

# CRACKING the TOEFL CBT

by George S. Miller

Princeton's Review, 1999

## content

<b>CRACKING THE TOEFL CBT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
HOW IS THE TOEFL CBT STRUCTURED .....	3
A-SHORT CONVERSATION .....	4
<i>Emphasized expressions:</i> .....	4
<i>Cliches:</i> .....	4
<i>Homonyms:</i> .....	6
IDIOMS FOR TOEFL LISTENING.....	7
CRACKING TOEFL CBT LISTENING PART A .....	14
<i>Question Topics in Order of Frequency</i> .....	14
<i>Three POE techniques:</i> .....	15
<i>Summary of TOEFL CBT Listening Part A Strategy</i> .....	15
CRACKING TOEFL CBT LISTENING PART B .....	17

## How is the TOEFL CBT Structured

<b>Section 1: Listening</b>	
Part A (short conversations)	11-17 questions
Part B (6-9 lectures and long conversations)	16-45 questions
	Total: 30-50 questions
	Time: 40-60 questions
<b>Section 2: Structure</b>	
Sentence Completion and Error Identification	20-25 questions
	Total: 20-25 questions
	Time: 15-20 minutes
<b>Break</b>	<b>Time: 10 minutes</b>
<b>Section 3: Reading</b>	
4-5 passages	10-13 questions each
	Total: 44-60 questions
	Time: 70-90 minutes
<b>Section 4: Writing</b>	
1 written essay	Time: 30 minutes
Approximate number of questions: 94-135	
Total time: Approximately 4 and one-half hours	

## A-short conversation

### Emphasized expressions:

We'll be lucky if ...

You'll be lucky if you get out of here alive!

We might as well ...

We might as well walk to New York from Kansas!

Only...

-Did Sam know anything about American politics?- He's only read everything that's ever been published about it!(=Yes; Of course; Yes, a lot!)

If only ...

If only I had known before now!(=I really wish.)

Did/was/is ...

-David really enjoys his new car.- So he did buy a new one.(expressing surprise)

-We all noticed that you weren't in class on Monday.-So, it wasn't cancelled.

Can always ...

You can always change your mind.(reminding you still have another alternative)

Can't ...

It can't be eight o'clock already!(=I know that it is true, but I can't believe it.)

### Cliches

A expression that has become overly familiar or commonplace.

I don't know.

I couldn't tell you.

I wouldn't know.

I haven't the vaguest.

I haven't the foggiest.

I haven't any idea.

Who knows?

It's a mystery to me.

Don't look at me.

Don't ask me.

It's over my head.

You got me.

Beats me.

Don't do it!

I wouldn't if I were you.

Oh no you don't!

Cut it out!

Not here you don't.

Better leave well enough alone.

Forget it!

Don't bother.

You can't be too careful.

#### Question/Suggestion

How about...?

Why not...?

What about...?

What would you say to...?

What do you think about..?

Would you mind if ..?

Shouldn't you...?

#### Agreement

To say the least.

That's putting it mildly.

You can say that again.

That's for sure.

Don't I know it.

Now, that's an idea.

There you go!

Now you've said something(...I agree with, whereas you didn't before.)

I'll say.

I couldn't agree with you more.

Count me in.

Why not!

Do I ever!

You bet!

#### Disagreement

I doubt it.

Probably not.

Not likely.

I wouldn't say that.

Don't bet on it.

Don't count on it.

Don't be too sure.

I don't think so.

No way.

Never.

Not in a million years.

#### Thank you!

Thanks.

I appreciate it.

Thanks a lot.

I don't know how to thank you.

You're a lifesaver.

I'll never be able to repay you.

I'm grateful.

You're welcome!

It's the least I can do.  
 Forget it.  
 Don't mention it.  
 Never mind.  
 It doesn't matter.  
 No problem.  
 What did you say?  
 Pardon me?  
 Excuse me?  
 Sorry?  
 What?  
 Surprise/Disbelief  
 Isn't that something!  
 I can't believe that...  
 My goodness!  
 How about that!  
 It/He/She's too good to be true!  
 We made it!  
 You're kidding!  
 You're joking!  
 Come on!  
 It can't be!  
 Who says?  
 To think I ...!  
 No! You don't say!

