The TOEFL® Speaking Test Part 1

In this part you have to speak for 45 seconds about a choice. You will be presented with two situations or opinions. You'll be asked which you prefer and you need to explain your choice.

Look at the topic below for 15 seconds. You may make notes if you wish

Some people think they can achieve more when they are with other people. Others think they are more productive when they are alone. What is your opinion? Explain why.

Preparation Time: 15 seconds

Response Time: 45 seconds

After 15 seconds, please speak into the microphone. You should speak for 45 seconds. Afterwards you can compare your recording to a sample answer.

Sample Answer:

I'm in two minds about this. In some cases it can be really beneficial to be with other people when you're trying to achieve something. For example, when I was trying to lose weight, I formed a group with some friends. We got together to weigh ourselves once a week. We went swimming and running together too. Being with other people motivated and encouraged me to eat less fatty food and do more exercise, so I think that was really beneficial. On the other hand, I once got together with my friends to form a study group before an exam, and to my mind, that was a waste of time. We spent too long chatting about our teachers, rather than focusing on the work. Then my friends spent ages discussing a topic I knew a lot about already. I'd have accomplished a lot more if I'd spent the afternoon reading on my own. So all in all, I think it depends on the activity whether I'd feel more productive doing something alone or with others.

The TOEFL® Speaking Test Part 2

Read the following text from a college course manual and listen to the conversation that follows it. Then, answer the question.

Course: GL202
Assessment Procedure Cont.

Part 3.6 - Group Work
The geology department is aware of the problems surrounding of group work, and its unpopularity among students. We realize that in some cases students do not contribute and thus gain marks they do not deserve, while stronger students are frustrated at being held back by weaker students. Similarly, it is very difficult for tutors to award marks for group projects, as it is unclear who is responsible for each part. However, the department feels that there is a great deal to be gained from group work, in terms of self-organization and communication skills. To this end, we plan to introduce a system whereby the group work itself is not formally assessed, but each student will undertake an individual piece of work based on the group project, which will be designed to ensure participation in the project.

Question: *The man expresses his opinion of group work. State and explain his opinion. Compare his opinion with the opinion of the geology faculty.*

Preparation Time: 30 seconds

Response Time: 60 seconds

After 30 seconds, please speak into the microphone. You should speak for 60 seconds. Afterwards you can compare your recording to a sample answer.

Audio Script:

(Male student) Thank goodness the department has made changes to the way they assess group work! I had a nightmare last term with our geology project. I couldn't bear going through that again!

(Female student) Why, what happened?

(Male student) Well, there were three of us in the group. One guy worked really hard, but he didn't trust anyone else to do anything. He just wanted to do it all himself.

(Female student) It sounds like you were freeloading.

(Male student) Well, I wasn't. I offered up plenty of ideas, but he kept saying they were no good. In the end, I stopped trying and left it to him. The other guy was a waste of space. He didn't pull his weight at all. We barely saw him.

(Female student) Did you get a good grade?

(Male student) A reasonable one, considering how little work I did. But I'm sure I'd have done better if I'd been given the chance to say what I wanted.

(Female student) Well, the new system should give you that opportunity.

(Male student) Yeah, I hope so, though I wish they'd abolish group work altogether. All this organization and communication is just a waste of time. It's got nothing to do with geology.

Sample Answer:

The man is not keen on group work. In his experience, group work was frustrating because another group-member wasn't interested in his ideas and so did the work himself. He denies being a freeloader because he did try, unlike the other team-member, but he admits that he did not deserve the marks he was awarded, because so little of the group work was his own. So it sounds as if the faculty is right in identifying that group marks don't correctly reflect the amount of work students have done. Another problem is that the man wishes he'd had the opportunity to approach the task in an individual way. The faculty seems to recognize this. That is why they have decided to implement a system whereby students do an individual piece of work based on a group project.
The man and the faculty don't agree on everything, though. The man doesn't think that the skills required in group work; that is, group organization and communication, are useful for a student of geology. However, the faculty thinks they are, and that's why they aren't abolishing group work altogether.

The TOEFL® Speaking Test Part 3

Read a passage from a teaching textbook and listen to the lecture that follows it. Then answer the question. (Reading time in an actual test would be 45-50 seconds.)

VAK Theory

One theory of learning states that we use three sensory receivers: visual (V), auditory (A), and kinesthetic (K) when we take in information. According to the VAK theory, one or two of these receiving styles is normally dominant and thus defines the best way for a person to learn new information. Thus a visual learner learns best using their sight; an auditory learner learns best when listening, and a kinesthetic learner learns best through physical activity.
VAK is one of the most popular learning models nowadays due to its simplicity. Teachers are beginning to incorporate a range of stimuli and activities into their lessons so as to cater for all types of learner. Although it is not yet proven that using one's preferred sense provides the best means for learning, having a range of activities can reduce boredom and increase motivation in the classroom.

Explain *VAK Theory* and how the example used by the professor illustrates how the theory can be applied.

