Factors Affecting High Performance in TOEFL iBT Reading Section:

A Comparative Analysis of High-Scoring Test Takers

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INTRODUCTION

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT)

In today's increasingly interconnected world, English has become the primary language of international communication, higher education, scientific research, and professional collaboration. Millions of students pursue educational opportunities abroad each year, and demonstrating English language proficiency has become an essential requirement for admission to universities and academic institutions where English serves as the medium of instruction. Among the internationally recognized English proficiency examinations, the **Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-Based Test (TOEFL iBT)** is one of the most respected and widely accepted assessments.

The TOEFL iBT is developed and administered by the **Educational Testing Service (ETS)**, a nonprofit educational organization headquartered in the United States. Since its introduction in 1964, the TOEFL has undergone continuous development to reflect authentic academic language use and the communication skills required in university environments. The current Internet-Based Test (iBT) evaluates a candidate's ability to understand and use English in academic contexts through integrated language tasks that closely resemble real-life classroom situations.

Today, the TOEFL iBT is accepted by more than **13,000 universities, colleges, and institutions in over 160 countries**, including leading universities in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and many parts of Asia. In addition to university admissions, TOEFL scores are also recognized for scholarship applications, professional certification, immigration purposes in certain countries, and employment opportunities where English proficiency is required.

The examination consists of four fundamental language skills: **Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing**. Each section is designed to measure a specific aspect of academic English while also assessing the candidate's ability to integrate multiple language skills when solving authentic academic tasks. The Reading section evaluates comprehension and critical analysis of university-level passages. The Listening section measures understanding of lectures and conversations commonly encountered in academic settings. The Speaking section assesses the ability to communicate ideas clearly and coherently, while the Writing section requires candidates to produce well-organized academic responses based on reading and listening materials.

Unlike many traditional language examinations that primarily test grammatical knowledge or vocabulary memorization, the TOEFL iBT focuses on practical language use. Test takers are expected to interpret information, analyze arguments, synthesize ideas from multiple sources,

recognize organizational patterns within texts, and communicate effectively in English. As a result, success in the TOEFL depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking, inference, evaluation, and analytical reasoning.

Among the four sections of the examination, the Reading section is often regarded as one of the most challenging. It requires candidates to process lengthy academic passages under strict time constraints while answering questions that assess both explicit understanding and deeper comprehension of the text. Rather than relying solely on vocabulary recognition, successful readers must identify main ideas, understand supporting details, infer implied meanings, determine the author's purpose, recognize organizational structures, and evaluate relationships between concepts presented throughout the passage.

Reading comprehension, therefore, represents a cornerstone of TOEFL performance. A student's ability to understand complex academic texts influences not only success in the Reading section but also performance in the integrated Speaking and Writing tasks, where comprehension of source materials is equally essential. Consequently, developing effective reading strategies has become one of the most important aspects of TOEFL preparation.

This research focuses specifically on the role of reading comprehension in achieving high scores on the TOEFL iBT Reading section. It examines the characteristics of successful readers, the cognitive and linguistic factors that contribute to effective comprehension, and the strategies employed by high-scoring candidates. Through an analysis of official TOEFL materials, established theories of reading comprehension, and practical preparation techniques, this study aims to provide valuable insights for English language learners, teachers, and future TOEFL candidates.

Ultimately, the purpose of this paper is not merely to explain the format of the TOEFL Reading section but to demonstrate that reading comprehension is the foundation upon which successful academic reading is built. By understanding how proficient readers process information, construct meaning, and apply strategic thinking, learners can develop the skills necessary to improve both their TOEFL performance and their broader academic literacy.

The chapters that follow explore the principles of reading comprehension, examine the factors affecting reading performance, analyze common challenges faced by TOEFL candidates, and present practical strategies that can help learners achieve higher levels of academic reading proficiency.

CHAPTER 1

Evaluation of English Proficiency Through Standardized Language Tests

In this section, we will introduce the names of the different types of English Languages proficiency tests such as (IELTS, PTE Academic, TOEIC, Cambridge English Qualifications, Duolingo English Test) by which people understand the degree of their knowledge of the English language. All of these tests are composed of 4 essential parts: Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening.

