TOEFL Preparation Information

The TOEFL is a rigorous, widely recognized English proficiency test. It demonstrates a learner's readiness to be successful using English in a university or other high-demand environment. It assesses the four language areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The test-taker receives a score in each skill area, along with a total score. There is no pass/fail score; every institution has its own standards for admission.

Literacy for Life uses CASAS reading and speaking assessments to determine the skill level of ESL learners. We recommend that our learners score a *minimum* of ESL 6 ("Low Advanced ESL") on CASAS before studying with TOEFL-level materials. At ESL levels below 6, general English skill development is still required. Typically, learners need to score *above* ESL 6 on CASAS to successfully gain admission to American colleges and universities. Please see LFL staff with any questions about your CASAS assessment scores.

The TOEFL test includes the following:

- **Reading** prompts from university-level textbooks
- Two **writing** prompts: one based on a reading and/or lecture, and one based on personal experience or opinion
- **Listening** prompts including lectures and conversations
- Two **speaking** prompts: one based on personal experience or opinion, and one based on an academic listening or reading prompt

Get the "official word" on the TOEFL:

- TOEFL website: https://www.ets.org/toefl/
- "TOEFL TV" channel on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/TOEFLtv

Preparation Resources:

- **TOEFL preparation books** are available for loan from Literacy for Life's library and the Williamsburg Regional Library. Books are also available for purchase at bookstores.

- The **TOEFL website** offers practical suggestions for improving skills in the four tested areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

- **Williamsburg Regional Library** offers access to a TOEFL study site within its **LearningExpress Library**. A library card is required.

- Literacy for Life subscribes to an excellent study program called **Apex** which does <u>not</u> have a TOEFL preparation tutorial but does have a tutorial for a different college

readiness test called the Accuplacer. [Accuplacer Tutorials](#) are available in reading and writing. See LFL staff for an account.

- For authentic reading practice, use TOEFL study materials but also challenge yourself with
    - **textbooks** from introductory university courses in a variety of subject areas
    - challenging **newspapers** such as the New York *Times* or *Wall Street Journal* (not *USA Today* or your local paper)
    - challenging **magazines** such as *Scientific American*, the *Atlantic*, *Smithsonian Magazine,* or even *Sports Illustrated* or *Rolling Stone* (not *People* or *Reader's Digest*)

- For **listening** practice, try audiobooks, podcasts, news radio (e.g, [National Public Radio](#)), audio tours of museums, [Ted Talks](#), or online lectures (e.g, [Alison.com](#)). Also, you can attend live local events such as lectures, discussion groups, or theater performances.

- For **speaking** practice, record yourself speaking about a topic with minimal preparation. Enlist the help of a fluent English speaker to help you review the recording. Converse with native English speakers as much as possible: speak with your LFL tutor; push yourself to contribute in your ESL classes; join a local book club or interest group; or do volunteer work where speaking with others will be required.

- For **writing** practice, read and listen extensively to improve your vocabulary and understanding of English sentence structure. See the resources recommended below to study and practice English grammar. Learn how to write [paragraphs and essays](#) with the structure typical of American academic writing. Expect to practice and revise your writing extensively with the help of a fluent English writer such as your tutor or ESL teacher.

- Free **grammar** study sites include [Khan Academy](#), the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#), and [NoRedInk](#).