

The MBA Center Grammar Review for the TOEFL

I. Verbs

II. Nouns

III. Pronouns

IV. Modifiers

V. Comparatives

VI. Prepositions

VII. Conjunctions

I. VERBS

Verbs are the foundations of language and accordingly they are one of the most common questions in the Structure and Written Expression section. Although many of the questions involve the advanced cases, an understanding of the basic tenses is essential

In this section we will be using four terms for the verb words. Let's define them before we begin.

Infinitive	<i>to be</i>	<i>to live</i>
Dictionary	<i>be</i>	<i>live</i>
Gerund	<i>being</i>	<i>living</i>
Participle	<i>been</i>	<i>lived</i>

Present Tense

<u>subject</u>	<u>simple</u>	<u>continuous</u>	<u>perfect</u>	<u>perfect continuous</u>
<i>I</i>	<i>live</i>	<i>am living</i>	<i>have lived</i>	<i>have been living</i>
<i>you</i>	<i>live</i>	<i>are living</i>	<i>have lived</i>	<i>have been living</i>
<i>he/she/it</i>	<i>lives</i>	<i>is living</i>	<i>has lived</i>	<i>has been living</i>
<i>we</i>	<i>live</i>	<i>are living</i>	<i>have lived</i>	<i>have been living</i>
<i>they</i>	<i>live</i>	<i>are living</i>	<i>have lived</i>	<i>have been living</i>

present simple—Indicates a habitual action—something that is always true—for example, a train schedule or a scientific fact. This action does not actually need to occur at the moment of speaking.

I live in Paris.
(Generally speaking, I live in Paris.)
I teach English.
(Generally speaking, I teach English.)

He eats lobster.
(He generally enjoys eating lobster.)

present continuous—An action that is occurring at the moment of speaking. An action in the present continuous must be occurring at the moment of speaking, as opposed to the more general present simple case. Be careful of “continual action” verbs, like *to read*, that are not necessarily occurring at the moment of speaking exactly.

I am living in Paris.
(At the moment of speaking, I am living in Paris.)
I am teaching English.
(At the moment of speaking, I am instructing a class or student.)
I am eating lobster.
(Right now, as I speak, I am eating lobster.)

present perfect—Refers to an action in the past that is connected to the moment of speaking. It does not necessarily mean that the action is still continuing, although in some cases, it does. Usually it is a past experience the speaker is using to demonstrate expertise on a subject.

I have lived in Paris for ten years.

(Ten years ago, I moved to Paris and I am still here. In the past, for a period of ten years, I lived in Paris, and that experience is important to the moment of speaking. I can recommend some restaurants.)

I have taught English for ten years.

(Ten years ago, I began teaching English, and I still am today. In the past, for a period of ten years, I taught English, therefore I can help you with your homework.)

I have eaten lobster for ten years.

(I began eating lobster ten years ago, and I still eat it today. I have eaten lobster before. In the past, I ate lobster, and that is why I hate it.)

present perfect continuous—An action that began in the past and is still continuing. Always. Make a parallel between this tense and the present perfect.

I have been teaching for ten years.(I began teaching ten years ago, and I still am teaching today.)

Past Tense

<u>subject</u>	<u>simple</u>	<u>continuous</u>	<u>perfect</u>	<u>perfect continuous</u>
<i>I</i>	<i>lived</i>	<i>was living</i>	<i>had lived</i>	<i>had been living you</i>
<i>lived</i>	<i>were living</i>	<i>had lived</i>	<i>had been living</i>	<i>he/she/it lived</i>
<i>was living</i>	<i>had lived</i>	<i>had been living</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>lived</i>
<i>living</i>	<i>had lived</i>	<i>had been living</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>lived</i>
<i>lived</i>	<i>had been living</i>		<i>lived</i>	<i>were living</i>
				<i>had</i>

past simple—Indicates a finished action. Something that has happened in the past and has no connection to the moment of speaking.

I lived in Paris

(In the past, I lived in Paris.)

I taught English.

(In the past, I taught English.)

I ate lobster.

(In the past, I ate lobster.)

past continuous—An action that happens in the past and is interrupted by another action. This verb can never stand alone, it must have a complement verb.

I was living in Paris when France won the World Cup.

(During my action of “living in Paris,” France won the World Cup.)

I was teaching English when the student got sick.

(While I was in the middle of teaching, the student got sick.)

I was eating lobster when the phone rang.

(While I was eating, the phone rang.)

past perfect—Usually used when there is more than one action happening in the past in a certain order.

I had lived in Paris before I went to school in England.

(First I lived in Paris, then I went to England.)

I had taught English before I finished my degree.

(Teaching came before finishing my degree.) He said he had eaten too much lobster.

(In the past, the man said that he performed the action of eating.)

Future Tense There are four forms to the future tense in English. It is not important, for the TOEFL, to understand the distinction between them as they are virtually interchangeable. However, you must always be able to identify the future. Look for the time signature of the sentence if you are using the present simple or present continuous.

modal—*I will leave tomorrow.* **idiom**—*I am going to leave tomorrow.*

present simple (+ future time)—*I leave tomorrow.* **present continuous (+ future time)**—*I am leaving tomorrow.*

Subjunctive This verb form requires a specific form in English. It is used to describe an action that is important or necessary. That is, the action of the second subject is important or necessary, generally, to the first subject. Let's look at the form first, and then a method of finding the subjunctive.

Subjunctive with verbs of importance

<u>that</u>	<u>subject</u>	<u>subjunctive</u>	<u>verb</u>	<u>of</u>	<u>importance</u>
<i>that</i>	<i>the student</i>	<i>write.</i>	<i>Mr. Spinoza</i>	<i>demand</i>	<i>s</i>

Subjunctive with nouns of importance

<u>subjunctive</u>	<u>noun of importance</u>	<u>that</u>	<u>subject</u>
<i>Mr. Spinoza's</i>	<i>demand</i>	<i>that</i>	<i>the student</i>
<i>write</i>	<i>has been beneficial.</i>	<i>It is his</i>	<i>demand that</i>
<i>the student</i>	<i>write.</i>		

Subjunctive with adjectives of importance

<u>subjunctive</u>	<u>adjective of importance</u>	<u>that</u>	<u>subject</u>
<i>It is</i>	<i>important</i>	<i>that</i>	<i>the student</i>
<i>write</i>	<i>his assignment.</i>		

The subjunctive tense always takes the dictionary form. Here is a three step process for recognizing the subjunctive:

1. Look for the word "that" (be careful, "that" on its own does not automatically mean a subjunctive. "That" has many uses.).
2. Is the word before "that" a word of importance? Remember that such a word can be a verb, noun, or adjective.
3. The verb that follows the subject, no matter what number that subject happens to be, is always in the dictionary form

Here is a list of verbs, nouns, and adjectives of importance, which take the subjunctive:

<u>verbs</u>	<u>nouns</u>	<u>adjectives</u>	<i>suggest</i>
<i>suggestion</i>	<i>necessary</i>		
<i>insist</i>	<i>insistence</i>	<i>important</i>	<i>prefer</i>
<i>preference</i>	<i>essential</i>		

<i>recommend requirement imperative desirable propose urge</i>	<i>recommendation required request proposal</i>	<i>recommended require demand demand request ask urgent</i>	<i>desire</i>
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WRONG: *It is imperative that he is here before the meeting begins.*

RIGHT: *It is imperative that he be here before the meeting begins.*

WRONG: *The policeman recommended that Robert drives more carefully.*

RIGHT: *The policeman recommended that Robert drive more carefully.*

WRONG: *The honors committee would not waive the requirement that Robert has letters of recommendation from his professors*

RIGHT: *The honors committee would not waive the requirement that Robert have letters of recommendation from his professors.*

Conditionals Conditional statements concern a circumstance (or condition) that influences the results or probable results of an action. There are two basic types, real (factual) and specious (only possible). The TOEFL will test your ability to use the proper verb with each conditional.

“If” clause/second clause

<i>If</i>	subject	verb	object,	subject	modal	verb	object
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The tense of the verb in the second clause depends on the tense of the verb in the first clause.