Speaking[1]:
The speaking section measures how well a person can communicate in English through speech. It focuses on pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary, as well as the ability to express ideas clearly. In this part, test takers may be asked to answer questions, give opinions, describe experiences, or summarize information.

Reading[2]:
The reading section evaluates the ability to understand written texts in English. These texts are usually academic or informational and may include articles, passages, or short essays. This part tests skills such as understanding main ideas, identifying details, and interpreting meaning from context.

Writing[3]:
The writing section measures how well a person can express ideas in written English. Test takers are often required to write short essays or responses based on a given topic or source material. This section evaluates grammar, vocabulary, organization, and clarity of ideas..

Listening[4]:
The listening section assesses the ability to understand spoken English in different situations, such as conversations, lectures, or discussions. Test takers listen to audio recordings and answer questions based on what they hear. This part focuses on understanding main ideas, important details, and the speaker's intention.

Note: Only for the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), speaking and writing sections are optional other than compulsory.

1,2,3,4: Wikipide

TOEFL — Test of English as a Foreign Language

In this research paper, we will only delve deeper into TOEFL iBT Test, which is one of the most important, flexible, and trick-understandable ones. The **TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)** is one of the oldest and most recognized English language proficiency test in the world which was developed to provide a standardized way of measuring the English skills for those whose English is not their first language (non-native speakers). This test is recognized widely by big industries, used for admission into universities (English-taught degrees) and also used for other academic purposes such as self-improvement.

First Introduced: The TOEFL test was firstly administered in 1964[1] by the Modern Language Association after development under linguist Charles A. Ferguson[2]; ETS (Educational Testing Service) took over administration shortly after. From that time on, there are about 35 million TOEFL tests taken worldwide and only in 2024, there was 2.4 million tests were taken [3].

Purpose: Measures the ability of non-native English speakers to use and understand English at the university level, including the skills of Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking.

Modern Format: Today, the most widely used version is the TOEFL iBT (Internet-Based Test)**,** which is taken on a computer and evaluates all four language skills in an integrated format. This format is always taken into tests centers available in 120 countries and the reading and the listening sections are scored right away by the computer AI, unlike the speaking and writing scores that are sent to the ETS (Educational Testing Services) and the results of the test taker will be availible on his/her ETS Account after 4-6 days [4].

Global Recognition: TOEFL scores are accepted by thousands of universities and institutions worldwide and are especially common for admissions into higher education programs in the United States. With more than 2,300 test centers [5] in 120 countries and a secure, streamlined Home Edition, which all will significantly increase student's rate of success in this exam. This exam, as all other Englihs proficiency tests, is 100% accepted by the universities in the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and Australia, and by over 13,000 institutions worldwide [6].

Newest update: TOEFL Internet based test is going to welcome a new update[7] in 21 of the January 2026. There would be numerous exciting changes that help test takers to pass the test more easily both in the format and difficulty, which is discussed with detail in the next page.

1,2: Wikipedia
3,4: ETS
5,6: ETS
Note: After 21th of the January, 2026, results will be available within 72 hours.

CHAPTER 2

2026 Upcoming Changes

TOEFL iBT Format Comparison: Before vs After January 21, 2026

Skill	Before Jan 21, 2026	After Jan 21, 2026
Reading	• Academic passages only • Fixed difficulty • ~20 questions • ~35 minutes	• Adaptive difficulty • Academic + daily-life texts • More task types • ~18–27 minutes
Listening	• Lectures & conversations • Academic only • Fixed format • ~36 minutes	• Adaptive section • Announcements, talks, daily conversations • ~18–27 minutes
Speaking	• 4 long tasks • Independent & integrated • Academic focus • ~16 minutes	• 11 short tasks • Listen & repeat • Interview-style answers • ~8 minutes
Writing	• 2 tasks • Integrated + essay • Academic writing only • ~29 minutes	• Multiple short tasks • Emails, sentence building • Academic discussion • ~23 minutes

