**TOEFL Section 1: Reading Comprehension**

Source: <http://www.englishclub.com/esl-exams/ets-toefl-practice-reading.htm>

This part of the TOEFL tests your ability to read academic English. This is important if you want to succeed at an English college or university. Students are given large amounts of reading in most post secondary courses in the US.

You should practice looking for the main idea by reading quickly through a passage. Then you should read more thoroughly for the purpose of answering the questions. It is not necessary for you to understand everything in a reading passage. You just need to be able to answer the questions. There will be many terms that you do not recognize. Technical words that are not defined in the text will be defined in the glossary. If you need to know the meaning of a word to answer a question and it is not defined in the text or in the glossary, try to identify the root word, stem, and part of speech.

**Hint**: The questions are asked in chronological order. In other words, the answers from the first few questions are in the first paragraph. The final question often requires that you understand the passage as a whole.

Look at the following types of questions that you will find in a reading set. Then try the practice set. Before you answer each question, try to determine what type of question is being asked.

**Question types**

**Detail/Fact (3-6 per set)**

* *According to the passage...*
* *According to paragraph 1, why/what/which...*
* *The author's description of ...mentions which of the following...*

**Negative Fact (0-2)**

* *All of the following are mentioned in the passage EXCEPT:*
* *According to the passage which of the following is NOT...*

Factual and Negative Factual questions ask about specific details and facts that are often provided in a single line of text. Sometimes you will be directed to the paragraph that contains the answer.

**Inference/Implication (0-2)**

* *Which of the following can be inferred about ...*
* *In paragraph 3, the author implies...*

You will have to make connections and assumptions to answer this style of question. Unlike factual questions, answers will not often be found in a single line of text.

**Vocabulary (3-5)**

* *The word...in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to...*
* *When the author says* ***...*** *is....she means...*

The meaning of the term is often understood by reading the surrounding text. You will not be asked to define vocabulary that is uncommon, subject related, or cannot be understood in context.

**Author purpose (0-2)**

* *In paragraph 5, why does the author discuss...*
* *The author mentions...as an example of...*

These questions ask you to do things such as figure out reasons why certain topics are discussed or certain examples are provided. Again you will be asked to make assumptions.

**Reference questions (0-2)**

* *The word ... in paragraph 3 refers to...*

These questions generally ask you to identify a noun or phrase that a pronoun is referring to.

**Insert sentence to the reading (0-1)**

* *Look at the four squares that indicate where this sentence can be added to the passage. Where would the sentence fit best?*

These questions require that you look for transitional phrases or other hints to figure out where the additional sentence belongs. Make sure that the position you choose for the new sentence makes sense by reading the sentence before and after. After you have made your choice, read all three sentences to yourself to check if the paragraph flows well.

**Simplify the sentence (0-1)**

* *Which of the following best provides the important information in the highlighted sentence from the passage. Incorrect answer choices leave out essential information or change the meaning of it.*

When answering this question make sure that you do not choose a sentence that is slightly incorrect. All of the important information from the sentence must be in the simplified sentence.

**Summary (0-1)**

* *An introductory sentence for a summary of the passage is found below. Complete the summary by choosing the THREE answer choices that contain the most imporant ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not fit in the summary because they provide ideas that are not mentioned in the passage or are only minor ideas from the passage. This question is worth 2 points.*

Remember that only the most important parts of the passage will appear in the summary. Look at the topic sentences of the passage for help when answering this question. Some choices will be too detailed, or will be incorrect.

**Fill in the chart (0-1)**

* *Complete the table in order to summarize the information about .... Match the statements to the ...*

Remember that not all of the statements or examples have to fit into the chart. Some do not belong under any of the headings.

**Example:**

Read the following passage. Then answer the questions and check your answers.

Most people can remember a phone number for up to thirty seconds. When this short amount of time **elapses**, however, the numbers are erased from the memory. How did the information get there in the first place? Information that makes its way to the short term memory (STM) does so via the sensory storage area. The brain has a filter which only allows stimuli that is of immediate interest to pass on to the STM, also known as the working memory.  
  
There is much debate about the capacity and duration of the short term memory. The most accepted theory comes from George A. Miller, a cognitive psychologist who suggested that humans can remember approximately seven chunks of information. A chunk is defined as a meaningful unit of information, such as a word or name rather than just a letter or number. Modern theorists suggest that one can increase the capacity of the short term memory by chunking, or classifying similar information together. By organizing information, one can optimize the STM, and improve the chances of a memory being passed on to long term storage.  
  