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-----------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. a. | <i>If</i> | <i>ice</i> | <i>melts,</i> | <i>it</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>warmer than 32°F.</i> |
| b. | <i>If</i> | <i>ice</i> | <i>melts,</i> | <i>it</i> | <i>will be</i> | <i>warmer than 32°F.</i> |
| 2. | <i>If</i> | <i>he</i> | <i>studies,</i> | <i>he</i> | <i>will be</i> | <i>successful.</i> |
| 3. | <i>If</i> | <i>he</i> | <i>studied,</i> | <i>he</i> | <i>would be</i> | <i>successful.</i> |
| 4. | <i>If</i> | <i>he</i> | <i>had studied,</i> | <i>he</i> | <i>would have been</i> | <i>successful.</i> |

1a. Scientific fact conditional. That fact that the ice is melting will always mean that it is warmer than 32°F. Present tense in both clauses.

1b. We can also use the present and future tenses for the scientific fact conditional.

2. A future action depending on a present action. Present tense in the “if” clause and *will/can/may* + dictionary form in the second clause.

3. A present action depending on an action in the past. Past tense in the “if” clause and *would/could/might* + dictionary form in the second clause.

4. A past action depending on an action further in the past. Past perfect tense in the “if” clause and *would/could/might* + *have* + past participle in the second clause.

TOEFL questions about conditionals are usually testing whether the second is correct. Here is what you need to know:

“If” clause verb

present
past
past perfect

Second clause verb

will/can/may + dictionary form
would/could/might + dictionary form
would/could/might + *have* + past participle

If I were rich, I would buy a car.
If I had been rich, I would have bought a car.
If I am successful, I will be rich.

And notice the scientific fact exception:

“If” clause verb

present

Second clause verb

present OR *will/can/may* + dictionary form

If you heat water to 100°C, it starts boiling.
If you heat water to 100°C, it will start boiling.

Causative Verbs

A causative verb is used when a subject (person or thing) is forcing or “causing” another subject to do something. Let’s look at the structure first, and then the specific word choice depending on which causative verb you are using.

Subject.....(forces or causes).....subject.....verb form.

	<i>have</i>	<i>make</i>	<i>let</i>	<i>get</i>	<i>help</i>
person	dictionary	dictionary	dictionary	infinitive	infinitive or dictionary
thing	participle	dictionary	dictionary	participle	infinitive or dictionary

WRONG: *Robert’s professor made him to rewrite his thesis.*

RIGHT: *Robert’s professor made him rewrite his thesis.*

WRONG: *Peter wants to get his thesis finish before he goes on vacation.*

RIGHT: *Peter wants to get his thesis finished before he goes on vacation.*

WRONG: *Peter wants to have his check cash right now.*

RIGHT: *Peter wants to have his check cashed right now.*

WRONG: *Maria had the accountant done her taxes.*

RIGHT: *Maria had the accountant do her taxes.*

WRONG: *Dean Black let Victor to go to his grandmother’s funeral.*

RIGHT: *Dean Black let Victor go to his grandmother’s funeral.*

WRONG: *Professor Martin helped Robert getting a job interview.*

RIGHT: *Professor Martin helped Robert get a job interview.*

or *Professor Martin helped Robert to get a job interview.*

Modal Verbs

Modal verb phrases use two verb words to describe an action with some sort of condition. The modal verbs (*can, could, would, etc.*) are always in front of the action verbs (*work, sleep, study, etc.*). Generally speaking, the modal verb is followed by the dictionary form of the action verb. Let's look at some definitions first, and then the structure.

Can/Could

These modal verbs describe either something that is possible, or an action that someone is able to do.

We can hear the music from the park.

(We are able to hear the music.)

He could feel the cold front in the wind.

(He was able to feel the cold front...)

Can is the present tense form and **could** is the past tense. The negative forms are **cannot** (**can't**) and **could not** (**couldn't**). Both forms are used to describe an action that is not possible.

I can't come to the office today.

(It is not possible for me to come to the office.)

I couldn't finish the assignment.

(It wasn't possible for me to finish the assignment.)

Could have is used to describe something that was possible, but is no longer possible.

We could have rented a convertible if we had called.

May/Might

These modal verbs describe either possible actions (like *can/could*) or something that will occur in the future.

I may go to the movie tonight.

(There is a possibility of my going to a movie.)

I might throw this computer out the window.

(There is a possibility...)

May and **might** are interchangeable, but only **might** is used when the event is imaginary.

*If I had studied harder for the test, I might have received a passing score.
(I didn't study hard enough, so I didn't receive a passing score.)*

When referring to the past, the verb “have” must be used in the construction.

*She might have been taking a shower when you called.
They may have finished the exercise by now. I'll go and check.*

Should/Ought to/Must

These idioms are used to describe a good or right action or something that is to occur for certain. **Should**, **ought to**, and **must** are sometimes called “moral imperatives.”

*I should read more classical literature.
(It is a good idea to read more classical literature.)*

*I ought to read more classical literature.
(It is a good idea to...)*

Note that **should** and **ought to** have virtually the same meaning. They are interchangeable.

*He should wear a seatbelt in the car.
(It is right that he wear a seatbelt.)*

*He must wear a seatbelt in the car.
(He has no choice, he will wear a seatbelt.)*

Must is simply a stronger form of **should** and **ought to**. If someone “*should*” do something, it means it is a good idea for him to do it. If someone “*must*” do something, however, it means he has no choice: the action will occur.

The modal verbs can be put in a list from least important to most. Study the list below to make sure you understand the differences.

<i>I could apologize to Helen.</i>	<i>(There is a possibility I will apologize.)</i>
<i>I can apologize to Helen.</i>	<i>(I am able to apologize, but I might not.)</i>
<i>I may apologize to Helen.</i>	<i>(There is a stronger possibility I will apologize.)</i>
<i>I might apologize to Helen.</i>	<i>(There is a stronger possibility I will apologize.)</i>
<i>I should apologize to Helen.</i>	<i>(It is right to apologize to Helen.)</i>
<i>I ought to apologize to Helen.</i>	<i>(It is right to apologize to Helen.)</i>
<i>I must apologize to Helen.</i>	<i>(I have no choice. I will apologize to Helen.)</i>

Had better

This idiom is used to give advice to someone. It usually implies that the advice is “good” or “right,” like *should* and *ought to*. The idiom **had better** is always followed by the dictionary form of the action verb.

*You had better finish the assignment.
(It is a good idea to finish the assignment.)*

*They had better drink all of these sodas.
(It is right that they drink all of these sodas.)*

Know how

When you want to explain that someone understands the process of doing something, you use the expression **know how**. This expression is always followed by the infinitive.

*Does she know how to type?
(Does she understand the process of typing?)*

*I know how to work on engines.
(I understand the action of working on engines.)*

Would rather/Would rather that

This idiom is used to express preference. If we use **would rather**, we must use the dictionary form of the action verb. If we use **would rather that**, we are introducing a new clause, that is, a new subject and verb, and we must use the past tense.

*I would rather read than watch a movie.
(I prefer reading to watching.)*

*She would rather ask the dean.
(She prefers asking the dean.)*

*Ezra would rather that you smoked at home.
(Ezra prefers that you to smoke at home.)*

*I would rather that he didn't drive alone.
(I prefer that he not drive alone.)*

Would you mind/Do you mind

This idiom is a polite request. You are asking someone to perform an action; if you use this idiom you must follow it with the gerund form of the verb (the *-ing* form).

Would you mind closing the door?
Do you mind finishing your work early?

Irregular verbs

In English, many verbs have unique forms for the simple past and the past participle.