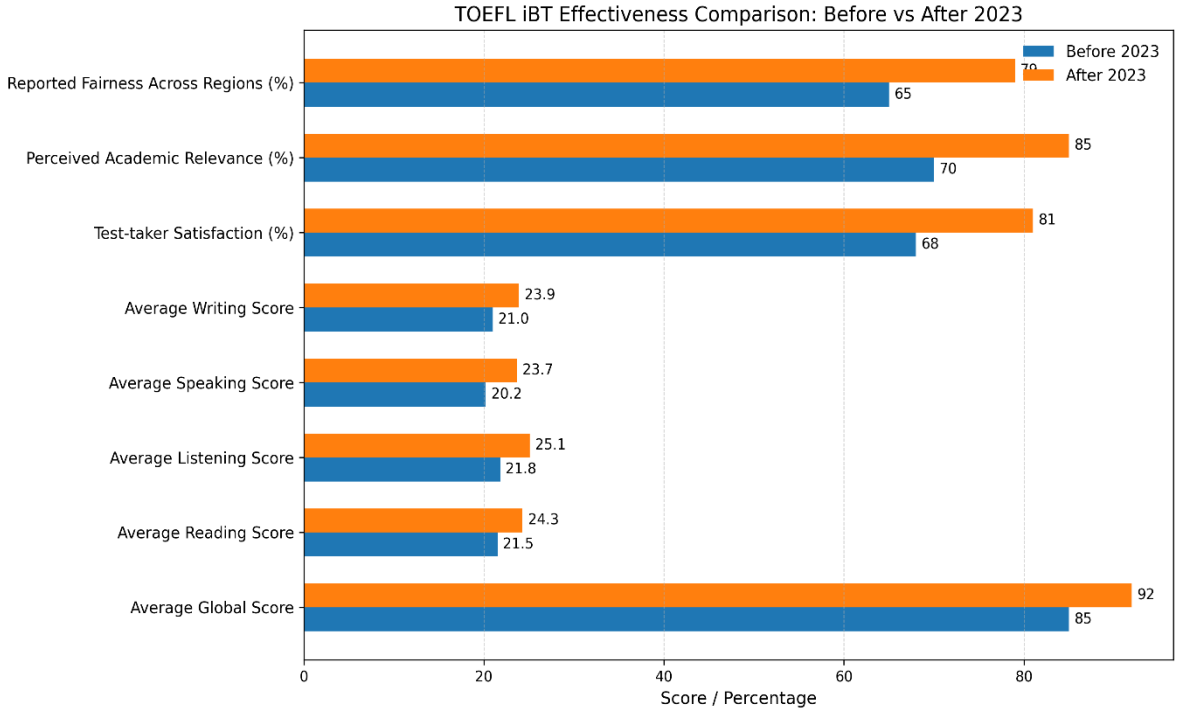
There are more changes as well, such as:

- Before January the 21th, it takes about 4-6 days for the test results to be announced, however, after 21th, results waiting time would be significantly reduced to only 72 hours.

- Before this update, reading texts were not modern ones, their context was all about historical, scientific, parts of the research papers, and more.. but not contents about

modern events, scientific discoveries and other things that happened in the 21st century, which will be added after 21th the January.

- We will also have changes regarding the speaking section. In 2025, listening tasks were taken in only 2 recorded conversations and 3 lectures, nevertheless, changes would include tremendously decreasing the audio lengths by 70% and adding 6 similar recordings.
- Additionally, we will be able to see an additional type of scoring systems (CFFR) being inserted in TOEFL scoring system 1-120. This type would score test takers on the scale of 1-6.
- Also, all test center headphones worldwide are being replaced with state-of-the-art custom 'stereophones,' developed in collaboration with renowned audio brand Koss.
- For TOEFL iBT Home Edition, security would be enhanced to preserve the test's dignity and ensure fairness. This change would likely help more universiteis accept Home edition as they were not before this because the chances of cheating would drop to almost 0%.
- Finally, the last change is in the writing section, which will be an addition of a new task, in which examinees shour write a response to an academic Email received from a prefessor.
- These changes would allow students to take the exam more conveniently providing them with flexibility. Below, in this chart, we can see the changes before 2023 and after 2023, clearly stating that these updates would help students, as it was empirically seen before.



CHAPTER 3

Reading

Let's move on with the information about the TOEFL Exam's standard tricks which gaurantees ones success in this test.

