**TOEFL Section 2: Listening**

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

Try the following Listening examples. Remember that in the real test you will **hear** these parts. You will not see them, but you will be allowed to take down any notes while you listen. You will hear each section **once only**.

**Conversations, Academic discussions, Lectures**

There are three different types of listening passages you will hear. Some use formal language while others are more casual. Language is natural sounding, in that pauses, errors, and false starts occur.

The first style are called **conversations**. These take place between a student and a university employee. The employee is often a professor, but can also be another worker on campus such as an advisor or housing officer. The topics are usually about life on campus.

You will also hear **Academic discussions**, which take place in a classroom setting. In these passages there are more than two speakers. Usually the professor does most of the talking, and a few students ask and answer questions and make comments. They are usually longer in length than the conversations.

**Lectures** involve only one speaker. These lectures test your ability to comprehend academic subject material spoken by a professor. You will hear topics on just about every type of subject, from Biology, to Art, to Geology.

It is not necessary for you to learn any background material for this section. Everything you need to know to answer the questions will be stated in the lecture. There are many types of questions in this section. The questions are generally in the same order as the information presented.

**Question types:**

**Understanding Gist**

* *What is the main topic of the lecture*
* *What are the speakers mainly discussing*
* *What is the lecture mainly about...*
* *Why does the professor ask...*
* *Why is the student talking to...*
* *Why does the professor discuss...*

Understanding the Gist questions test your ability to understand the main idea and purpose of what you have heard. These questions are not about specific details. Some Gist questions focus on the purpose while others focus on the content.

**Detail**

* *According to the professor, what is the problem with...*
* *What does the student say about...*
* *What caused...*

You will likely need your notes to help you answer the detail questions. Remember to take down important facts as you listen. Examples and support for the main idea are often the subject of detail questions.

You will not be asked questions about minor details. Make sure not to pick an answer choice just because you heard a word from the lecture. It is common to find these words in the incorrect choices.

**Understanding Attitude**

* *What is the student's impression of...*
* *How does the professor feel about...*
* *What does the professor mean when she says...(listen again)*

Listen to the sound of the speakers' voices for hints about their attitudes and opinions about the topic.

**Understanding Function**

* *What does the student imply when she says this...(listen again)*
* *What is the purpose of the professor's response...(listen again)*

Part of the listening passage will often be replayed in these questions. Make sure that you are listening for function of what is being said.

**Organization**

* *How is the lecture organized?*
* *Why does the speaker mention/discuss...*

These questions are most commonly paired with lectures. As you listen, take note of how each lecture is organized (chronologically/compare and contrast) in case you get one of these questions.

**Making Connections**

* *What does the speaker imply about...*
* *What does the professor imply when he says...(listen again)*
* *Organize...in a chart...*
* *Place the following sequence of events in order*

These questions require you to draw conclusions, understand relationships, and make inferences. You may have to fill out a chart or match terms with definitions.

**Example 1: Casual conversation**

M: You mentioned at the start of last class that you are a fan of live music. I guess I don't have to tell you about the concert at the campus pub on Saturday. It's supposed to be the best show of the year.  
W: I know. I wish I could be there but I already promised professor Mathers that I'd have all of the quizzes graded by Monday. I'm afraid I'm going to be stuck in my dorm all weekend because I look after three tutorial classes including yours.  
M: Why did you offer to do that? Did you forget about the concert, or do you really need the money?  
W: Actually, I really need to concentrate on academics this year. If I want to get into the education program I have to prove that I am serious about being a tutorial leader. It's not about the money. We don't get paid much considering all of the hours we put in.  
M: Have you applied at other schools besides this one. I've heard it's really hard to get into the Education program here, but my cousin got accepted at one in a different state, and her grades aren't that good.  
W: That was my original plan, but Professor Mathers asked me to help her out this year and she also promised to write me a reference letter. I didn't think I could get into the program here, but now I do. My marks are higher than they have ever been and once I'm done my masters I hope to do my PHD.  
M: Well, I can see that you are really dedicated. You're going to make an excellent teacher.  
W: Professor you mean.  
M: Right. Well, I'm sorry you're going to miss the band.  
W: Me too. I can't help feeling a bit jealous. Sometimes I wish I was still in my first year of studies.  
M: Well, I'll tell you all about it on Monday. Oh, and thanks for the homework tips.  
W: Sure, anytime.