Verbs that have irregular forms in the simple past and the past participle:

<u>Infinitive</u>	<u>Simple Past</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>
<i>arise</i>	<i>arose</i>	<i>arisen</i>
<i>be</i>	<i>was/were</i>	<i>been</i>
<i>become</i>	<i>became</i>	<i>become</i>
<i>begin</i>	<i>began</i>	<i>begun</i>
<i>blow</i>	<i>blew</i>	<i>blown</i>
<i>break</i>	<i>broke</i>	<i>broken</i>
<i>catch</i>	<i>caught</i>	<i>caught</i>
<i>choose</i>	<i>chose</i>	<i>chosen</i>
<i>come</i>	<i>came</i>	<i>come</i>
<i>cost</i>	<i>cost</i>	<i>cost</i>
<i>deal</i>	<i>dealt</i>	<i>dealt</i>
<i>do</i>	<i>did</i>	<i>done</i>
<i>drink</i>	<i>drank</i>	<i>drunk</i>
<i>drive</i>	<i>drove</i>	<i>driven</i>
<i>eat</i>	<i>ate</i>	<i>eaten</i>
<i>feel</i>	<i>felt</i>	<i>felt</i>
<i>find</i>	<i>found</i>	<i>found</i>
<i>forget</i>	<i>forgot</i>	<i>forgotten</i>
<i>get</i>	<i>got</i>	<i>gotten</i>
<i>give</i>	<i>gave</i>	<i>given</i>
<i>go</i>	<i>went</i>	<i>gone</i>
<i>grow</i>	<i>grew</i>	<i>grown</i>
<i>hold</i>	<i>held</i>	<i>held</i>
<i>know</i>	<i>knew</i>	<i>known</i>
<i>lay</i>	<i>laid</i>	<i>laid</i>
<i>lie</i>	<i>lay</i>	<i>lain</i>
<i>meet</i>	<i>met</i>	<i>met</i>
<i>pay</i>	<i>paid</i>	<i>paid</i>
<i>put</i>	<i>put</i>	<i>put</i>
<i>run</i>	<i>ran</i>	<i>run</i>
<i>see</i>	<i>saw</i>	<i>seen</i>
<i>show</i>	<i>showed</i>	<i>shown</i>
<i>sing</i>	<i>sang</i>	<i>sung</i>
<i>speak</i>	<i>spoke</i>	<i>spoken</i>
<i>swim</i>	<i>swam</i>	<i>swum</i>
<i>take</i>	<i>took</i>	<i>taken</i>
<i>understand</i>	<i>understood</i>	<i>understood</i>
<i>wear</i>	<i>wore</i>	<i>worn</i>
<i>write</i>	<i>wrote</i>	<i>written</i>

Verbs as Modifiers

As we have seen, verb words have many different uses in English. They can refer to actions, of course, and also can be nouns or adjectives. Let's look at the three different types of verbal modifiers.

Gerunds

The gerund is simply the “-ing” form of a verb. Remember that it is not a verb unless it is preceded by the conjugated verb “to be” (in the present or past continuous tense). Gerunds are very popular on the TOEFL test because, as we have said, most students assume they are actions.

I am smoking too much. (verb)
Smoking is a cultural taboo. (noun)
Look for the smoking gun. (adjective)

Remember that the gerund as a noun can always be replaced with the expression: “the action of...” Thus, in the second example we could say: “The action of smoking is a cultural taboo.” By replacing the gerund with this expression, we can clearly see that in this sentence, “smoking” is a noun.

Infinitives

An infinitive by itself can never be the main verb of a sentence. A verb must be conjugated to be an action. Infinitives are almost always subjects, but can sometimes follow certain kind of verbs. In both cases, infinitives will describe the “purpose” of an action.

To understand an assignment, one should read the additional text.
I read an additional text to understand the assignment.

Participles

These are the most easily confused modifiers. Very often, a modifier comes after a simple verb, but is not a verb! The only time a participle can be a verb (an action) is when it is in the compound tense of the present or past perfect.

He is finished with the assignment.
The assignment will be rewritten tomorrow.
Mr. Smith was considered for the job.

In these three examples, the participle is describing a noun: “a finished assignment,” “a rewritten assignment,” and “a considered Mr. Smith.” Compare these examples with the three below in which the participle acts as a verb. Notice that the perfect tense must be used in each case.

*He has finished with the assignment.
He had rewritten the assignment.
Mr. Smith has considered the job.*

Gerunds and Infinitives

Like the irregular verbs, certain verbs are always followed by the gerund and others are always followed by the infinitive. Again, there is no grammar rule here. These forms must be memorized.

Verbs followed by the gerund (-ing):

admit
advise
anticipate
appreciate
avoid
can't help
complete
consider
delay
deny
discuss
discuss
dislike
enjoy
finish
forget
keep
mention
mind
miss
postpone
practice
quit
recall
recollect
recommend
regret
resent
resist
risk
suggest
tolerate
understand

Verbs followed by the infinitive:

afford
agree
appear
arrange
ask
beg
care
claim
consent
decide
demand
deserve
expect
fail
forget
hesitate
hope
intend
learn
manage
mean
need
offer
plan
prepare
pretend
promise
refuse
regret
seem
struggle
wait
want
wish

Phrasal Verbs

Many English verbs take on new meanings when combined with particles. When you combine take with off, for example, the result is a verb that means “remove” (*take off your coat*) or “depart” (*the plane takes off*). These verb+particle combinations are called phrasal verbs. Here is a list of the most important phrasal verbs:

ask out
blow up
bring about, on
bring up

ask someone to go on a date
inflate, destroy in an explosion
cause
raise (children), introduce (a topic)

call back	return a phone call
call off	cancel
call up	telephone
catch up	overtake
come across	find
cover up	conceal
cross out	delete
cut out	stop doing something
do over	repeat
dress up	put on fancy clothes
drop by, in (on)	visit
drop off	discharge (passenger)
drop out	quit (school)
figure out	solve
fill out	complete
find out	discover
get along (with)	be friendly
get back (from)	return
get off	leave (bus, train, etc.)
get on	enter (bus, train, etc.)
get out of	exit
get over	recover
get up	rise (from bed)
give back	return (to owner)
give up	quit, surrender
go over	review
grow up	become an adult
hand in	submit
hang up	end a telephone call
keep up (with)	stay abreast
kick out (of)	dismiss
look after	take care of
look into	investigate
look out (for)	beware
make out	discern; kiss
make up	invent; use cosmetics; become reconciled
pass away	die
pass out	faint
pick up	collect
point out	indicate
pull off	be successful
put away	return to proper place
put back	return to original place
put off	delay
put on	dress oneself in
put up with	tolerate
rip off	steal
run into, across	encounter

run out (of)	become depleted
run over	knock down
show up	appear
shut off	stop (machine, light, etc.)
shut up	be quiet
spell out	be explicit
take off	remove (clothing); depart
take out	delete, take someone on a date
tear down	demolish
tear up	rend, tear into pieces
think over	contemplate
throw away, out	discard
throw up	vomit
turn in	go to bed, submit
turn off	stop (machine, light, etc.)
turn on	start (machine, light, etc.)
turn down	reduce volume, refuse
turn up	increase volume, appear

II. NOUNS

There are several problems with nouns on the TOEFL. However, the problems you will see are most often combined with modifier or agreement problems. You must have a basic understanding of nouns in English to do well on this test.

Let's look at the two different kinds of nouns and the modifiers used for each. There are two kinds of nouns: count and noncount. Although many nouns are easy to understand, some just have to be memorized. Let's look at the basic rules for count and noncount nouns and the modifiers used for each. We will also see lists of exception nouns and specific modifier problems.

Count Nouns

Count nouns are the most common kinds of nouns, describing anything with a definite or individual shape. For example, you can identify or touch a cup. It has a definite and individual shape that is different from, say, the table or the knife. However, you can not identify or touch a coffee. Coffee is a noncount noun. And in order to make it individual or definite, it must be contained by something. We'll look at this rule soon. Right now you must understand that most count nouns have a definite or individual shape.

However, there are some count nouns that have no shape because they are abstract concepts or ideas. Units of measurement and a finite number of abstract ideas can be definite and individual. For example, you could say "*one inch*," or "*five meters*," and you could say "*an idea*" or "*five projects*." Once again, although these are not concrete objects, that is things you can touch, they can be definite and individual. Here is a short list of common count nouns.

names of persons, animals, and things that are distinct

<i>one friend</i>	<i>three friends</i>	<i>one child</i>	<i>three children</i> (irregular)
<i>one teacher</i>	<i>two teachers</i>	<i>one rat</i>	<i>four rats</i>
<i>one tourist</i>	<i>three tourists</i>	<i>one dog</i>	<i>two dogs</i>
<i>one pencil</i>	<i>five pencils</i>	<i>one bird</i>	<i>five birds</i>

groups or classifications

<i>one family</i>	<i>five families</i>	<i>one religion</i>	<i>two religions</i>
<i>one class</i>	<i>two classes</i>	<i>one region</i>	<i>five region</i>
<i>one city</i>	<i>three cities</i>	<i>one group</i>	<i>three groups</i>

receptacles and units of measure

<i>one glass</i>	<i>five glasses</i>	<i>one meter</i>	<i>ten meters</i>
<i>one plate</i>	<i>two plates</i>	<i>one mile</i>	<i>twenty miles</i>
<i>one bottle</i>	<i>three bottles</i>	<i>one ounce</i>	<i>five ounces</i>
<i>one box</i>	<i>two boxes</i>	<i>one liter</i>	<i>two liters</i>

abstract ideas and concepts

<i>one idea</i>	<i>two ideas</i>	<i>one project</i>	<i>four projects</i>
<i>one schedule</i>	<i>five schedules</i>	<i>one notion</i>	<i>several notions</i>
<i>one reason</i>	<i>three reasons</i>	<i>one cause</i>	<i>many causes</i>

Although the list is brief, you get the idea. As a general rule, if a noun has a definite and identifiable shape, it is a count noun. Let's look at the rules for the proper use of these nouns.