Preparation Time: 30 seconds
Response Time: 60 seconds

After 30 seconds, please speak into the microphone. You should speak for 60 seconds. Afterwards you can compare your recording to a sample answer.

Audio Script:

An example of how you might go about this is, well, I'll describe a lesson I observed a few weeks ago. The teacher was teaching children about nature… about plants – specifically about how to identify different trees. The first thing she did was to play a game where students had to name as many trees as they could – without writing anything down, just speaking out loud. Then after that little activity, she described the different ways you can identify trees – from the shape of their leaves, their buds, their bark and so on. But you can imagine that the kids who don't have very good imaginations… they couldn't really visualize what she was talking about… their minds were starting to wander, they were shuffling in their seats and getting distracted. But that was okay, because next she showed some photos for them to look at on the electronic whiteboard, then passed around some picture books. Students then copied some of the pictures into their exercise books. After that, students got the chance to go out into the school grounds and physically identify some of the trees that were there. So it was quite an effective lesson – very memorable, and the pupils looked very engaged. A week later I asked one of them to describe to me the leaf of an oak tree, and she did so perfectly.

Sample Answer:

The idea behind the VAK theory is that everyone has a preferred way of learning. Visual people learn best through looking at things, auditory learners learn best when they hear something, and kinesthetic learners learn best by doing. The theory suggests that teachers need to include a range of activities in their lessons so that all pupils, whether they are visual, auditory or kinesthetic, get the chance to learn. The professor's example shows a teacher doing just this. The game, where the students name trees, and the teacher's opening talk, is designed to suit auditory learners, because at this point, they're only using their ears. The photos, and the part where the students copy pictures of leaves is visual, although you could say that copying pictures is kinesthetic too. The part where they go outside and look at leaves is kinesthetic. The fact that the student could remember the shape of the oak leaf suggests that applying the VAK theory is a useful way of helping students to learn. However, we can't assume it was the VAK theory that helped her remember. Perhaps the variety of activities kept her motivated, or maybe she was just a particularly bright student with a good memory.

The TOEFL® Speaking Test Part 4

In this part you have to speak for 60 seconds to summarize an academic lecture.

Listen to the talk. You may make notes if you wish

Using information from the talk, describe what we know about water on Mars, and how we know it.

Preparation Time: 20 seconds
Response Time: 60 seconds

After 20 seconds, please speak into the microphone. You should speak for 60 seconds. Afterwards you can compare your recording to a sample answer. You may have to 'allow' this page to use your microphone.

Audio Script:

It's always been one of those big sci-fi questions – is there life on Mars, or rather, could Mars ever support life? Well, it is generally assumed that in order to have life, you need water. Well, ever since the 1960s we've been sending out probes to Mars to try to… ascertain if there is water on Mars, or if there ever has been, and in the 1990s, 1996 to be precise, the U.S. Mars Global Surveyor was launched. The surveyor remains in orbit around Mars to this day, and has some rather nifty equipment on board, including a high-resolution camera, a sensor which can identify soil and rocks, and a laser that can take measurements and map the planet's surface.
So what have we leant from the Global surveyor? Well, we've found out that yes, there was once water on Mars, and in great quantities too. I'm talking oceans, seas, lakes… - much like earth today. They have deduced this because of the shapes of the mountains and valleys on Mars – they are the same shape as those formations on earth that we know were created by water. In fact, some analysts are suggesting that there is still water on Mars to this day, but deep down, in holes 100 to 400 meters below the surface. This idea created quite a stir, as you can imagine, and a number of scientists have tried to either prove… or refute this theory, using other evidence available to us. Some Chinese scientists, for example, have been studying a meteor that was collected from Antarctica in 2001, but they've found no evidence of water there, but that's not to say there isn't any water on Mars, as Mars and meteorites are separate entities entirely. Another source of evidence we have is images from astronomical telescopes, but we can't see much of the planet from this angle – just the poles, and they are covered in ice caps – dry ice, not H20 – so that doesn't help us one way or the other.

Sample Answer:

The professor tells us that there was once water on Mars. There was a similar amount of water on the planet as there is on earth now. We know this because of data retrieved by a probe which is in orbit around Mars. The probe was launched in 1996, and has been sending data back to Earth ever since then. It has taken photographs and measured the shape of the land, so that maps can be drawn. From this information, scientists have been able to deduce that there was water there, because the rock formations on Mars are similar to the formation on Earth that were formed by water. Some of those scientists believe that there is water on Mars even now, but there doesn't seem to be any evidence for this. Some studies have been done on a meteorite which landed on Earth in 2001, but there was no sign of any water there, although that doesn't mean there isn't any water on Mars, because Mars and this meteorite are not the same thing. We can also get pictures from astronomical telescopes, but they don't really help us ascertain whether there is water on Mars or not either, because from this angle, we can only see the poles of Mars, and these are covered in dry ice. So, according to the lecture, we still don't know whether or not there is currently water on Mars.