GOLDEN Rules Of The READING Section

In this section, we have 2 passages and about 36 minutes to solve 20 questions. To solve the questions, we need to firstly comprehend the text and then move on with the questions. There are 8 types of questions in this section: Factual, Negative Factual, Vocabulary, Rhetorical Purpose, Inference, Paragraph Relationship, Insert Sentence, Important idea.

Before we move on to the strategies for each question type, I would like to familiarize you with the strategies for comprehending a passage first. Due to question's trickiness and using tips and tricks were significantly impactful in one's success regarding solving the questions. However, After July 2023, texts become more difficult and trickier to understand, and oppositely, questions become easier to solve.

Solve this on your own!

Before 2023:

Let me show you a comparison between a text before 2023 and after that date.

The causes of this population rebound are consequences of other human actions. First, the major predators of deer—wolves, cougars, and lynx—have been greatly reduced in numbers. Second, conservation has been insured by limiting times for and types of hunting. But the most profound reason for the restoration of high population numbers has been the fate of the forests. Great tracts of lowland country deforested by logging, fire, or both have become ideal feeding grounds for deer. In addition to finding an increase of suitable browse, like huckleberry

and vine maple, Arthur Einarsen, longtime game biologist in the Pacific Northwest, found quality of browse in the open areas to be substantially more nutritive. The protein content of shade-grown vegetation, for example, was much lower than that for plants grown in clearings.

Question 1

• ***<u>According</u> to the paragraph, which single claim is best supported as the most profound cause of the deer population rebound?***

a) The numerical decline of major predators such as wolves, cougars, and lynx.
b) Legal conservation measures that limit when and what kinds of hunting are allowed.
c) The transformation of lowland forests into open feeding grounds by logging, fire, or both, which increased both quantity and nutritive quality of browse.
d) A rise in the protein content of all shade-grown vegetation.

Traps of the First question:

The main trap in this question is order. Many students think the A or B reason is the answer because they come earlier in the paragraph. This pushes them to choose predators or hunting limits. But the sentence starting with "But the most profound reason" clearly shows that the writer is changing direction and pointing to the most important cause.

Another trap is option d. It talks about protein content, which sounds scientific and detailed. Under pressure, details feel important. But protein content is only an example used to support the forest explanation. It is not a main cause by itself.

To get the correct answer, the reader must connect several sentences: forests were cleared, deer got more food, and that food was more nutritious. This is harder than just matching one sentence.

Question 2

• ***Which of the following hypothetical findings would most seriously undermine the author's explanation that changes in forest condition are the principal reason for restored high deer numbers?***

a) New data showing hunting limits were introduced long after deer populations had already recovered.
b) Evidence that plants in newly opened clearings have substantially lower protein content than shade-grown plants.
c) Records demonstrating that wolf, cougar, and lynx populations rebounded at the same time as deer.

d) Observations that huckleberry and vine maple are less available in clearings than in intact lowland forest.

Traps of the Second Question:

This question is tricky because it asks what would weaken the author's idea, not what the text says. Many students still try to "match" information instead of thinking about logic.

Option a looks serious because it talks about time, but hunting limits are not the main reason in the text, so weakening them does not really hurt the main argument.

Option c feels tempting because predators are mentioned early. But again, predators are not the most important cause, so this option does not break the main explanation.

Option d uses plant names from the passage, which makes it feel safe or something called making "Word Soup". But the author focuses on food quality, not just availability.

The correct answer is b because it directly attacks the key idea: open areas have more nutritious food. If that is not true, the main explanation fails.

After 2023:

Some of the least costly defenses, in terms of energy use, available to plants are structures that make penetration by predators difficult, if not impossible. These include tough leaves, spines, and epidermal hairs on leaves, which may trap, impale, or fence out insects and discourage browsing by vertebrate herbivores, as well as hard-coated seeds. These structures may have evolved early in the history of the plants when they might have been subject to even greater predatory pressures. Because they represent little investment, plants still retain them.

Question 3:

Paragraph 1 supports which of the following statements about the defense system of plants?

a) Its development requires lots of energy on the part of the plant.

b) Its design is less elaborate today than at the time of its origin.

c) it was probably of greater necessity in the early stages of plant evolution.

d) It developed relatively late in the plant's evolutionary history.