Count nouns...

- (1) can be singular or plural (simply add an "-s" or "-es").
I have one pencil. I have two pencils.
- (2) can take a singular or plural verb (make sure they agree).
This book is interesting. These books are interesting.
- (3) can be preceded by a number: one, five, etc.
One student works hard. Five students work hard.
- (4) can be preceded by "the," "a," and "an."
The glass is broken. A glass is broken.
- (5) cannot be without an article, number, or expression, if they are singular.
(not) *Student works hard.* (but) *A student works hard.*
One student works hard.
The student works hard.
Many students work hard.

(6) can be alone if they are plural.

Students work hard.

Books are interesting.

Noncount Nouns

Although noncount nouns are not as common, you will see many of them on the TOEFL. Noncount nouns are nouns that are not distinct and individual. That is, they need to be contained by something (by a count noun) before they can be counted. As we saw in the introduction to count nouns, we cannot say “*two coffees*.” *Coffee* is noncount, so in order to count it, we must add the expression “*a cup of...*” or “*a pound of...*”, etc.

Noncount nouns have no definite shape or contain many small parts that are considered as a group. Please notice that abstract concepts are generally noncount (though we saw a few count examples earlier). Let’s look at a list of common noncount nouns.

Foods and Liquids that come in many different shapes

<i>bread</i>	<i>a piece of bread</i>	<i>a loaf of bread</i>
<i>wine</i>	<i>a bottle of wine</i>	<i>five glasses of wine</i>
<i>oil</i>	<i>a container of oil</i>	<i>some oil</i>
<i>coffee</i>	<i>a cup of coffee</i>	<i>too much coffee</i>
<i>pasta</i>	<i>a bowl of pasta</i>	<i>four packets of pasta</i>

Natural material, or material to build with

<i>water/ice</i>	<i>a glass of water</i>	<i>a pool of water</i>
<i>wood</i>	<i>a piece of wood</i>	<i>ten pieces of wood</i>
<i>sand</i>	<i>a bag of sand</i>	<i>five pounds of sand</i>
<i>concrete</i>	<i>a slab of concrete</i>	<i>too much concrete</i>
<i>hydrogen</i>	<i>an atom of hydrogen</i>	<i>a cluster of hydrogen</i>
<i>paper</i>	<i>a piece of paper</i>	<i>a notebook of paper</i>

Things that come in different shapes and sizes

<i>luggage</i>	<i>a piece of luggage</i>	<i>lots of luggage</i>
<i>clothing</i>	<i>an item of clothing</i>	<i>some clothing</i>
<i>money</i>	<i>a piece of money</i>	<i>some money</i>
<i>music</i>	<i>a piece of music</i>	<i>an album of music</i>

Abstract concepts

<i>advice</i>	<i>a piece of advice</i>	<i>some advice</i>
<i>teaching</i>	<i>a little teaching</i>	<i>some teaching</i>
<i>dignity</i>	<i>a piece of dignity</i>	<i>some dignity</i>
<i>thinking</i>	<i>a piece of thinking</i>	<i>some thinking</i>
<i>closeness</i>	<i>a time of closeness</i>	<i>some closeness</i>

Although not a comprehensive list, you get the idea. Again, as a general rule, if a noun does not have a definite and identifiable shape, it is a noncount noun. Let’s look at some rules for the proper use of these nouns.

Noncount nouns...

(1) have only one form.

Time is moving quickly. I haven't the time.

(2) are always used with a singular verb.

Wine is good for the heart. Sand is made into glass.

(3) cannot normally take "a" or "an."

(not) *A rice is healthy.* (but) *Rice is healthy.*
or *Wine is healthy* *Some rice is healthy.*
This rice is healthy.

(4) cannot have a number in front. (not) *Five wine is too much.*

(but) *Five glasses of wine is too much.*

(5) can be used with "the."

The wine is good. The water is cold.

Nouns with Count or Noncount Meaning

Yes, it is possible that nouns can be both count and noncount. Remember that the meanings are slightly different. Let's look at a few.

	<u>count</u>	<u>meaning</u>	<u>noncount</u>	<u>meaning</u>
	<i>one work, a few works</i>	<i>an artistic object</i>	<i>work</i>	<i>the general idea of all work</i>
	<i>one thought, a few thoughts</i>	<i>an individual idea</i>	<i>thought</i>	<i>the general idea of all thought</i>
	<i>a time, good times</i>	<i>a specific period</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>the general idea of time</i>
	<i>a paper, some papers</i>	<i>a report or individual document</i>	<i>paper</i>	<i>general material</i>
idea	<i>a wine, some wines (of France)</i>		<i>a specific wine</i>	<i>wine the general of all wine</i>
	<i>a glass, some glasses</i>	<i>a specific number of containers</i>	<i>glass</i>	<i>general material</i>
	<i>one business, many businesses</i>	<i>a specific number of businesses</i>	<i>business</i>	<i>the general idea of all business</i>

One of the testmaker's favorite traps for nonnative speakers is to use nouns that are noncount in English, but count in other languages. Nice, isn't he? These common mistakes can be avoided by learning the following list.

Nouns that are usually noncount in English but count in other languages.

<i>Accommodation</i>	<i>Advice</i>
<i>Baggage</i>	<i>Behavior</i>
<i>Bread</i>	<i>Chaos</i>
<i>Damage</i>	<i>Equipment</i>
<i>Fun</i>	<i>Furniture</i>
<i>Homework</i>	<i>Information</i>
<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Leisure</i>
<i>Luck</i>	<i>Luggage</i>
<i>Money</i>	<i>Music</i>
<i>News</i>	<i>Patience</i>
<i>Permission</i>	<i>Progress</i>
<i>Scenery</i>	<i>Traffic</i>
<i>Weather</i>	<i>Work</i>

Count or noncount modifier

The main testing point for count and noncount nouns is the modifiers that go with them. Here is an exhaustive list.

<u>Count</u> <i>(minutes)</i>	<u>Noncount</u> <i>(time)</i>
<i>a few minutes</i> <i>(enough minutes)</i> <i>so few minutes</i> <i>(not enough minutes)</i> <i>few minutes</i> <i>(a small number of..)</i>	<i>a little time</i> <i>(enough time)</i> <i>so little time</i> <i>(not enough time)</i> <i>little time</i> <i>(a small amount of...)</i>
<i>many minutes</i>	<i>much time</i>
<i>a number of minutes</i>	<i>an amount of time</i>
<i>a kind of student</i>	<i>a type of homework</i>
<i>some minutes</i>	<i>some time</i>
<i>fewer minutes</i>	<i>less time</i>

Nouns and Articles

Articles include the words “a,” “an,” and “the.” There are, of course, some specific rules for using these three articles correctly. Let’s look.

“A” and “An”

are used with singular count nouns, remember that singular count nouns cannot be alone.

A student is not here. (not) *Student is not here.*

are used only with singular nouns, never with a plural noun.

Some students are not here. (not) *A students are not here.*

are used for singular examples of plural ideas.

He is a perfect student.
This is a very nice hotel.

“The”

is different from “a” and “an” in that it refers to a specific object, not a general object.

He sat in a chair. (any chair)
He sat in the chair near the stage. (a specific chair)

Is there a pharmacy near here? (any pharmacy)
I am going to the pharmacy tomorrow. (a specific pharmacy)

is used with either singular or plural nouns.

