to reach a conclusion based on facts presented in the lecture or conversation.

How to Recognize Making Inferences Questions

Making Inferences questions are typically phrased as follows:

- What does the professor imply about X?
- What will the student probably do next?
- What can be inferred about X?
- What does the professor imply when he says this? *(replay)*

Tip for Making Inferences Questions

- In some cases, answering this kind of question correctly means putting together details from the lecture or conversation to reach a conclusion. In other cases, the professor may imply something without directly stating it. In most cases the answer you choose will use vocabulary not found in the lecture or conversation.

Example

Professor

Dada is often considered under the broader category of Fantasy. It's one of the early directions in the Fantasy style. The term "Dada" itself is a nonsense word—it has no meaning . . . and where the word originated isn't known. The "philosophy" behind the "Dada" movement was to create works that conveyed the concept of *absurdity*—the artwork was meant to shock the public by presenting the ridiculous, absurd concepts. Dada artists rejected reason—or rational thought. They did not believe that rational thought would help solve social problems . . .

. . . When he turned to Dada, he quit painting and devoted himself to making a type of sculpture he referred to as a "ready-made" . . . probably because they were constructed of readily available objects . . . At the time, many people reacted to Dadaism by saying that the works were not art at all . . . and in fact, that's exactly how Duchamp and others conceived of it—as a form of "non-art" . . . or anti-art.

Duchamp also took a reproduction of da Vinci's famous painting the *Mona Lisa*, and he drew a mustache and goatee on the subject's face. Treating this masterpiece with such disrespect was another way Duchamp was challenging the established cultural standards of his day.

What does the professor imply about the philosophy of the Dada movement?

- ⬭ It was not taken seriously by most artists.
- ⬭ It varied from one country to another.
- ⬭ It challenged people's concept of what art is.
- ⬭ It was based on a realistic style of art.

Explanation

Note the highlighted portions of the lecture. You can see that Dadaism was meant to challenge the public's conception of what art was meant to be. The correct answer to the question is choice 3.

Strategies for Preparing for and Taking the Listening Section

How to Sharpen Your Listening Skills

Listening is one of the most important skills necessary for success on the *TOEFL*® test and in academics in general. The ability to listen and understand is tested in three out of four sections of the *TOEFL iBT*® test.

The best way to improve your listening skills is to listen frequently to many different types of material in various subject areas (sciences, social sciences, arts, business, and others). Of course, watching movies and TV and listening to the radio are excellent ways to practice listening. Audiotapes and CDs of talks are available in libraries and bookstores; those with transcripts of the listening material are particularly helpful. The Internet is also a great resource for listening material.

Here are some ways you can strengthen skills for the three listening purposes tested on the TOEFL iBT test.

1. Listening for basic comprehension

- Increase your vocabulary knowledge, perhaps by using flash cards.
- Focus on the content and flow of material. Do not be distracted by the speaker's style and delivery.
- Anticipate what the speaker is going to say as a way to stay focused, and adjust your predictions when you receive additional information.
- Stay active by asking yourself questions (for example, What main idea is the professor communicating?).
- Copy the words "main idea," "major points," and "important details" on different lines of paper. Listen carefully and write these things down while listening. Listen again until all important points and details are written down.
- Listen to a portion of a lecture or talk and write a brief summary of important points. Gradually increase the amount you listen to and summarize.

2. Listening for pragmatic understanding

- Think about what each speaker hopes to accomplish; that is, what is the purpose of the speech or conversation? Is the speaker apologizing, complaining, making suggestions?
- Notice the way each speaker talks. Is the language formal or casual? How certain does each speaker sound? Is the speaker's voice calm or emotional? What does the speaker's tone of voice tell you?

- Notice the degree of certainty of the speaker. How sure is the speaker about the information? Does the speaker's tone of voice indicate something about his or her degree of certainty?
- Watch television or movie comedies and pay attention to stress and intonation patterns used to convey meaning.
- Watch television or movies and pay attention to the way characters express disagreement or make suggestions in indirect ways in order to avoid hurting another character's feelings.

3. Listening to connect ideas

- Think about how the lecture is organized. Listen for the signal words that indicate the introduction, major steps or ideas, examples, and the conclusion or summary.
- Identify the relationships between ideas in the information being discussed. Possible relationships include cause/effect, compare/contrast, and steps in a process.
- Listen for words that show connections and relationships between ideas.
- When you listen to recorded material, stop the recording at various points and try to predict what information or idea will be expressed next.
- Create an outline of the information discussed while listening or after listening.
- Listen for changes in topic or side comments in which the speaker briefly moves away from the main topic and then returns (digressions).

Tips for the Day of the Test

- Take notes while you listen. Only the major points will be tested, so do not try to write down every detail. After testing, notes are collected and shredded before you leave the test center.
- When listening to a lecture, pay attention to the new words or concepts introduced by the professor. These words may be written on a chalkboard and will often be tested.
- When listening to a lecture, pay attention to the way the lecture is organized and the way the ideas in the lecture are connected.
- Choose the best answer. The computer will ask you to confirm your choice. After clicking on **OK**, you automatically go on to the next question.
- Listening questions must be answered in order. Once you click on **OK**, you cannot go back to a previous question.