### Homonyms:

new/knew  
 flower/flour  
 sew/so  
 won/one  
 plain/plane  
 sea/see  
 wood/would  
 hour/our  
 red/read  
 wait/weight  
 maid/made  
 way/weight  
 hole/whole  
 by/buy  
 sail/sale  
 sense/cents  
 reflex/reflects  
 soul/sole  
 son/sun

I /eye  
Banned/band  
Hire/higher  
Worn/warn  
jeans/genes  
cell/sell  
pale/pail  
tale/tail  
scene/seen  
fair/fare  
here/hear  
principal/principle  
weather/whether  
die/dye

## Idioms for TOEFL Listening

**Break down** - a collapse of physical and/or mental health; failing to work:

When she heard that her pet iguana had escaped, Mary Lou broke down and cried in front of the whole class.

After their car broke down, Marty and James had to walk five miles to the nearest service station.

**Break in** - to enter forcibly; with an item of clothing, it can mean to wear in and make comfortable:

The thief broke into the museum and stole all the artwork.

I finally broke in those shoes - but not before they gave me some terrible blisters.

**Breakthrough** - a sudden achievement:

The new vaccine represented a significant breakthrough in the battle against the virus.

**Break up** - to separate or collapse; to divide and disperse:

In 1969, the Beatles officially broke up after playing together as a band for more than a decade.

**Clear away** - to free from something:

When all this trouble clears away, he'll be able to go back to school.

If you clear away the dishes, I'll wash them.

**Clear out** - to leave a place, usually quickly:

The fire marshal ordered the people to clear out of their homes due to the possibility that the brush fires would spread.

**Come about** - to happen:

The train wreck came about as a result of the engineer's negligence.

**Come across** - to find or meet by chance:

We came across my grandmother's old diary while cleaning out the attic.

Come down with - to get sick:

When she came down with a terrible case of laryngitis, Kathy Lou Kelly wasn't able to perform at the benefit concert.

Come up with - to produce something or have an idea:

It was Juan who came up with the scheme to trick Mrs. Huxtable.

Come from - to derive or originate from:

The English language comes from many sources, such as Greek and Latin.

Come of - result from:

"Nothing good will come of that sort of behavior," my mother always said.

Come out - to disclose:

The news finally came out—cholesterol is not as bad for you as scientist originally believed.

Come through with - to succeed in doing:

The union finally came through with an offer to negotiate rather than strike.

Come to - to regain consciousness; add up to:

After Dorothy came to, she saw that she was in her own bed in Kansas.  
That dress and those shoes will come to about \$100 dollars.

Come to terms with - to understand or absorb mentally:

She had trouble coming to terms with her dog's death—it seemed so sudden.

Do without - to get along without:

During the drought, residents had to do without long, luxurious showers.

Drop in / drop by - to visit casually and something unexpectedly:

After the movie, we'll drop in and see if Margie is home.  
On your way to the dorm, drop by the library to see if the book is on reserve.

Fall back on - to turn to for help:

Fortunately for John, after he lost all his spending money, he had some savings to fall back on.

Fall behind - to fail to keep up with:

Mark had fallen behind so badly in his studies, it seemed he'd never be able to finish all his work and pass his courses.

Fall for - be taken in by; duped:

I can't believe that John fell for that trick – it was so obvious.

Fill in - to substitute for:

Mary Jones will fill in for Patty Smith during the race, as Patty is too ill to come today.

Fit in - to make time for; to conform:

The doctor will fit you in at about 3 o'clock for an appointment with her.  
Teenagers often try to fit in with their friends by wearing the same style of clothes and listening to the same music.

Give away - make a gift of:

The store was giving away a new scarf with every purchase in order to bring in more customers.

Give in - to surrender:

In Hesse's *Siddhartha*, the main character's father finally gives in and allows his son to leave home.

Give up - to stop; to yield to; to part with:

I finally gave up smoking after years of hearing all the health warnings.  
Nellie wouldn't sign the legal papers yet-she wasn't sure if she wanted to give up her right to a trial.

Go along with - to agree to:

The president would go along with the decision to hire some more people if the department could bring in more revenue.

Go down - when referring to food this means it can be swallowed and digested:

Ice cream was the only food that would go down easily after her operation.

Go far - to succeed:

Laura would go far with her hard work and intelligence.

Go on - to proceed with; to happen:

"I don't want to go on a diet again in my lifetime!" exclaimed Bob.  
The speaker went on for almost three hours before stopping.

Go through with - to do:

Few people thought that the mayor would go through with his plans to close all the city's homeless shelters.

Go under - to fail:

Due to the poor economy, ten businesses have gone under in our town in the last year.

Go up - be erected:

The building went up in a few months and soon there were tenants in the apartments.