I like the painting.
I like the paintings.

refers to one thing, often unique or individual.

The Earth is the only inhabited planet in the Solar System.
Austin is the capital of Texas.

and therefore, is almost always used with the superlative.

Who is the best student?
This is the cheapest book in the store.
He is the tallest teacher among us.

Sentences without articles

Sometimes, a noun does not need an article. If we are referring to a general idea, usually a noncount noun, no article is needed.

School is difficult in the summer. (general, all schools)
A school should be clean. (general, yet one example of a general subject)
The school is far from here. (a specific school)

Cats are either hated or loved. (general)
The cats of Africa include lions and cheetahs. (specific)

Do you like chocolate? (general)
Do you have the chocolate I like? (specific)

Nouns as modifiers

If a noun is used to modify or describe another noun, it must always be singular. Careful, there are exceptions to this rule that are tested. And be very careful of trying to find a rule that is always true; this point will depend on the placement of the noun. Let's take a hyphenated noun as our example.

This is a three-year-old child.

or

The child is three years old.

The 1000-dollar contract was invalid.

or

The contract was worth only 1000 dollars.

This is a two-bedroom house.

or

The house has two bedrooms.

In the first sentence of each example, the noun phrase (*three-year-old*, *1000-dollar*, and *two-bedroom*) is modifying the actual noun. But in the second sentence the same noun phrases are objects in the sentence.

Always look for the grammatical reason for the word. Is it a modifier? singular. Is it a noun? could be plural. Let's look at some exceptions.

Almost all nouns ending in “-ics” are plural but take a singular verb.

Mathematics is a hard subject.
My physics teacher is very good.
There is nothing better for you than gymnastics.

ETS's favorites:

News, mathematics, economics, politics, etc.

Numerical Modifiers

Word order is a common testing point. Whenever you see a numerical question, sigh with relief. They are very easy once you understand the forms. There are two different types of numerical modifiers with two different styles each.

1. order

chapter one (cardinal)

the first chapter (ordinal)

lane one (cardinal)

the first lane (ordinal)

not:

the chapter one

first chapter

lane the first

the one lane

Notice that in the second example we must have an article.

For simple nouns we are using cardinal numbers...*one, two, three, four*, etc...or we can use ordinal numbers...*first, second, third, fourth*, etc... depending on the order of the expression.

2. dates

March first

The first of March

April tenth

The tenth of April

When we refer to dates, we must always use ordinal numbers. This can be a difficult testing point because many Americans will say "*April one*" or "*ten March.*" These forms however, are not grammatically correct.

III. PRONOUNS

Pronouns are words that replace a noun in a sentence. There are a few general rules to know. ETS is mostly concerned with a few specific problems. We see these questions on both Sentence Completion (Part A) and Error Identification (Part B) of the Structure and Written Expression section and in the Reading Comprehension section.

First let's look at an exhaustive list of the pronouns types in English. Then we will focus on the testing points found on the TOEFL.

General Pronouns

Subject: *I, you, he/she/it, we, they*

These pronouns are the subject of the sentence or clause, that is, they perform the action of the verb.

Object: *me, you, him/her/it, us, them*

These pronouns are the object of the sentence or clause, that is, they receive the action of the verb.

Possessive: *my (mine), your (yours), his/her/its (his, hers, its) our (ours), their (theirs)*

These pronouns show ownership of a noun.

reflexive: *myself, yourself, himself/herself/itself, ourselves, themselves*

These pronouns are used when the subject and the object are the same person or thing.

relative: *who, whom, whose, which, that*

These pronouns are used to describe or modify a noun.

Exceptions

Possessive

There are two forms for the possessive, look carefully at the following examples.

1. *my house* *this house is mine*
 your car *the car is yours*
 his friend *a friend of his*

2. *on my own* *by myself* *myself alone*
 on his own *by himself* *himself alone*

3. *bring/take* (noun) *with* (object pronoun)
 Bring an umbrella with me. (not *myself*)
 Take his book with him. (not *himself*)

4. “*There*” and “*it*” are often used as pronouns in inverted sentences.

There + plural/singular It + singular
 There are many shops on Fifth Avenue
 It is the best movie I have ever seen.

5. General person modifiers

“*One*” and “*You*” can be general person modifiers.

 If one works hard, one will do well.

 If you work hard, you will do well.

Relative Pronouns

This is the most common testing point for pronouns. A relative pronoun is very often put in the sentence correctly, which means it is there to distract you. Learning the correct use of the relative pronouns is a very simple lesson, however, and once you understand it you will not make a mistake with these pronouns.

First understand what each type is.

who (subject) *he*

<i>whom</i>	(object)	<i>him</i>
<i>whose</i>	(possessive)	<i>his</i>
<i>which</i>	(possessive or connector)	<i>its</i>

The pronoun “*who*,” is the subject pronoun. The pronoun “*whom*,” is the object pronoun. Therefore you must determine if the modifier is performing the action in the relative clause or is receiving the action. Let’s look at some examples:

1. *This is the man who won the race.*
2. *This is the man whom I saw at the race.*
3. *This is the man who I said won the race.*

Find your relative clause. Notice that “*This is the man*” is the same in both sentences and does not affect the relative clause, which is the dependent clause of the sentence. Find the relative clause “*who won the race*” or “*whom I saw at the race*” and determine if the verb has a subject. In the first example, it doesn’t: thus we must use the subject pronoun “*who*.” In the second example, the verb “*saw*” has a subject performing the action, “*I*”: thus we use the object pronoun “*whom*” because it is receiving the action. Now, look carefully at the third example. We can still quickly determine the dependent clause and independent clause, but there are two conjugated verbs in the dependent (relative) clause! Which one is the main action of the sentence? Not “*said*,” but “*won*” is the main action, and so again we are using the subject pronoun “*who*.” Let’s look at some more difficult examples.

4. *The woman who lived next door for fifteen years is studying to become a doctor.*
5. *The woman whom I lived with for fifteen years is studying to become a doctor.*

Above, the relative clause is in the middle of the sentence. Notice we can take it out and the basic sentence still makes sense: “*The woman...is studying to become a doctor.*” In the first example it is the “*woman*” performing the action: use the subject pronoun “*who*.” In the second example, the subject “*I*” is performing the action and the “*woman*” is receiving the action: use the object pronoun “*whom*.”

The MBA Center Method

1. Determine your relative clause
2. Locate the main verb in the relative clause
3. Does this verb have a subject?
If yes, use “*whom*,” the object pronoun.
If no, use “*who*,” the subject pronoun.

General Person Pronouns

As we have said, the general person pronouns are “*one*” and “*you*.” ETS loves them, and will make sure you know the agreement rules.

- If one works hard, one will do well.*
If you work hard, you will do well.
not: *If one works hard, he will do well*

Agreement

The testmakers will test your knowledge of all the pronouns and what they should agree with.

They are especially fond of possessive pronouns. Here is a brief list of subjects that are often tested for agreement.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Pronoun</u>
<i>Those of us...</i>	<i>our</i>
<i>Those of you...</i>	<i>your</i>
<i>Some of us...</i>	<i>our</i>
<i>Some of you...</i>	<i>your</i>
<i>Each of us...</i>	<i>our</i>
<i>Each of you...</i>	<i>your</i>
<i>Each student...</i>	<i>his</i>
<i>Each of my students....</i>	<i>his</i>

Possessing the Gerund

Remember that a gerund (*-ing* form of a verb) can be a noun. Therefore, it can be possessed like a simple noun. At first, this is difficult to understand. Most students assume that the gerund is a verb, an action. But unless the gerund is preceded by a conjugated form of the verb “*to be*,” it is not a verb. Be careful. Often, it is much easier to understand if you replace the noun gerund with the expression: “*the action of...*” (That is, of course you can possess the simple noun, “*action.*”)

They were pleased with our asking about the new furniture.
(*They were pleased with our “action of asking...”*)

My smoking is very unpopular in my family.
(*My “action of smoking....”*)

IV. MODIFIERS

Modifiers include any words or expressions that are modifying (or describing) another word. Adjectives, adverbs, nouns, verbs, and phrases can all be modifiers. In fact, almost any word in English can modify another word. The rule for modifiers, however is fundamental. To determine if a word or expression is a modifier, you must be able to reduce a sentence to its simple parts or essentials. Look at this example.

