WHAT IS A GOOD TOEFL SCORE? [2024 UPDATE]

The Test of English as a Foreign Language, more commonly known as the TOEFL, is most typically used by universities to determine the English level of a hopeful international student. However, many other professions from around the world use the TOEFL as a required (or recommended) certification. We analyzed what makes a good TOEFL score for 2024 across all categories. Broken down into four distinct sections (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing), this exam works to measure your ability to use English in a university setting. How to get a good score in TOEFL is a whole beast of its own, but before you begin TOEFL prep, it's important to start with knowing your goal. What's a good TOEFL score? What do you need to earn to achieve your English language goals?

TOEFL Score Basics

The TOEFL is scored on a scale of between 0 and 120 points. The scores you earn on the test you take will be valid for a period of two years following the exam date. Each individual section (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) is worth a maximum score of 30 points. For the Reading and Listening sections, scoring is simple. There is only one correct answer, so these two sections can be graded automatically. The Speaking and Writing sections are evaluated manually by graders, as the questions are more open-ended and require a human eye. Your TOEFL results will also now include two scores: one that you received for the most recent test you took, and a Superscore or TOEFL My Best Score result that is the combination of all the top section scores you earned for every test you took over the past two years. Not every university will accept your Superscore/TOEFL My Best Score, so check with your university.

TOEFL iBT versus PBT

If you are new to the TOEFL, you might have seen the iBT and PBT acronyms thrown around and not known what they stood for. TOEFL iBT is the internet-based Test, the PBT is the paper-based test. The importance of knowing the difference between these two is decreasing, as very few people take the paper-based TOEFL any longer. In fact, more than 97% of test-takers take the iBT, and the only reason the PBT is still in existence is so the TOEFL can be offered in countries without universal internet access. Odds are that

you will be taking the iBT. However, sometimes the PBT is touted as a good preparation tool for the internet-based TOEFL. This isn't exactly true, and here's why. There is a huge difference in the content, design, and structure. The paper-based test has a number of limitations because of its format: there is no assessment of speaking skills, no section for completing or correcting sentences such as the iBT has, the writing section is double the size, and the test itself takes longer. While any English practice is sure to add some benefit, if you are planning to take the iBT TOEFL, it is best to make yourself familiar with its specific sections, length, and content to achieve your best score. We've already covered that the iBT TOEFL is worth a total of 120 points, so if you see scores that are listed in the hundreds, you are looking at a PBT score. The paper-based test is scored from 310 to 677. Because of the lack of speaking assessment on the PBT, many universities no longer accept this form of the TOEFL unless the test-taker can show that it is their only option.

University Score Ranges

Depending on the university that you are hoping to attend, there will be a minimum score required as a part of your application. The list below is not exhaustive, but does give you a good idea of what the general range looks like. You will also notice that certain schools do not require a TOEFL score, but will take your score into consideration as they process your application.

TOEFL Requirements for Universities

University	Recommended Score
Carnegie Mellon	102/120
Harvard University	Not required, but aim for 100/120 minimum
Stanford University	Not required, but aim for 100/120 minimum
New York University	100/120
Brown University	100/120

University	Recommended Score
Cornell University	100/120
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	90/120
Boston University	80/120
University of Washington	76/120
Portland State University	68/120

This chart, with data from the ETS Test and Score Data Summary, represents a range of scores, from as low as 68 to above 100. What this gives you is an idea of the range of where to aim with your scores.

Average TOEFL Scores

Below are charts showing the average TOEFL scores, broken down by different criteria. Take a look to determine what the average score is and how different factors play into it.

Average TOEFL Score - Broken Down by Section

Section	Score
Speaking	20.2/30
Reading	20.4/30
Writing	20.9/30
Listening	20.5/30

Based on these numbers, we can determine the below as what marks your score as an average TOEFL score, above average, or below the average:

What is a Good TOEFL Score?

Above Average TOEFL Score	83-120
Average TOEFL Score	82
Below Average TOEFL Score	0-81

What is a Good TOEFL Score: Average TOEFL Score - By Purpose

High School Students	2-year college students	4-year college students	Graduate students	Business school students	English language program applicants	Job applicants	Immigration applicants	Professional license applicants	Other
76	80	84	88	88	82	88	88	88	84

Aim High

One important thing to keep in mind: just because you are applying to a school with a certain minimum requirement doesn't mean that you should just aim for that minimum! Use this to showcase your English skills, to take yourself to the next level. Furthermore, keep in mind that a score that is higher than the minimum will have a positive impact on your chance to get into the university of your dreams. Don't set the bar too low-aim high!

Prepping for the Exam

Now that you understand how scoring works and what an average score looks like, it's time to get prepping! The TOEFL is not an exam that it is a good idea to try blind. There are several tips, tricks, strategies, and preparation tools that can make a huge difference in your score. Whether you are looking to improve on your TOEFL score or are a beginner and looking to get started with prep, it's a good idea to work with an expert. Talk to one of our tutors today about training for the TOEFL.