Traps of the Updated version "Question 3"

Paragraph "**After 2023**" has a big difference between the other one. As you can see there are more traps in the text than in the question, so it is the questions that causes the question to be tricky, but the same thing does not apply to texts before 2023. For instance, due to the intense pressure during a reading test, you would not see the "least" before the adverb costly, as a

result, your subconsious mind would think of this as costly only. If you think the world costly, a would appear more appealing for you while it's not correct at all, it quite the opposite.

Moreover there are other types of traps as well for you in this text, not in the question. For instance, "if not impossible" phrase, while without using this phrase the text would make you understand, but this makes it more complex and confusing for you to comprehend. The last independent sentence has a cause-and-effect relationship, making it even more complex since the sentence " Because they represent little investment, plants still retain them." doesn't seem to connect two things while it has a relationship with the for an intermediate or upper-intermediate level english learner.

The correct answer is the option C. There are two main ways we can solve this question and questions of such text type.

1: The first and foremost way is reading the whole paragraph and comprehending, enabling us to infer the answer from many traces such as: could be understood through these sentences or parts of the sentences: "**are structures that make penetration by predators difficult**", spreading the massage of defensive systems, and '**which may trap, impale, or fence out insects and discourage browsing by vertebrate herbivores**"which spread the massage of defensing the plant as well. And this sentence "***These structures may have evolved early in the history of the plants when they might have been subject to even greater predatory pressures***", meaning that in early times of the plants' development process, these defensive parts are the most necessary for the plant. All of these sentences only sends this massage that in the early stages of a plant developing, these are mostly neccessary to plants.

2: The second way is to track the cause-and-effect links instead of the general meaning. In this paragraph, the key relationship is created by the word "**because**" in the sentence: "**Because they represent little investment, plants still retain them.**" This shows a direct cause (**little investment**) and effect (**plants keep these defenses**). Another cause-and-effect link appears in the sentence: "**These structures may have evolved early in the history of the plants when they might have been subject to even greater predatory pressures.**" Here, the cause is greater predatory pressure, and the effect is the development of defensive structures. By identifying these relationships, we can see that the defenses were necessary early due to high pressure and are still present because they cost little energy. Any answer choice that ignores either early pressure or low energy cost can be eliminated. This method avoids being trapped by descriptive details like examples of structures, which do not explain why or when the defenses developed.

CHAPTER 4

Comprehension

Comprehension plays a pivotal role not only in the reading but also in the Writing, Speaking, and listening tasks. For instance, when we don't comprehend the reading passage of the 2rd task in the speaking, we would neither be able to understand the listening, nor would we be able to speak in a way to fulfill the requirements for a good score.

Unlike what most of us think, in the reading section it does not matter if you can translate a text but cannot comprehend it. There is a golden exercise that help a language learner to comprehend any text in any level. This exercise helps us to recognize a sentences' role in a paragraph and a paragraph in an essay on the whole.

A student preparing for the TOEFL iBT should understand that only Comprehension on its own accounts for more than 20% of your overall score in this exam. We can infer this by the listening, accounting for a fascinating 63% of the overall exam.

There are two ways you can practice to build a comprehension level for yourself to precisely comprehend almost any text, from beginners to the most difficult ones written by Shakespeare.

The Golden Formula:
We have to firstly read question (not the answer choices) and then the paragraph and finally answer the question.

We have to understand the relationship between sentences and infer the answer from them. So that's why I will show you an exercise that could help you understand these better and I will demonstrate how you can use this exercise to train your eyes for anything that has a relationship and differentiate them from other type of sentence. Understanding this relationship would help you understand the meaning and the purpose of a sentence or a paragraph, and therefore, helping you to solve the question.