Although designed to hold more than 100 people, the only smoking section in the 20-story building fills quickly during the ten-minute breaks.

The simple sentence is:

The section fills quickly.

The modifiers are:

Although designed to hold more than 100 people,	(modifying phrase)
only	(adjective)
smoking	(gerund adjective)
quickly	(adverb)
20-story	(noun modifier)
ten-minute	(noun modifier)

The prepositional phrases (extra information) are:

in the 20-story building
during the ten-minute breaks.

So, reducing the sentence to its essentials can help you understand how words are being used. “*Smoking*” is not a verb, but an adjective. “*20-story*” and “*ten-minute*” are adjectives, not nouns.

Simple Modifiers

Simple modifiers are basic adjectives and adverbs that describe, respectively, nouns and verbs. Let’s take a moment and look at the problem of word order.

Adjectives

Adjectives can be separated into two categories: fact and opinion. Factual adjectives deal with color, size, weight, condition, etc. Opinion adjectives deal with judgments and preferences. Opinion adjectives usually precede factual adjectives.

This is a beautiful new house.
(not: *This is a new beautiful house.*)

He is a handsome young man.
(not: *He is a young handsome man.*)

Adverbs

Adverbs describe the way the action of a sentence is performed. They are almost always in the -ly form. But be careful: just seeing -ly is not sufficient to call something an adverb. (For example, “lately,” is a time preposition, meaning “recently.”) Adverbs will usually come

after a simple verb, after the object, or in the middle of a compound verb. Of course, there are exceptions.

I work quickly on the computer.
(My action of working is quick.)

He listens carefully so he doesn't miss anything important.
(His action of listening is careful.)

My friend speaks English and Chinese perfectly.
(My friends' action of speaking is perfect.)

Adverbs can also be used before adjectives.

This is a terribly expensive restaurant.
He was incredibly fast at computerized tests.
I am reasonably good at grammar.

And they can come before the past participle (as a modifier).

The woman was seriously injured in the riot.
The new TOEFL is badly organized.
He is rarely occupied at this hour.

Modifiers of Manner

Modifiers of manner describe “how” something was done. As we have said before, understanding how words are used in a sentence is essential. Look at these comparisons.

<i>The coffee tastes bad.</i>	<i>I performed badly.</i>
<i>He liked the quick service.</i>	<i>The staff served quickly.</i>
<i>The rain was very heavy.</i>	<i>It was raining heavily.</i>

In the first column, only adjectives are used as modifiers: “*bad coffee*,” “*quick service*,” “*heavy rain*.” In the second column, adjectives are used as adverbs: “*badly performed*,” “*quickly served*,” “*heavily raining*.”

Be very careful with what we call the “feel verbs”: to taste, smell, hear, see, think, etc. These verbs take adjectives. Compare:

<i>The man sees badly; he needs glasses.</i>	(His action of seeing is bad)
<i>The coffee tastes bad.</i>	(The coffee, not the action of tasting, is bad)

<i>The music was very quiet.</i>	(The music—noun— was quiet)
<i>The music was played quietly.</i>	(The action of playing was quiet)

<i>He looked so serious.</i>	(The man was serious)
<i>He looked seriously at the project.</i>	(The action was serious)

Irregular forms

“*Late*,” “*hard*,” and “*fast*” are all adverbs without an “-ly.”

<i>He arrived late.</i>	<i>(his action of arriving was late)</i>
<i>The late bus was filled.</i>	<i>(the bus that arrives late)</i>
<i>The TOEFL is hard!</i>	<i>(it is a hard test)</i>
<i>I worked hard on the TOEFL.</i>	<i>(my action of work was hard)</i>
<i>He drove fast.</i>	<i>(His action of driving was fast.)</i>
<i>This is a fast car.</i>	<i>(The car is fast.)</i>

Nouns as Modifiers

In some cases, nouns can modify other nouns. When they do, remember that a modifying noun must be singular and is usually not possessive. This is a very common trap on the TOEFL.

nouns as modifiers

1. *The car radio is one of the best on the market.* not: *the cars radio...*
the car's radio...
2. *This museum facility specializes in pre-Raphaelite drawings.*
not: *this museum's facility*
this museums facility

Yet, look at this one...

- 3a. *The student book is on the table.*
A book made for the student, not the teacher, but a general book, not possessed by anyone.
- b. *The student's book is on the table.*
A book possessed by an individual student.
- c. *The students' book is on the table.*
A book possessed by a number of students.

Notice that the modifier will not change to agree with a singular or plural noun. It will always be singular, unless the noun-adjective is uniquely possessing the noun.

- d. *The student books are on the table.*
- e. *The student's books are on the table.*
- f. *The students' books are on the table.*

Modifier Exceptions

Enough

Enough is used to describe something that is sufficient. There are two forms.

Enough + Noun

Adjective + *Enough*

The forms are that simple. Let's look at some examples.

*There is enough food for everyone to eat.
Is it cold enough for you?*

Be careful of words that are both nouns and adjectives.

*There is enough light to read without hurting your eyes.
It is light enough to carry.*

So and Such

These two modifiers describe the result of another clause. They have three distinct forms depending on what noun they modify.

So + Adjective + *A/An* + singular count noun + *that*

Such + *A/An* + Adjective + singular count noun + *that*

Such + Adjective + plural count noun/noncount noun + *that*

*It was so nice a day that we went for a hike.
It was such a nice day that we went for a hike.
It was such nice weather that we went for a hike.*

Phrasal Modifiers

Phrasal modifiers differ from regular modifiers in that they contain a number of words instead of one. Both function in the same way, however, always describing a clear subject. As a testing point, this grammatical problem is most common on Error Identification questions, although it is often tested on the Sentence Completion questions as well. ETS considers some of these to be very difficult questions. Phrasal modifiers are often used to make a sentence longer and more confusing. However, they are easy to spot and work around.

Remember that a modifier will always describe the nearest available noun.

Relative Clause Modifier

The relative clause is used to specify exactly what person or thing the speaker is talking about. It simply adds more information about the subject. Therefore, a relative clause will not change the basic sentence structure, it simply adds more information. There are five different kinds that ETS is concerned with.

Who and Whom

The pronoun “*who*,” is the subject pronoun. The pronoun “*whom*,” is the object pronoun. Because “*who*” and “*whom*” are each used in different circumstances, you must determine if the modifier is performing the action in the relative clause or receiving the action. Let’s look at some examples:

1. *This is the man who won the race.*
2. *This is the man whom I saw at the race.*

First, find your relative clause. Notice that “*This is the man*” is the same in both sentences and does not affect the relative clause, the independent clause of the sentence. Find the relative clause “*who won the race*” or “*whom I saw at the race*” and determine if the verb has a subject. In the first example, it doesn’t: thus we must use the subject pronoun “*who*.” In the second example, the verb “*saw*” has a subject “*I*” performing the action: therefore we use the object pronoun “*whom*” because it is receiving the action. Let’s look at some more difficult examples.

3. *The woman who lived next door for fifteen years is studying to become a doctor.*
4. *The woman whom I lived with for fifteen years is studying to become a doctor.*

In both examples above, the relative clause is in the middle of the sentence. Notice we can take it out and the basic sentence still makes sense: “*The woman...is studying to become a doctor.*” In the first example it is the “*woman*” performing the action: use the subject pronoun “*who*.” In the second example, the subject “*I*” is performing the action and the “*woman*” is receiving the action: use the object pronoun “*whom*.”

Extra Information Clauses

Adding a clause to a sentence in order to give more information about a noun is very common. Remember, doing this will not change the structure of the sentence. Make sure that the subject has a clear verb which agrees in number and person. If you get confused, you can simply take the extra information clause out of the sentence and it should make sense.

1. *The mayor is on vacation.*
2. *The mayor, along with his wife and children, is on vacation.*

In the first sentence we have a simple subject + verb + object structure. It is very easy to see that the singular subject “*mayor*” agrees with the singular verb “*is*.” In the second sentence we have added some more information, a plural group: “*wife and children*.”

However, this will not change the simple sentence structure, or the verb. In fact, the sentences are identical: the second sentence only adds extra information.

Question Words in a Statement

In order to ask a question, we normally invert the subject and verb after the question word. But when we use a question word in a statement, we normally follow it with first the subject and then the verb. Consider these two examples:

Where is the bus stop?

