



# TOEIC® Program features English in *global communication*

Setting the global standard for English language assessment

TOEIC Program tests are designed to assess English learner's communicative language ability in common daily life and workplace settings wherever English is learned and used around the world.

The TOEIC Program tests do not assess the ability to use English like native speakers nor do they test technical business language. They do test the English abilities needed to communicate effectively in global settings that learners who are non-native speakers should be expected to achieve.

# Global tests of communicative language ability for non-native speakers of English responding to the evolving nature of English communication



*The ability to communicate effectively in English is a truly global commodity.*

Around the world, English is used for a variety of purposes and in diverse contexts as a medium of communication or “global lingua franca” in business, education and elsewhere, especially in today’s highly connected Internet age. The use of English in these contexts gradually evolves over time as it is used for different purposes and between different people.

The TOEIC Program, in recognition of the evolving nature of international English communication, has for decades supported research to better understand how English is used in the international workplace and everyday life.

This includes the use of “business English” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1996), English speaking skills in the international workplace (Schmidgall & Powers, 2021), English writing skills in the international workplace (Lee & Schmidgall, 2020; Schmidgall & Powers, 2020), English listening and reading skills in the international workplace (Schmidgall et al., 2021a, 2021b) and the definition of English proficiency on the TOEIC Program tests as it relates to broader theories about international English communication (Schmidgall, 2025).

This research has drawn on a variety of methods, including “needs analysis” surveys of workplace professionals and reviews of research literature to help identify the English skills needed to communicate effectively in international settings.

# The TOEIC Program does not assess native-speaker-like English abilities or specialized English

Derived from these evidence-based understandings, the TOEIC Program tests are intended to provide a trustworthy measure of the communicative language ability of non-native speakers of English in relation to contexts where they are likely to need to use English.

It is important to emphasize that the TOEIC Program tests do not assess how closely test takers approximate “native-speaker” abilities in English, nor do they emphasize particular varieties of English, such as “American English” or “British English” only.

Furthermore, the TOEIC Program tests do not assess technical, specialized or unusual aspects of the English language that might be encountered in unique professions or business settings.

Rather, the intent of the TOEIC Program is to provide assessments of the English proficiency that can be expected of any learner around the world who needs to demonstrate their developing abilities on common communication tasks.

## Test tasks are set in typical situations across the globe

The tasks that appear on the TOEIC and TOEIC Bridge tests are designed to reflect typical uses of English in a variety of contexts around the world.

The specific tasks that appear on TOEIC Program tests have been selected on the basis of careful analyses of the ways in which English is actually used around the world for the most common daily life and workplace purposes (e.g., Hines, 2010; Lee & Schmidgall, 2020).

For example, on the TOEIC Bridge Reading test, test takers might be asked to read a series of text messages exchanged by colleagues to arrange a meeting at an international airport in Japan, or they might review a public service announcement from a library in Australia.

On the TOEIC Speaking test, test takers might participate in an interview about their television watching habits with a Canadian market research firm.

These examples illustrate, as do listening and writing tasks on the TOEIC and TOEIC Bridge tests, the focus of the TOEIC Program on testing learners’ abilities to communicate effectively in typical situations and activities that require English skills, regardless of where in the world they occur. The TOEIC Program provides truly global assessments of English.

# Scores are comparable wherever the test is taken

As a global approach to assessment, scores from different test forms of the same TOEIC Program test are comparable regardless of when and where the test is taken.

A test taker in Mexico and a test taker in France who receive the same score on a TOEIC Program test can be understood to have the same level of English proficiency.

In fact, psychometricians at ETS utilize various statistical techniques to make sure that a test taker's performance is converted accurately onto the TOEIC test score scales, and they conduct a procedure called "equating" to make sure that scores on different test forms and occasions are comparable (Schmidgall et al, 2021a).

What is more, score users can trust that different test takers have had highly comparable test-taking experiences and that the test scores provide a fair and accurate indication of their actual English communication abilities.

For example, research has shown that TOEIC Speaking and Writing test scores predict judgments of test takers' communicative effectiveness by professionals in the international workplace around the world.

In other words, test takers with higher scores on TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests are perceived as more effective communicators in international workplace settings (Schmidgall & Powers, 2020, 2021).

The score scales for the TOEIC Program tests are also designed to provide maximally meaningful and interpretable information about English learners' abilities, so that score users around the world have access to a common and mutually understandable measurement of English.