**Now get ready to answer the questions.**

1. What are the speakers mainly discussing?

A) Their plans for next semester

B) Why the woman can't go to the concert

C) Their favorite band

D) Finding a tutor

2. What will the woman do on Saturday?

A) Teach a class.

B) Mark tests.

C) Visit her cousin.

D) Go to a concert.

**Listen again to part of the conversation. Then answer the question.**

M: Well, I can see that you are really dedicated. You're going to make an excellent teacher.

W: Professor you mean.

M: Right.

W: Professor you mean.

3. What does the woman mean when she says this?

A) She thinks he should treat her with more respect.

B) She plans to teach university.

C) She thinks Professor Mathers is not kind.

D) She thinks she'll be as good a teacher as Professor Mathers.

4. What can be inferred from the conversation?

A) The woman never works on weekends.

B) The man and woman take the same courses.

C) The speakers live in the same dorm.

D) The man stayed after class for help.

5. How does the male student feel about the woman's weekend plans?

A) He feels sorry for her.

B) He is excited for her.

C) He is worried about her.

D) He is jealous of her.

**Example 2: Academic discussion**

**Now listen to part of a lecture from a environmental science class.**

M (professor): There is one more section I'd like to spend a few moments reviewing before we close our books for the day. Who here remembers the film we watched last month on hazardous wastes?  
W: You mean the one about computer and television monitors?  
Professor: Yes, that's the one Lisa. In the film they discussed why some States are making it illegal to dump monitors into regular landfills. Can anyone remember the reason? Yes, Lisa?  
W: Um...it's because of the cathode ray tubes, also known as CRT's, inside them. These tubes are high in lead content, and the lead can leak into the ground water. Right?  
M: Excellent. It's nice to know that some of you were listening even though it wasn't the most upbeat documentary. Now, does anyone remember the reason why manufacturers place lead in the CRT's of computer and TV monitors in the first place?  
W: The tubes are infused with lead in order to shield the viewer from harmful x-rays. There is no known alternative at this time, but I think the film said that researchers are working on it.  
M: Yes, that's true. And why wasn't this a problem twenty years ago? Why is it suddenly a major concern?  
W: That's simple. It's because nearly every household in the U.S. has a television, and many have three or four. My family is guilty of this, I admit. And, not only that...people are throwing out their TV's and computer monitors in order to keep up with the new technology. You know, like the flat screen LCD monitors. With the digital age upon us, this is going to pose even more of a problem. I have to admit, I got a new plasma TV a few months ago, and there was nothing wrong with my old TV.  
M: Well, I'm sure you're not the only one Lisa. Now,since you're on a roll...why can't these old monitors just be recycled?  
W: Well, unlike paper and plastics, there just aren't any services that provide this type of recycling. According to the film, a lot of companies that recognize the threat are storing their unused equipment in warehouses until some better solutions become available.  
M: Yes, and this brings us to our next film. Lisa would you mind dimming the lights? This film is titled *Landfill Solutions*. It deals with a number of products that can be recycled through innovative means.

1. What is the main topic of the discussion?

A) Harmful televisions

B) A landfill concern

C) Computer equipment

D) Recycling films

2. What makes monitors hazardous to the environment?

A) SRT's

B) X-rays

C) Cathode ray tubes

D) Landfills

3. According to Lisa, why can't monitors be recycled?

A) They are too expensive to reuse.

B) There are no companies that provide this service.

C) People are too lazy to take them to recycling plants.

D) Companies prefer to store them for future use.

**Listen again to part of the discussion. Then answer the question.**

W: The tubes are infused with lead in order to shield the viewer from harmful x-rays. There is no known alternative at this time, but I think the film said that researchers are working on it.  
M: Yes, that's true. And why wasn't this a problem twenty years ago? Why is it suddenly a major concern?  
W: That's simple. It's because nearly every household in the U.S. has a television, and many have three or four. My family is guilty of this, I admit.