I don't know where the bus stop is.

The first sentence is a simple question, and we put the verb before the noun. The second sentence is a statement and we follow the question word with the subject and verb. If the sentence is not a question, make sure that the verb follows the noun.

Introductory Modifiers

Introductory modifiers are words or phrases that begin a sentence. Like all modifiers, they must be as close as possible to the noun that they modify or describe. There are many different kinds, but ETS is mainly concerned with the introductory verbal modifier and the introductory adjective modifier. These modifiers can be very long, but don't let that confuse you. Just make sure that the subject being described is directly after the modifier.

Introductory Verbal Modifiers

This kind of modifier will use the participle or the gerund. If the subject of the action is not mentioned in the modifier, it must follow directly after it. Always make sure that the modifiers are describing the correct subject.

WRONG: *Looking out of his window, the city looked very quiet and peaceful.*

RIGHT: *Looking out of his window, the man thought the city looked quiet and peaceful.*

V. COMPARATIVES

Comparatives are words or expressions that contrast or relate to things in a sentence. There are two kinds of comparatives: the simple comparative and the superlative. In addition there are many idiomatic phrases that are comparatives.

Here we will look at the two different kinds of comparatives and the idiomatic expressions that go with them. As with all idioms in English, to learn them they must be memorized. The proper use of the comparative idiom is a common testing point on the TOEFL. **Comparatives**

The most common type of comparative is the “-er” form or, with words of three or more syllables, the addition of the word “more.”

“-er”

We use “-er” for short words, normally one- and two-syllable words.

<i>tall</i>	<i>taller</i>	<i>small</i>	<i>smaller</i>
<i>smart</i>	<i>smarter</i>	<i>nice</i>	<i>nicer</i>
<i>big</i>	<i>bigger</i>	<i>short</i>	<i>shorter</i>
<i>light</i>	<i>lighter</i>	<i>heavy</i>	<i>heavier</i>

However, we use “more” if the word is longer.

<i>intelligent</i>	<i>more intelligent</i>
<i>sophisticated</i>	<i>more sophisticated</i>
<i>interesting</i>	<i>more interesting</i>
<i>frightened</i>	<i>more frightened</i>
<i>essential</i>	<i>more essential</i>

Both the “-er” and “more” forms are used to compare two things. We can compare subjects, objects, actions, etc. At this point you should be concerned with a “correct comparison.” That is, when making a comparison, make sure the two things being compared are the same kind of thing. You cannot, for example, compare “a country” with “a leader.”

Irregular forms

Be careful of comparison words that have irregular forms.

<i>good</i>	<i>better</i>	(not “gooder”)
<i>well</i>	<i>better</i>	(not “weller”)
<i>bad</i>	<i>worse</i>	(not “badder”)
<i>badly</i>	<i>worse</i>	(not “badder”)

Idioms

With the simple comparative, we use the word “than.”

I am better than him.
This book is more interesting than that one.
The movie was longer than I expected.

Note that we can also use the word “less” in a comparative.

The dinner was less than the dinner we had had before.
The course was less informative than the one he gave before.
The book is less expensive than what the man said it would be.

And we can use the word “fewer” in the same way.

*There are fewer than 10,000 sperm whales still surviving.
Fewer than 200 people signed up for the advanced course.
He has fewer options than most of my friends.*

Same as

This comparison describes two things which are exactly alike. Always use “as” with this idiom.

*This book is the same as last year's edition, but it costs more!
Each movie I see seems the same as the last.
He did not receive the same TOEFL score as I.*

Similar to

This comparison describes two things which are close or almost matching. Again, be careful of the idiom.

*His apartment is very similar to mine, although he has a better view.
The book is similar to last year's, but there are more exercises.
Your coat is similar to one that I had a few years ago.*

Like, Alike

These comparison words, describing two things that are almost identical, have two different forms.

The TOEFL test is like the TOEIC test, although the latter is easier.

or

The TOEFL test and the TOEIC test are alike, although the latter is easier.

This class is like the one I took last summer in New York.

or

This class and the one I took last summer in New York are alike.

Channel 13 on regular television is like Channel 45 on cable television.

or

Channel 13 and Channel 45 are alike.

As...as

Another comparison of similarity, make sure that when you use “as” in the comparison you repeat it after the quality word (*big, small, cheap, etc...*)

*This book is as expensive as the one I bought last year.
The seats are as close as the other ones you wanted me to reserve.
The performance was as good as could be expected.*

I wouldn't consider him as good a player as Smith or Jones.

“As...as” can also be an expression of comparison, usually referring to a duration or period of time.

As long as you did what you wanted to, what is there to worry about?

We will go to America as soon as we find a place to stay.

As long as you work hard, you will get your salary.

As soon as she came into the room, I knew she was the one.

Different from

Another idiom, this time comparing two things that are not the same at all. Note that “different than” is incorrect.

Coffee in France is not very different from coffee in America.

His course was different from what I expected, but I liked it.

My idea is different from his, although I think we can use his idea as well.

Superlatives

Superlatives are the highest form of something and must be used when comparing three or more things. Like the simple comparatives, we use “-est” for short words and words like “most,” “least,” “best,” etc. for longer words. Look at these examples:

Mike is smarter than Fred in class, in fact he is the smartest student I have.

Paris is better than most cities, it is perhaps the best city in the world.

The New York Times recently reported that Joyce was the finest writer of the twentieth century

Irregular forms

<i>good</i>	<i>better</i>	<i>best</i>
<i>bad</i>	<i>worse</i>	<i>worst</i>
<i>far</i>	<i>further</i>	<i>furthest</i>

Advanced Comparative Forms

Sometimes we repeat the comparative to say that something is changing continuously.

The work keeps getting harder and harder.

I find it easier and easier to find an apartment that I like.

The work on the book is becoming more and more boring.

We can also use a parallel structure form to describe actions that are connected.

The sooner I finish this work the better.

The fewer responsibilities you have the more free time you get.

The higher we climb the harder it is for me to breathe.

And be careful when you quantify a comparative.

*These dishes cost twice as much as they did at the other shop.
The students must often work three times as hard as normal*

or

*These dishes are twice as expensive as they were at the other shop.
The students must often work three times harder than normal.*

VI. PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions do many things in English. We have seen them with verbs, in idiomatic expressions, in modifiers, everywhere. There are more exceptions with prepositions than with any other part of speech in English. Fortunately, you are not required to know them all. As we have said about idioms, in order to truly master them, you must practice the language in the country of origin. However, for the TOEFL, this section should help you considerably.

Below are common problems with prepositions found on the TOEFL. Like the idioms, you will have to memorize them.

At, On, and In

These prepositions are very common in describing a place or describing a time. Although prepositions have a regular form, we are going to look at the advanced cases. Please be very careful with the exceptions.

Place

At....referring to a specific place

*...at the doctors office
...at number 10 Main Street
...at the corner of 5th and 17th*

On....referring to a general area

*....on the playing fields
....on Main Street
....on top of the building
....on the side of the road*

In....referring to a much more general place

*...in Madrid
...in the classroom
...in the countryside
...in the urban area*

Consider this example:

I live at number 10 on Simon Avenue in London.

Consider these exceptions:

*We were on the beach.
I will meet you on the corner of 5th in ten minutes.
He was in the apartment on Main Street.*

Time

At...referring to a specific time

*...at 10 o'clock
...at sunset
...at midnight*

On...referring to a particular day

*...on Monday
...on July 23rd
...on the first day of the month*

In....referring to a general period of time

*...in the Middle Ages
...in 1998
...in ten minutes*

Consider this example:

Classes will begin at 6:30 on Monday in September.

And consider these exceptions:

*at night
in the evenings
at present
over the weekend
at Christmas*

Other time prepositions

Since...refers to a time when the action began.

*We have lived here since 1996.
I have studied since I was a child.*

(Notice that we use the present perfect tense: the action began in the past and continues through the moment of speaking.)

For...refers to a period of time

*We have lived here for 3 years.
I studied for 20 years.*

From...to....refers to the beginning and the end of an action.

We lived there from 1996 to 1998.

I studied from my childhood to my earlier adult years.

During/While... referring to an action the coincides with another action

I was working while I thought about the movie.

I was living in Dallas while I was preparing for graduate school.

