

Introduction to TOEFL

(see <http://educationusa.state.gov/undergrad/testing/english.htm>)

The Test Of English as a Foreign Language (or TOEFL) is an exam with features similar to those of the GCE Ordinary Level English exam.

Why take the TOEFL?

- A basic requirement for successful study in the United States is the ability to communicate in English. If English is not your native language, U.S. universities and colleges will ask you to take an English language proficiency test before admitting you to a degree program.
- Almost all institutions require that this test be the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

How to test →

Centers and test dates

- One could either take the computer-based or the paper-based test. As the name suggests, you would need a computer and good internet facilities to take the computer-based test.
- TOEFL is currently given in most countries around the world on computer, and the paper-based version is being phased out. The test is offered on many days in the month, but only at a limited number of computer-based testing centers.
- The paper-based testing sites in Cameroon are the American consulates in Douala and Yaounde.

Registration

- Pre-registration is required, and it is NOT possible to go to the testing center and hope to find space available that same day. Computer-based testing registration deadlines vary. According to TOEFL instructions, mail-in registration deadlines are three weeks ahead of your desired test date, one week ahead of the test date for fax registrations, and two days ahead of the test date for registration by telephone.
- It is advisable to register at least two to three months in advance of your desired test date. For those countries where paper-based testing is still offered, the test is given on certain dates during the year, and registration deadlines are approximately six weeks ahead of those dates.
- TOEFL registration bulletins are available from either the test administrators in the United States, the regional registration center in your country, or from a U.S. educational information or advising center. These centers may ask you to pay postage costs, and they may also have test preparation materials for the TOEFL available for reference use, loan, or purchase.

Content of Exam

- The test uses a multiple choice and essay format to measure each examinee's ability to understand North American English.
- The test is divided into four sections: listening, structure, reading, and writing.
- The writing section requires the test taker to write an essay. TOEFL is a computer-adaptive test, which means that not all students answer exactly the same questions on the test. Instead, depending on how the student performs on each question, the computer determines whether the level of the next question should be harder or easier.

Scores

- The total number of questions you answer correctly and your score on the essay form the raw scores for each section.
- Raw scores are then converted to a scaled score for each section, which for the computer-based test ranges from 0 to 30. From these a total score is calculated, which ranges between 40 and 300 for the computer-based test.
- Each college decides for itself what score is acceptable. In general, colleges consider a total score of 250 or above to be excellent and a score below 97 as inadequate. Average scores range between 173 and 250 for undergraduate applicants.