4. What does Lisa mean when she says this:

A) Her family has thrown monitors in the garbage.

B) Her family owns a lot of television sets.

C) Her family feels bad about how much TV they watch.

D) Her family doesn't care about the environment.

5. What will the class do next?

A) Visit a landfill site.

B) Dissect a computer monitor.

C) Watch another film.

D) Review the film about monitors.

**Example 3: Lecture**

**Now listen to part of a lecture from a gemology class.**

In last week's lesson about the difference between metals and gems, we discussed how pliable true gold is. Today we are going to be talking about the diamond, the hardest known natural mineral. As most of you know from our introductory chapter, diamonds are the transparent form of pure carbon. Carbon crystals form deep in the Earth's mantle when high temperatures and extreme pressure occur. The term "diamond" comes from the Greek word adamas, which means unconquerable. In the jewelry business, diamonds are valued according to a few categories, known as the 4 C's. The cost of a diamond depends on its carat, color, cut, and clarity. Besides Africa, there are few areas around the world with large diamond deposits. However, diamond replication is a new trend that threatens the multimillion dollar industry. Researchers have discovered a way to produce large volumes of diamonds by putting carbon under extreme heat and pressure. This process causes the carbon to crystallize into diamonds. HPTC, which stands for high pressure and high temperature, is also used to change or remove the color of diamonds. A small piece of natural diamond, called a seed, is often used as the base, and then a synthetic diamond is grown around it. These colorful diamonds, known as fancies, are rare in nature, yet gemologists still consider them genuine. In fact, most people in the jewelry business shy away from the term synthetic diamonds because it suggests that they are not real. Their argument is that man made diamonds are produced in the very same way as mined diamonds are in nature. Even the trained eye cannot easily detect the difference between a natural diamond and one that is manufactured. While this innovation threatens to devastate the jewelry industry by bringing the cost of true diamonds down, it could also turn the precious stone into a common semiconductor. Not only are diamonds incredible conductors of heat, they are also efficient electrical insulators. Tremendous heat can pass through a diamond without causing any significant damage. It won't be long before computer companies start advertising diamond computer chips. Won't that make for some interesting marketing campaigns?

1. What is the purpose of this lecture?

A) To compare diamonds and gold

B) To discuss types of gems

C) To discuss the formation of diamonds

D) To review the elements of carbon

2. Which of the following is NOT one of the 4 C's used by the jewelry business?

A) Carbon

B) Carat

C) Color

D) Cut

3. Where do natural diamonds form?

A) In a manufacturing plant

B) In an electrical insulator

C) Deep in the Earth's mantle

D) Alongside metals such as gold

4. According to the professor, what are diamonds good for besides jewelry?

A) They can create heat.

B) They can hold heat in.

C) They can damage insulators.

D) They can conduct electricity.

**Listen again to part of the lecture. Then answer the question.**

Professor: Not only are diamonds incredible conductors of heat, they are also efficient electrical insulators. Tremendous heat can pass through a diamond without causing any significant damage. It won't be long before computer companies start advertising diamond computer chips. Won't that make for some interesting marketing campaigns?  
Won't that make for some interesting marketing campaigns?

5. What does the professor mean when she says this:

A) Nobody will want to buy diamond computer chips.

B) Advertisers will have fun marketing this type of product.

C) Computers will take interest away from the jewelry industry.

D) Jewelers will be competing with programmers.

6. Indicate whether each sentence below describes synthetic diamonds or mined diamonds. Place the numbers in the correct box.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **mined diamonds** | **synthetic diamonds** |
| -- | -- |
| -- | -- |
| -- | -- |
| -- | -- |
| -- | -- |

1. are often created from a "seed"
2. exist in very few places in the world
3. come in countless colorful varieties
4. are produced by high pressure and temperature under the ground
5. could cause financial problems for the jewelry industry

**Answer Sheet with Explanation**

**Casual conversation**

**Question 1:**

* Choice A is incorrect because they are discussing the woman's plans, not the man's.
* Choice C is incorrect because the man suggests it is supposed to be "the best show," but does not say it is his favorite band.
* Choice D repeats the word tutor, which is related to tutorial leader, but neither of the speakers are looking for one. Again, it is not the main idea.