I met Sarah during the museum exhibition.

Between and Among

Between will always be used where there are two things.

The book is between the stereo and the window.

The museum is between the main avenue and the park.

Among will always be used where there are three or more things.

The CD is among the things on the shelf.

The child is certainly among his friends

Paris is among the greatest cities in the world.

But and Except

These two prepositions can mean the same thing. Remember, however, that “*but*” can also mean “however.”

Everyone but Sarah has enrolled in the course.

or

Everyone except Sarah has enrolled in the course.

I will take every book except this one.

or

I will take every book but this one.

Instead/Instead of

Both of these mean that something is replaced with something else. There are two forms:

Instead of + noun, adjective, or adverb.

Instead (used at the end of a clause or sentence).

*We would like chicken instead of the duck.
He thought it was only functional instead of beautiful. Sara works quickly instead of thoroughly.*

*We decided to vacation in Greece instead.
The movie sounded good, but we went to the theater instead.*

From/For/By

These three prepositions describe three different relationships. All three are followed by a noun or a gerund.

<i>From</i>	because of, caused by
<i>For</i>	purpose, reason
<i>By</i>	method, means

*I am tired from all that exercise today.
Pasta is made from basic grains.*

*This computer is used for communication.
The student is working for his second degree.*

*A student can be very successful by studying each night.
We like to travel by car rather than by train.*

Because/Because of

These two forms describe the reason for an action to occur.

Because + Subject + Verb

Because of + Noun

*We were late because of the traffic.
We were late because the traffic was so bad.*

Idioms

Knowing what preposition to use after a particular verb or adjective is often a matter of idiom. Here is a list of the most important verb+preposition idioms:

accuse of
advise against
agree to, with
aim at, for
apologize to, for
apply to, for
approve of

argue with, about
arrive at
ask for
associate with
begin with
believe in
belong to
borrow from
care about, for
choose between
compare to, with
complain about
confess to
consist of
contribute to
cope with
count on
deal with
depend on
differ from
discriminate against
dream of, about
emerge from
escape from
excel in
fail at
feel like
fight for, against
fill with
finish with
focus on
forget about
furnish with
hear of
hide from
hope for
identify with
insist on
know of, about
laugh at
listen to
live on
look at, for, after
look forward to
meet with
object to
participate in
pay for

pray for
prepare for
prevent from
prohibit from
protect from
provide with
quarrel with
read about
reason with
recover from
refer to
rely on
remind of
report on, to
rescue from
resign from
retire from
respond to
search for
smell of
stare at
stop from
subscribe to
substitute for
succeed in
suffer from
take advantage of
take care of
talk to, about
taste of
tell about
thank for
think of, about
trade with, for
trust in
vote for, against
wait for
wish for
worry about
write to, about

Here is a list of the most important adjective+preposition idioms:

absent from
accustomed to
acquainted with
addicted to

afraid of
amazed at, by
angry with, about
annoyed with, about
anxious about
ashamed of
associated with
aware of
based on
blessed with
bored of, with
capable of
careful of, with
certain of, about
characterized by
cluttered with
committed to
composed of
concerned with, about
connected to
content with
convinced of
coordinated with
crowded with
curious about
dedicated to
devoted to
different from
disappointed with, in
divorced from
eager for
engaged to, in
envious of
equipped with
excited about
expert at
exposed to
faithful to
familiar with
famous for
filled with
fond of
free from, of
friendly with
full of
furnished with
glad about
good at

grateful to, for
guilty of
innocent of
interested in
involved in
jealous of
known for
late for
limited to
made of, from
married to
necessary for
nervous about
obliged to
opposed to
patient with
pleased with, about
polite to
prepared for
proud of
ready for
remembered for
responsible to, for
sad about
safe from
satisfied with
scared of
separate from
slow at
sorry about, for
surprised about, at
terrified of
tired of
typical of
upset with
used to
valued for
worried about
wrong about

VII. Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that connect two parts of a sentence that depend logically on each other. They make the relationship between two clauses more clear. Many of the prepositions we just looked at are, in fact, conjunctions. (For example, *but* can be a conjunction.)

The testing point for most conjunctions is the idiomatic form. Therefore, we will concentrate on the idiomatic form of each conjunction.

Neither/Either

These two conjunctions describe a situation where two subjects agree on a negative action. There are two forms. Be careful not to use a double negative: either a positive verb with the negative “*neither*” or a negative verb with the positive “*either*.”

Statement + *neither* + Verb + Subject.

Statement + Subject + Negative Verb + *either*.

I don't like coffee, and neither does she. (not “*neither doesn't she*”)

I don't like coffee, and she doesn't either. (not “*she doesn't neither*”)

Be careful. They can also be used in positive sentences and even as the subject of a sentence

Neither of the two proposals is satisfactory.

or

Neither is satisfactory.

Either of the two proposals is satisfactory.

or

Either is satisfactory.

They can be used as a positive or negative response to a question.

Would you like tea or coffee?

Neither, thank you.

Either is fine, thank you.

(Remember that “*either*” and “*neither*,” by themselves, are always singular.)

And of course, there are the idiomatic forms.

Either + or

Neither + nor

Either the teacher or the students should know where to go.

Neither the teacher nor the students know where to go.

Advanced rule

There is a unique structure for these typical idioms. Note that you will always use two nouns in this conjunction, and the number of the verb will always depend on the second example! Be careful.

*Neither the ticket nor the credit cards are here.
Neither the credit cards nor the ticket is here.*

*Either the plane or the three buses are fine with me.
Either the three buses or the plane is fine with me.*

So/So that/So too

“So” and “So that” are both conjunctions of result. Both describe a result of the other clause in the sentence.

*The library was closed so I went home and studied there.
I enrolled in a TOEFL class so I would perform better on the test.
The movie was so good that I saw it again.
He moved to the front row so that he could see more clearly.*

“So....Too” is used to describe a repeated action. There are two forms.

Statement + So + Verb + Subject.

Statement + Subject + Verb + Too.

*She will take the exam, and so will I.
She will take the exam, and I will too.*

*I wanted to find the record, and so did she.
I wanted to find the record, and she did too.*

“So too” can also be used in the emphatic form to describe a similar characteristic.

Whereas Joyce was a great Irish writer, so too did Bequeath contribute to the country’s canon.

Despite/In spite of

These idioms are the most common idioms on the test. TOEFL questions which test these idioms are what our teachers call “free questions” because you do not need to read the sentence to choose the right answer. It is always a matter of form, and there are only two.

In spite of or *Despite*

These forms mean almost exactly the same thing: an action that occurs when another action is against it.

*In spite of the poor weather, the wedding was beautiful.
He went to Las Vegas anyway despite my good advice.*

Both...and/Both...and...as well as

These conjunctions connect two or more words performing, describing, or modifying the same thing. Make sure to use parallel structure.

*Both Lewis and Chris are enjoying Paris.
Both Lewis and Chris, as well as David, are enjoying Paris.*

*The lecture was both entertaining and informative.
The lecture was both entertaining and informative, as well as required.*

*Lucy and Dan, as well as Julian, are going to the beach.
Lucy, Dan, and Julian are going to the beach.*

As/As if

“As” can sometimes mean “because.”

As it was raining, we didn't take our afternoon walk

But it can also be used when two actions occur at the same time.

Emily fell as she was trying to climb a tree.

And it can be used to describe a duration of time.

As the class went on, I felt more and more tired.

“As if” is used to describe how somebody or thing sounds, feels, or looks.

*It looks as if we are not going to finish on time.
Mario sounded as if he wasn't confident about the plane.
She felt as if she had never worked a day in her life.*

By/By the time/Until

These conjunctions are used to describe a time when something should be ending.

*I should be finished with this work by Thursday.
By the time I got there, the line was already around the block.
She said she wouldn't know anything until the official report.*

Not...but/Not only...but also “Not...but” is used to show a preference of one thing over another. It must keep the idiomatic form.

*I liked not the colors but the lines of the painting.
(not I liked not the colors but also the lines...)*

I used not the computer but my own notes for the project.

“Not only...but also,” however, is used when two things are compared.

*I liked not only the colors but also the lines of the painting.
(not I like not only the colors but the lines.)*

*I used not only the computer but also my own notes for the project.
(not I used not the computer but also my notes...)*