Hang on - to hold on to; to wait or persevere:

Indiana Jones managed to grab onto the cliff and hang on for dear life.  
The receptionist told me to hang on while she consulted her appointment book.

Hang around - to loiter:

On a hot summer day, the kids like to just hang around at the beach.

Hang up - to end a telephone conversation by putting the receiver down:

Police tell you to just hang up if you get an obscene phone call.

Heat up - to increase in pressure:

The debate heated up significantly when Congressman Smithers mentioned plans for rezoning in the area.

Keep in touch with - to stay in communication with:

Please keep in touch with us after you move to France.

Kill off - to put to death:

The use of that pesticide will kill off ants as well as fleas.

Lay aside - to give up or set aside:

The mayor warned the students to lay aside their angry feelings toward the rival school on the day of the big soccer game.

Jan laid aside some money for just such an emergency.

Lay off - to terminate someone's employment:

The Brindley Corporation had to lay off ten percent of its employees due to decreased sales.

Laid up - sick in bed or out of the action:

Mr. Rodriguez was laid up for several weeks with a terrible flu.

Leave out - to omit:

"Don't leave out Aunt Mary from the wedding invitations!"

Leave up to - to allow to decide:

I'll leave your punishment up to you to decide," Principal Skinner told the kids.

Live up to - to fulfill:

We expect that Jim will live up to our plans to become the first member of the family to attend college.

Live down - to bear the embarrassment:

He'll never live down the shame of forgetting all his lines in the class play.

Move on - to go in another direction:

"It's time for you to move on," Susan told her friend, who wanted to quit her job as an editor.

Off limits - restricted:

That area is off limits to cars, due to efforts in our community to cut down on pollution.

On the mark - exactly right:

"Boy, were you on the mark about Irene-you were the only one who thought that she'd play so well in that concert."

Overkill - excess:

You really didn't need to prepare fifteen pages for that report-it really was overkill.

Over with - finished:

I was so relieved to be over with the TOEFL after six months of study.

Pass by - to overlook:

Marie was upset that the committee passed her by and chose a different finalist.

Pass through - to go through:

To get to New England by car from that town, it is necessary to pass through New York.

Pass up - to refuse:

We couldn't believe that Jose would pass up an opportunity to travel all around the country for free.

Pour in - to arrive in a large amount:

Cards and letters came pouring in to offer help and money after the new reports about that young girl's need for an operation.

Pull out - to take out:

The United States pulled its last troops out of Vietnam in 1973, although soldiers had been leaving for years.

Pull off - to do something in spite of problems:

Jake could hardly believe that Amanda could pull off that deal after she'd made such a big mistake.

Pushover - someone who is easily taken advantage of:

That Mrs. Jones is a real pushover—she always lets you hand in papers late if you ask.

Put down - to insult; to suppress:

I can't believe the way John puts down his mother when she's standing right here. The leaders put down a rebellion in their country by appeasing the different groups.

Put up - to allow or go along with:

Mr. Smith doesn't put up with any troublemakers in his class—they are immediately punished.

Run by - to tell someone about:

Maria asked her accountant to run those figures by her one more time before she signed the contract.

Send back - to return:

President Clinton vetoed the bill and sent it back to Congress for changes.

Sign in - to sign your name to enter a place:

Visitors must sign in at the front desk before going into the main auditorium.

Speak out - to state publicly:

Jones was afraid to speak out when he saw his boss stealing supplies—he didn't want to get in trouble.

Speak up - to speak more loudly; to state publicly:

"Please speak up—the rest of the group cannot hear you," Ms. Montgomery told Peter. Activists argue that we all have the responsibility to speak up wherever we see injustice, or no change will ever take place.

Speed up - to increase one's speed:

I have been practicing my reading comprehension with the hope that I will speed up and finish more passages in the time allotted.

Step in - to intervene:

The Town Board was forced to step in and put a stop to the development in the area when it was judged to be unsafe.

Stick to - to persist:

"Stick to your morals and you'll do a good job," my grandfather always advised.

Stick around - to stay:

I think I'll stick around- there's no reason to head home yet.

Stop by - to make a brief visit:

Could you stop by the grocery store on your way home from work and pick up a loaf of bread?

Stop up - to clog or prevent from moving:

The grease and hair stopped up the sink and Jan had to call a plumber to fix it.

Think better of - to change your mind:

Mark had considered dropping out of school to work, but a discussion with his parents made him think better of it, and he decided to stay in school.

Think nothing of - to do without care:

Some people in that town think nothing of throwing all their garbage into the river- don't they know the long-term effect?