*The correct answer is* **B**. This is an **understanding the gist** question.

**Question 2:**

* Choice A is what the woman does, but not on the weekend.
* Choice C repeats the word "cousin" but is not the correct answer.
* Choice D is what she wants to do but can't.

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

**Question 3:**

* Choice A is incorrect because the woman is only a tutorial leader right now.
* Choice C confuses the homonyms "mean" (unkind) and the verb "to mean" (to intend to say or do).
* Choice D is incorrect because they are not speaking about Professor Mathers in this part of the conversation.

*The correct answer is* **B**. She plans to do her PHD and become a professor. This is an **understanding function** question.

**Question 4:**

* Choice A is incorrect because the woman has to work this weekend.
* Choice B is incorrect because the man thanks the woman for the study tips.
* Choice C is not inferred. The woman mentions being in her dorm all weekend, but there is nothing to suggest that the man lives there too.

*The correct answer is* **D**. (They are having a private conversation and the woman gave him study tips.) This is a **making connections** question.

**Question 5:**

* Choice B is incorrect because the woman is going to be at home working.
* Choice C is not mentioned.
* Choice D is incorrect, because it is the woman who says she is jealous of the man's plans.

*The correct answer is* **A**. This is an **understanding attitude** question.

**Example 2: Academic discussion**

**Question 1:**

* Choice A is incorrect because it is not the televisions that are harmful. It is the CRT's inside them that are harmful. In the discussion, the word "harmful" is used to describe the X-rays that the CRT's shield people from.
* Choice C is mentioned but is not the main topic. You will often find a choice that is too broad or too detailed to be the main topic.
* Choice D combines two things that are mentioned, making the choice illogical.

*The correct answer is* **B**. This is an **understanding gist** question.

**Question 2:**

* Choice A contains a similar sound distractor. C and S sound similar.
* Choice B is what makes monitors harmful to humans. The CRT's protect people from this hazard.
* Choice D confuses the "wh" question. If the question was reworded using "where" then the answer might be correct.

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

**Question 3:**

* Choice A is not mentioned.
* Choice C could be true, but is not something Lisa says. In the "according to" question, you cannot choose an answer just because it makes sense. It has to be mentioned by the speaker (in this case Lisa).
* Choice D(storage) is mentioned, but not for the reason of "future use".

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

**Question 4:**

* Choice A is incorrect because Lisa hasn't admitted that they threw the sets out, only that they own a lot of sets.
* Choice C is incorrect because there is no mention of how much time Lisa's family spends watching TV.
* Choice D related to throwing out large items, but is not Lisa's point.

*The correct answer is* **B**. This is an **understanding function** question.

**Question 5:**

* Choice A, B, and D are all contradicted by the last sentence in the discussion. The professor talks about what the new film will be about. It is not one that they have seen before. The answer to this type of common question is always in the last line or two of the listening passage.

*The correct answer is* **C**. This is a **making connections** question.

**Example 3: Lecture**

**Question 1:**

* Choice A is not the main purpose. Gold is only mentioned once at the beginning of the lecture.
* Choice B is incorrect because only one gem is discussed.
* Choice D is too specific.

*The correct answer is* **C**. This is an **understanding gist** question.

**Question 2:**

* Choices **B, C, and D** are named. Choice A is the only logical answer.

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

**Question 3:**

* Choice A is the opposite. This is where non natural diamonds are formed.
* Choice B does not answer the question "where".
* Choice D is not mentioned.

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

**Question 4:**

* Choice **A** has the incorrect verb "create". They hold heat.
* Choice **C** has the incorrect verb "damage". They create insulation.
* Choice **D** has the correct verb, but the incorrect noun. They conduct heat.

*The correct answer is* **B**.

This is a **detail** question.

**Question 5**

*The correct answer is* **B**. This is an **understanding attitude** question.

**Question 6.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **mined diamonds** | **synthetic diamonds** |
| -- | 1 |
| 2 | -- |
| -- | 3 |
| 4 | -- |
| -- | 5 |

This is a **making connections** question.