In English texts, there are many types of relationships between sentences, such as cause and effect, problem and solution, comparison and contrast, definition and example, classification, sequence or process, general statement and support, claim and evidence, concession and refutation, and description. However, in TOEFL reading texts, only a limited set of these relationships is commonly used, mainly cause and effect, comparison and contrast, general idea and supporting details, example or illustration, sequence in scientific or historical processes, and simple problem–solution structures, while more complex argumentative patterns are rarely

Scientific (Geology, Chemistry, Astronomy…)	History (Athens, Industrial Revolution, China, Maya…)	Human (Infancy, Remembering, Yawning…)

Main-Topic->	

Sub Topics

1:
2:
3:

Cause and Effect:	1:	2:
Problem and Solution:	1:	2:
A hypothesis and its argument:	1:	2:

Despcription	1:	2:
Compare-Contrast:	1:	2:
A general fact with some details:	1:	
A general fact with some details:	1:	

Text Organization

1. In the exercise above, we should firstly understand the theme of our topic, whether it's scientific or history, and after understanding it, we highlight the category.

2. Second, we have to skim the whole passage to grasp the general idea that the whole passage delves deeper to just in one minute, SUPER QUICK!

   2a. The only way possible for this is to quickly read the first sentence of a paragraph and the last sentence of each paragraph.

3. Next, as we start to seriously read the passage, there are always three sub topics in TOEFL reading passages that we have to distinguish. There could be more than three paragraphs, of course, but not more than three sub topics-3 main topics of the passage that could be in 1-3 paragraphs in length-in a TOEFL reading text. So, our goal is to diagnose those 3 sub-topics, and usually they are in the first sentence of a paragraph (the rest of the paragraph is just details about that sub-topic), which we also call a gold sentence, however, it can also be in the middle of a paragraph or in the last sentences.

4. In this part, we train our eyes to find us the relationships between 2 and more sentences. Firstly, we have to connect and understand the relationship between 2 or more sentences and then understand the type of a paragraph. Whether a paragraph is a cause and effect or problem-solution. And sharpening the eye to the extent that, it is problem solution, what sentence refers to the problem and what to the solution. Understanding these help us understand the passage on the whole and therefore, solve questions with a higher score.

Here are the rules one needs to follow to do this exercise correctly.

- It is optional for you to either write the whole sentence that you see in the reading or just write the first word of a sentence and the last one, but I reccomend you to write the whole sentences so you can understand what causes a sentence to be a “cause-and-effect” and the other to be a “problem-solution” because there are words such as because, since, due to, owing to... and more to cause a sentence to maintain a cause and effect relationship with the other one.
- There are more than one cause and effect and compare-contrast in a passage, as a result, these are most common ones and that’s why I reccomend you to keep an eye on both of them.

- It mainly depends on your English Level, however, for an average TOEFL learner, it takes only 2-3 weeks to master this exercise and therefore increasing their score up to 3 scores. But there is a condition: one should do it every day and they should take at least one passage and maximum of a 3 in a day.

That’s it, if you do this exercise as recommended, you definitely see the results, but don’t worry if you don’t see those scores increasing just in 4 days, it takes time, as it did for me, to improve your score greatly.

THE SECOND GOLDEN FORMULA:

There is also another type of formula that if you combine both of these formulas, you would amazingly increase your score. This will help you for better comprehension of a sentence itself. The first formula would help you to understand relationships and type of sentences, but to understand the relationship, you firstly need to comprehend it. The first one helps you to choose subtopics, on the other hand, this will help you to understand what a sentence could be called sub-topic.

Well, this exercise is done when you solve all the questions, unlike the first formula, doing it before taking the reading exam.

1. Firstly, after taking the reading test, you start analyzing the same passage you take exam of doing this exercise.
2. When exercising, you can take your time, it was usually taking up to 1 hour for me to analyze just one passage. But I reccomend you set the limit for yourself because this exam requires you to be great at time management.

3. Before we start to do this exercise, I need you to know all of these terms (parts of speech, Phrases, and Clauses) I reccomend learning them in detail.

Subject: The subject is what the sentence is about or what performs the action.
Object: The object is what receives the action of the verb or completes its meaning.
Verb: Shows an action, occurrence, or state of being.
Noun: Names a person, place, thing, or idea.
Pronoun: Replaces a noun to avoid repetition.
Adjective: Describes or limits a noun.
Adverb: Modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb.

Phrases

Phrase: A group of words without a subject–verb combination that works as a single unit.
Noun Phrase: Built around a noun and its modifiers.
Verb Phrase: Built around a main verb and its auxiliaries.
Adjective Phrase: Describes a noun using an adjective and modifiers.
Adverb Phrase: Modifies a verb, adjective, or adverb.
Prepositional Phrase: A group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with its object, adding information about time, place, cause, or manner.