Think over - to consider:

Every time Steven writes a paper he has to think over his topic for a few days before he even begins to write.

Think through - to consider all the effects:

"You obviously did not think through what would happen to you if you pulled that fire alarm," Principal Skinner told Marie.

Tied up - busy; unavailable for use:

Mr. Jones cannot come to the meeting this afternoon-he'll be tied up downtown until 7:00 p.m.

Since most of their money was tied up in long-term investments, Jan and Mark couldn't spend any of it.

Turn down - to refuse; to lower:

The Smiths were turned down for a loan because of their poor credit history.

The volume on the speakers was turned down because it was so late at night.

Turnoff - something that disgusts a person:

"Guys who only talk about the themselves are such a turnoff!" the magazine article proclaimed.

Turn over - transfer:

By law, attorneys must turn over evidence to the courts so that both sides may have a chance to review it.

Turn to - to go to for guidance or inspiration:

Many teenagers turn to their friends and family to help them decide where to attend college.

Turn up - to find or uncover:

It's always a good idea to browse the shelves in a library when you are doing a research paper-you never know what you may turn up.

Up against - confronted with:

In spite of being up against strong opposition from the larger British forces, the United States won the Revolutionary War.

Up to date - current:

Her clothes are always so stylish and up to date-she must read all the fashion magazines.

Wake up - to rouse from sleep or inactivity:

The young Americans of the 1960s sent a wake up call to the country to get involved and work for change.

Young children may wake up at any time in the middle of the night.

## Cracking TOEFL CBT Listening Part A

### Question Topics in Order of Frequency

#### 1. Meaning questions

- What does the man/woman mean?

#### 2. Infer/imply questions

☺ To *imply* means to express a thought indirectly

☺ To *infer* means to draw a conclusion

- What can be inferred about the woman?
- What does the woman imply?
- What can be inferred about the conversation?
- What does the man imply about...?

#### 3. Action questions

- What does the man/woman suggest the man/woman do?
- What will the man/woman probably do?
- What will the man/woman probably do next?

#### 4. Detail questions

- What does the man want to know?
- What do the speakers say about?
- What happened to the...?
- What does the woman say about...?

In Part A of the TOEFL CBT, time is on your side. You can take as long as you want to answer the questions (but don't take too long). The 12-second interval of the paper-and-pencil test has been eliminated. Remember to be extra careful on the **first eight questions**. They have the most influence on the questions types to come that will help improve your score.

***Be extra careful on the first eight questions.***

## Three POE techniques:

### Opposites

one wrong answer choice will look pretty similar to the correct answer, but will mean the opposite. If there is a pair of opposites, one of them is likely to be the right answer.

### Common sense / extreme answer choices

None of conversations will contain anything controversial, violent, passionate, or silly. so, you can use common sense and POE to eliminate three types of wrong answers:

Type 1: answer that are too extreme.(any answers that might be controversial are automatically wrong.)

Type 2: idioms. the second speaker will frequently use an idiomatic expression. you can eliminate choice that gives a literal translation.

such as: He was head and shoulders above the rest of the cast.

- a. he is too tall to be actor.
- b. his performance was excellent.

the right answer is ?

### Sound- alike

choose the answer that sounds least like what you heard on the tape. You'll notice that many sound-alikes can be eliminate using common sense.

w: Will Mary be in on Sunday?

m: Sunday is usually Mary's day off.

What does the man mean?

- A. Sunday is a day M often works.
- B. M rarely works on Sunday.
- C. Some days M's work is awful.
- D. M has had a terrible cough since Sunday.

A and B are the opposites. C is too extreme. Off-often-awful-cough are sound-alikes. The right answer B, is one of the opposites, is not extreme, and contains the fewest sound-alikes.

## Summary of TOEFL CBT Listening Part A Strategy

**Step 1:** Avoid looking at the picture. The pictures ETS shows you in Part A of the Listening section serve only as “distractors”.

**Step 2:** Listen to how the first speaker sets up the random topic of conversation.

**Step 3:** Listen extra closely to how the second speaker responds. Remember, the question will almost always be about the second speaker.

**Step 4:** While reading the answer choices, look for those that contain:

- *Opposite pairs in the answer choices*
- *Answer choices that directly translate idiomatic expressions*
- *Sound-alikes*

**Step 5:** Use POE (Process of Elimination) on as many answer choices as possible and then click on your answer. If you are still undecided, choose the answer choice containing the fewest sounds from the statement or dialogue.