Scores on the TOEIC Program tests provide many levels of distinction from beginning learners to those with quite advanced competence, and the meaning of these scores is carefully described and illustrated on score reports and in supporting resources.

For resources for the scores on the TOEIC Program tests visit [www.ets.org/toEIC/test-takers/scores.html](http://www.ets.org/toEIC/test-takers/scores.html)

# Providing high-quality and fair tests that reflect English communication skills in today's world

As global assessments of English ability, the TOEIC Program tests present test takers with language tasks and test content that are relevant to their communication needs and reflective of contemporary uses of English in common daily life and workplace settings.

Periodically, the underlying assessment designs of the TOEIC Program tests are reviewed and updated as necessary to make sure that the tests are providing the most accurate and meaningful measures of English communication ability to test score users around the world (e.g., Ashmore et al., 2018; Park & Bredlau, 2018).

For example, the TOEIC Bridge tests were redesigned in 2019 by a team of ETS researchers, test developers and psychometricians.

The test design process began with defining the nature of English proficiency that would be assessed by the test: the English skills needed in everyday life for learners at beginning to intermediate proficiency levels.

ETS researchers began by investigating and defining the types of language knowledge and skills needed for everyday communication, as well as the types of communication tasks that learners at beginning to intermediate proficiency levels could be expected to perform (Schmidgall et al., 2019).

Based on this understanding, test developers produced new test tasks that corresponded to important communication tasks in the real world and measured the language knowledge and skills needed for everyday communication (Everson et al., 2019).

*Test designs  
are periodically  
updated to be  
aligned with  
changes in English  
communication*

# Test content and tasks are created based on up-to-date surveys on the use of English

**Directions:** Respond clearly and fully to the message from you friend Chris. You have 8 minutes to prepare and write.

Suggest ONE dish you like, and

Briefly explain to Chris how to make it

**Chris**

**Chris:**

Hope you're doing well My sister's visiting me tomorrow and I'm thinking of cooking something nice for her (don't know what!). I wonder if you have any ideas...

Importantly, new content for the TOEIC Program tests is regularly created on the basis of up-to-date understandings regarding how English is used in common daily life and workplace settings (e.g., Yoon et al., 2017).

ETS assessment developers work diligently to survey typical English communication tasks that reflect the fundamental abilities reflected in the TOEIC Program test designs and fairly represent how English is used around the world today.

For example, tasks include diverse communication media like e-mail, smartphone text and Internet-based language use. The sample item on the left shows a task from the TOEIC Bridge Writing test, where the writing takes place in a computer- or smartphone-mediated text chat environment.

Additionally, test content covers current information related to travel, entertainment, health, dining, news and other familiar subjects as well as general business and workplace communication demands (i.e., the kinds of tasks typically encountered in international business and workplace settings). As such, test contents and tasks are kept well-aligned with real-world activities and ways of communicating that change over time.

# Providing high-quality and fair tests for all test takers around the world

It is also important that the TOEIC Program provides quality and fair tests to test takers across the globe. To ensure the quality and fairness of a test, before test items are deployed for operational use, they must go through a rigorous review process that is focused on quality and fairness.

Each item must pass multiple content reviews where additional test developers independently scrutinize the item to make sure it is appropriate and consistent with item specifications.

Each item then must pass a fairness and sensitivity review to make sure that the test content will not be biased toward or against any demographic group (e.g., gender, language, culture).

ETS test developers use this comprehensive procedure because of ETS' commitment to fairness, which is reflected in claims about the impartiality of test scores (see Schmidgall et al., 2021a, p. 12):

- test tasks do not include response formats or questions that may inappropriately favor or disfavor some test takers
- test tasks do not include content that may be offensive to test takers

After the TOEIC Program tests are administered, the scoring process includes statistical analyses to confirm that test items (and the overall test) is functioning properly.

ETS psychometricians carefully review the performance data from test administrations to make sure test scores are reliable and fair for the many different groups of English language learners around the world who take the test (e.g., Yoo et al., 2019).

Through such concerted efforts by researchers, test developers and psychometricians, the TOEIC Program tests present learners with an equally fair and accessible representation of the most common uses of English today that they should be expected to know along with topics that are reasonably familiar to any English learner.

The TOEIC Program tests measure — and help learners and teachers to focus on — the learning of English that is relevant and useful in daily life and workplace settings worldwide.

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