Clauses

Clause: A group of words containing a subject and a verb.
Independent Clause: Expresses a complete thought and can stand alone.
Dependent Clause: Cannot stand alone and depends on an independent clause.
Noun Clause: Acts as a noun in a sentence.
Adjective Clause: Describes a noun in a sentence.
Adverb Clause: Modifies a verb, adjective, or adverb.

I will show you how you can do this exercise by implementing the strategy into this paragraph.

Follow these instructions when analyzing a text through this exercise:

1. Read the sentence and know the main idea of it by distinguishing the independent and dependent clauses.
2. Understand every component of that specific sentence, getting from noun and verbs to phrases and different types of clauses.
3. Translate that same sentence into your own language aloud.

Let's begin!

Some of the least costly defenses, in terms of energy use, available to plants are structures that make penetration by predators difficult, if not impossible. These include tough leaves, spines, and epidermal hairs on leaves, which may trap, impale, or fence out insects and discourage browsing vertebrate herbivores, as well as hard-coated seeds. These structures may have evolved early in the history of the plants when they might have been subject to even greater predatory pressures. Because they represent little investment, plants still retain them.

Clauses:

Independent clause: *Some of the least costly defenses … available to plants are structures* → main idea: plants have low-cost defenses.

Dependent clause (adjective clause): *that make penetration by predators difficult, if not impossible* → explains what the structures do.

Dependent clause (adjective clause): *which may trap, impale, or fence out insects and discourage browsing by vertebrate herbivores*.

Other Components:

Main noun phrase (subject): *Some of the least costly defenses, in terms of energy use, available to plants*

Verb: *are* (linking verb)
Subject complement: *structures*
Prepositional phrase: *in terms of energy use* (explains "least costly")
Verb phrase (relative clause): *make penetration by predators difficult*
Nouns: *defenses, energy, plants, structures, penetration, predators, leaves, spines, hairs, insects, herbivores, seeds*
Verbs: *are, make, include, trap, impale, fence out, discourage, may have evolves.*

Phrases listing examples: *tough leaves, spines, epidermal hairs on leaves, hard-coated seeds*
Modifiers: *tough, epidermal, hard-coated, vertebrate*

By colors, you can easily understand what I mean. However, it is would be time consuming if you use this highlighting method. So, that is why I propose you recognize each component of a sentence only in your mind.

I hope success for you all of you hardworker language learners, I wish these methods work best for you.

Question types, Strategies, and Traps

TOEFL READING QUESTION TYPES

(What they ask → Strategy → Example)

1. Factual Information Questions

What they ask: Information directly stated in the passage.
Strategy: Locate the sentence and match meaning, not words.
For example:
Question: What do spines do?
Answer: They discourage animals from eating plants.

2. Negative Factual Information Questions

What they ask: Which option is NOT mentioned in the passage.
Strategy: Eliminate answers that are clearly stated in the text.
For example:
Answer: Producing bright flowers

3. Inference Questions

What they ask: What can be logically concluded from the passage.
Strategy: Choose the weakest answer that must be true.
For example:
Answer: Light affects plant growth.

4. Vocabulary in Context Questions

What they ask: Meaning of a word as used in the passage.
Strategy: Replace the word with each option and test the sentence.
For example:
Word: discourage → prevent.

5. Reference Questions

What they ask: What a pronoun or phrase refers to.
Strategy: Look immediately before the reference word.
For example:
"them" → plants.

6. Sentence Simplification Questions

What they ask: Best restatement of a complex sentence.
Strategy: Keep core meaning; remove details.
For example:
Answer: Plants in dry areas save water with thick leaves.

7. Insert Text Questions

What they ask: Where a sentence best fits in a paragraph.
Strategy: Use logic, pronouns, and transitions.
For example:
A result sentence fits after its cause.

8. Prose Summary Questions

What they ask: Main ideas of the passage.
Strategy: Choose general ideas, reject examples.
For example:
Answer: Plants use physical defenses against predators.

9. Table / Categorization Questions

What they ask: Classification of information from the passage.
Strategy: Match exactly how the passage groups ideas.
For example:
Physical defenses → spines, tough leaves.