When making a conscious effort to memorize something, such as information for an exam, many people engage in "rote rehearsal". By repeating something over and over again, one is able to keep a memory alive. Unfortunately, this type of memory maintenance only succeeds if there are no interruptions. As soon as a person stops rehearsing the information, it has the tendency to disappear. When a pen and paper are not handy, people often attempt to remember a phone number by repeating it aloud. If the doorbell rings or the dog barks to come in before a person has the opportunity to make a phone call, he will likely forget the number instantly.**\*** Therefore, rote rehearsal is not an efficient way to pass information from the short term to long term memory.**\*** A better way is to practice "**elaborate** rehearsal". **\***This involves assigning semantic meaning to a piece of information so that it can be filed along with other pre-existing long term memories.**\***  
  
Encoding information semantically also makes **it** more retrievable. Retrieving information can be done by recognition or recall. Humans can easily recall memories that are stored in the long term memory and used often; however, if a memory seems to be forgotten, it may eventually be retrieved by prompting. The more **cues** a person is given (such as pictures), the more likely a memory can be retrieved. This is why multiple choice tests are often used for subjects that require a lot of memorization.  
Glossary:  
semantic: relating to the meaning of something

**Reading Comprehension questions:**

1. According to the passage, how do memories get transferred to the STM?

A) They revert from the long term memory.  
B) They are filtered from the sensory storage area.  
C) They get chunked when they enter the brain.  
D) They enter via the nervous system.

2. The word **elapses** in paragraph 1 is closest in meaning to:

A) passes

B) adds up

C) appears

D) continues

3. All of the following are mentioned as places in which memories are stored EXCEPT the:

A) STM

B) long term memory

C) sensory storage area

D) maintenance area

4. Why does the author mention a dog's bark?

A) To give an example of a type of memory

B) To provide a type of interruption

C) To prove that dogs have better memories than humans

D) To compare another sound that is loud like a doorbell

5. Look at the four stars that indicate where this sentence can be added to the passage. Where would the sentence fit best?

**For example, a reader engages in elaborate rehearsal when he brings prior knowledge of a subject to a text.**

6. How do theorists believe a person can remember more information in a short time?

A) By organizing it

B) By repeating it

C) By giving it a name

D) By drawing it

7. The author believes that rote rotation is:

A) the best way to remember something

B) more efficient than chunking

C) ineffective in the long run

D) an unnecessary interruption

8. The word **it** in the last paragraph refers to:

A) encoding

B) STM

C) semantics

D) information

9. The word **elaborate** in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to:

A) complex

B) efficient

C) pretty

D) regular

10. Which of the following is NOT supported by the passage?

A) The working memory is the same as the short term memory.

B) A memory is kept alive through constant repetition.

C) Cues help people to recognize information.

D) Multiple choice exams are the most difficult.

11. The word **cues** in the passage is closest in meaning to

A) questions

B) clues

C) images

D) tests

12. Which of the following best provides the important information in the highlighted sentence from the passage? Incorrect answer choices leave out essential information or change the meaning of it.

A) Prompting is the easiest way to retrieve short term memory after an extended period of time.

B) A memory can be retrieved by prompting, in a case where it has been rarely used.

C) It's easier to remember short term memories than long term memories due to regular prompts.

D) Recalling a long term memory that is often used is easy, while forgotten memories often require prompting.

**Answer Sheet with Explanation**

Question 1:

* Choice **A** is the **opposite** of what happens.
* Choice **D** is **not mentioned**.
* Choice **C** is what a person should try to do when memorizing something.

*The correct answer is* **B**. This is a **factual** question.

Question 2:

*The correct answer is* **A**. This is a **vocabulary** question.

Question 3:

* Choice **A** is mentioned in the first paragraph.
* Choice **B** is mentioned in the second paragraph.
* Choice **C** is mentioned in the first paragraph.

*The correct answer is* **D**. This is a **negative factual** question.

Question 4:

* Choice **A** is incorrect because it is not the "reason" the author mentions it.
* Choice **C** is not mentioned.
* Choice **D** distracts you because both are mentioned as examples.

*The correct answer is* **B**. This is an **author purpose** question.

Question 5:

*The correct answer is* **fourth \*** This is a **insert text** question.

Question 6:

* Choice **B** is what regular people think is true.
* Choice **C** is not mentioned.
* Choice **D** is a type of cue for retrieval.

*The correct answer is* **A**. This is a **factual** question.

Question 7:

* Choice **A** is contradicted by "not an efficient way".
* Choice **B** is incorrect because these two terms are not compared.
* Choice **D** is illogical.

*The correct answer is* **C**. This is a **factual** question.

Question 8:

*The correct answer is* **D**. This is a **reference** question.

Question 9:

*The correct answer is* **A**. This is a **vocabulary** question.

Question 10:

* Choice **A** is mentioned in paragraph one.
* Choice **B** is mentioned in paragraph three (though an interruption will destroy it).
* Choice **C** is mentioned in the last paragraph.

Question 10:

*The correct answer is* **D**. This is a **negative factual** question.

Question 11:

*The correct answer is* **B**. This is a **vocabulary** question.

Question 12:

* Choice **A** changes the meaning of the information.
* Choice **B** leaves out essential information about the long term memories that are used often.
* Choice **C** changes the meaning of the information.

*The correct answer is* **D**. This is a **sentence simplification** question.