

## Responding to Speaking Question 4: Tips to Help you Shine

Question 4 on the TOEFL IBT Test will ask you to show your understanding of an academic lecture by summarizing key information orally. Read on to learn more more about how to answer Question 4, how it is scored, and how you can practice for it.

### What do I have to do for Question 4 on the TOEFL IBT Speaking Test?

In question 4, you will:

1. Listen to a 60-90 second excerpt from an academic lecture. It will usually be about how to do something, or steps in a process.
2. See a question that you will answer by speaking
3. Have 20 seconds to prepare your response
4. Have 60 seconds to give your spoken answer

### What does Question 4 look like?

*First, you will hear the narrator say this:*

In this question, you will listen to a short lecture. You will then be asked to summarize important information from the lecture. After you hear the question, you will have 20 seconds to prepare your response and 60 seconds to speak.

*Next, you will see a photo of a professor giving a lecture, and hear the narrator say this:*

**Narrator:** Now listen to part of a talk in a type of course or topic. The professor will then begin the lecture.



*Then, you will hear the professor giving the lecture.*

Following the lecture, you will see a screen with a question for you to answer. The screen will note that you have 20 seconds to prepare your answer, and 60 seconds to give your response.

Using the examples of honeybees and ants, explain two ways animals cooperate with each other.

Preparation Time: 20 seconds

Response Time: 60 seconds

You will see a count-down timer on the screen. When the preparation time is up, you will hear a beep. The count-down timer will change, giving you one minute to respond. Begin speaking. When your time is up, the recording will automatically stop and you will see a new screen that reports you have completed the task.

#### What are tips for effectively answering Question 4?

- Take notes while you listen. You can listen only once, so make sure you jot down key ideas and words.
- Use the preparation time to review your notes and think about what you want to say.
- Remember to speak clearly and at a good pace. Your speaking speed should be natural.
- If you finish speaking before time runs out, don't just repeat yourself to fill the remaining time. Say something that clarifies, develops or elaborates on your response.
- While preparing for the TOEFL test, practice timing yourself so that you get used to speaking for the full 60 seconds without becoming repetitious.

#### How will I be assessed?

Your test will be sent to human raters, who will listen to your responses. They assess three main areas.

**Delivery:** Your speech needs to be clear and fluid with good pronunciation. The pace or speed of your speech should be natural, and you should have good-sounding intonation patterns.

**Language use:** Try to use a range of grammar and vocabulary to express your ideas.

**Topic development:** When speaking, try to answer the question fully. The assessor will look for how clearly you express your idea. He or she will also note how easy your response is to follow, so use phrases that connect one idea to another. connect one idea to another.

#### What can I do to prepare for Speaking Section Question 4?

To develop your **academic vocabulary**, read academic texts for practice. Keep a list of important new words that you find and practice pronouncing them.

To **practice summarizing**, read short news articles that interest you. Then set your timer for 60 seconds and practice recounting what the article is about. Record yourself and listen to it. Then try summarizing again, using language to link the ideas that you want to express.

**Use a rubric** when practicing. Over time, you will internalize the structure and feel confident on test day. The one below is from Michel Goodine, on TOEFL Resources (2022):

### **Question Four Template (Academic Lecture)**

#### **Stating the Lecture Subject and detail**

- “The lecturer explains SUBJECT/TERM by giving two examples/an example.”

#### **First Example/First Part (3-5 sentences)**

- “First, she/he describes...”

#### **Second Example/Second part (3-5 sentences)**

- “Second, she mentions...”

#### **Give a Short Conclusion**

- “These examples (this example) demonstrate...”

You will not be able to bring the rubric into the test with you, so practice with it in advance to get comfortable and create good habits.

To **get ideas for questions you will be asked**, look at textbooks in English that include study questions at the end of each chapter. Practice answering the questions **out loud**. This is a great way to get more familiar with a variety of topics, while also practicing your summarizing skills.

Good luck on the TOEFL!