TYEPES OF TRAPS AND WAYS TO FIGHT THEM:

1. Opposite Meaning Trap

What it does: Uses familiar words from the passage but reverses the author's idea.
Strategy: Always check whether the answer agrees with or contradicts the passage.
For example:
Passage: Plants reduce water loss by closing pores.
Trap answer: Plants reduce water loss by opening pores.

2. Extreme Language Trap

What it does: Uses absolute words that are stronger than the passage.
Strategy: Reject answers with words like *all, never, only* unless the passage clearly supports them.
For example:
Passage: Many birds migrate in winter.
Trap answer: All birds migrate in winter.

3. Half-Right Trap

What it does: One part of the answer is correct, but another part is wrong or not mentioned.
Strategy: Check every part of the sentence; if one part fails, eliminate it.
For example:

Passage: The drug reduces pain but causes side effects.
Trap answer: The drug reduces pain and causes no side effects.

4. Outside Knowledge Trap

What it does: Uses real-world facts not stated in the passage.
Strategy: Ignore what you know; choose only what the passage says.
For example:
Passage: The text explains how solar panels work.
Trap answer: Solar energy is environmentally friendly.

5. Wrong Detail Trap

What it does: Uses correct information but answers a different question.
Strategy: Match the answer directly to the question, not just the passage.
For example:
Question: Why do plants have spines?
Trap answer: Spines are found on plant stems.

6. Too Specific Trap

What it does: Focuses on one small example instead of the main idea.
Strategy: Prefer answers that match the passage's level of generality.
For example:
Passage: Animals use sounds to communicate.
Trap answer: Dolphins use clicks to communicate.

7. Too General Trap

What it does: Broadens the idea beyond what the passage supports.
Strategy: Reject answers that remove important limits or details.
For example:
Passage: Some insects live in forests.
Trap answer: All animals live in forests.

8. Restated Words but Wrong Logic Trap

What it does: Reuses passage vocabulary but changes relationships.
Strategy: Check cause, comparison, and sequence carefully.
For example:
Passage: Increased rainfall causes plant growth.
Trap answer: Plant growth causes increased rainfall.

9. Distorted Cause-and-Effect Trap

What it does: Switches the cause and the result.
Strategy: Identify which comes first in the passage.
For example:
Passage: Pollution leads to poor air quality.
Trap answer: Poor air quality leads to pollution.

10. Irrelevant Information Trap

What it does: Mentions true information that does not answer the question.
Strategy: Ask yourself: *Does this actually answer what I'm asked?*
For example:
Question: What is the main benefit of the vaccine?
Trap answer: The vaccine was developed in 2018.

These are the types of traps I was talking about earlier, these will only work for you, if you have comprehended the reading text, not else. And we have also learned the comprehension

If you are a test-taker, wish you the best! Hope this research make your reading score as possible.

LAST WORDS

Writing this research paper has been both an academic journey and a personal reflection on the challenges faced by English language learners preparing for the TOEFL iBT examination. Throughout this study, I sought not only to explain the structure of the TOEFL Reading section but also to investigate the deeper reasons behind the success of high-scoring test takers. Rather than relying solely on memorization or vocabulary acquisition, successful candidates demonstrate strong reading comprehension, recognize relationships between ideas, identify textual organization, and apply strategic thinking while answering questions.

The strategies presented in this paper were developed through extensive practice, careful observation of TOEFL reading passages, analysis of official test materials, and personal experience. Although no single strategy can guarantee a perfect score, consistent practice combined with effective comprehension techniques can significantly improve reading performance.

Language learning is a gradual process that requires patience, discipline, and persistence. Every difficult passage understood, every mistake analyzed, and every reading session completed contributes to long-term improvement. Students should therefore view each practice test not merely as an assessment but as an opportunity to strengthen their analytical thinking and reading ability.

Finally, I hope that the ideas presented in this research will assist future TOEFL candidates, English teachers, and language learners in approaching reading comprehension with greater confidence and understanding. My sincere wish is that these strategies will help learners achieve not only higher TOEFL scores but also stronger academic reading skills that will benefit them throughout their educational and professional careers.

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