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## TOEFL iBT Reading Questions

TOEFL iBT Reading questions cover Basic Information skills, Inferencing skills, and Reading to Learn skills. There are 10 question types. The following chart summarizes the categories and types of TOEFL iBT Reading questions.

TOEFL READING QUESTION TYPES	
<b>Basic Information and Inferencing questions</b> (11 to 13 questions per set)	
1.	Factual Information questions (3 to 6 questions per set)
2.	Negative Factual Information questions (0 to 2 questions per set)
3.	Inference questions (0 to 2 questions per set)
4.	Rhetorical Purpose questions (0 to 2 questions per set)
5.	Vocabulary questions (3 to 5 questions per set)
6.	Reference questions (0 to 2 questions per set)
7.	Sentence Simplification questions (0 to 1 questions per set)
8.	Insert Text question (0 to 1 questions per set)
<b>Reading to Learn questions</b> (1 per set)	
9.	Prose Summary
10.	Fill in a Table

The following sections will explain each of these question types one by one. You'll find out how to recognize each type, and you'll see examples of each type with explanations. You'll also find tips that can help you answer each TOEFL Reading Question type.

### BASIC INFORMATION AND INFERENCE QUESTIONS

#### Type 1: Factual Information Questions

These questions ask you to identify factual information that is explicitly stated in the passage. Factual Information questions can focus on facts, details, definitions, or other information presented by the author. They ask you to identify specific information that is typically mentioned only in part of the passage. They generally do not ask about general themes that the passage as a whole discusses. Often the relevant information is in one or two sentences.

#### *How to Recognize Factual Information Questions*

Factual information questions are often phrased in one of these ways:

- ▶ According to the paragraph, which of the following is true of X?
- ▶ The author's description of X mentions which of the following?
- ▶ According to the paragraph, X occurred because . . .
- ▶ According to the paragraph, X did Y because . . .
- ▶ According to the paragraph, why did X do Y?
- ▶ The author's description of X mentions which of the following?

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### **Tips for Factual Information Questions**

- ▶ You may need to refer back to the passage in order to know what exactly is said about the subject of the question. Since the question may be about a detail, you may not recall the detail from your first reading of the passage.
- ▶ Eliminate choices that present information that is contradicted in the passage.
- ▶ Do not select an answer just because it is mentioned in the passage. Your choice should answer the specific question that was asked.

### **Example**

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** "... Sculptures must, for example, be stable, which requires an understanding of the properties of mass, weight distribution, and stress. Paintings must have rigid stretchers so that the canvas will be taut, and the paint must not deteriorate, crack, or discolor. These are problems that must be overcome by the artist because they tend to intrude upon his or her conception of the work. For example, in the early Italian Renaissance, bronze statues of horses with a raised foreleg usually had a cannonball under that hoof. This was done because the cannonball was needed to support the weight of the leg. In other words, the demands of the laws of physics, not the sculptor's aesthetic intentions, placed the ball there. That this device was a necessary structural compromise is clear from the fact that the cannonball quickly disappeared when sculptors learned how to strengthen the internal structure of a statue with iron braces (iron being much stronger than bronze) ..."

According to paragraph 2, sculptors in the Italian Renaissance stopped using cannonballs in bronze statues of horses because

- they began using a material that made the statues weigh less
- they found a way to strengthen the statues internally
- the aesthetic tastes of the public had changed over time
- the cannonballs added too much weight to the statues

### **Explanation**

The question tells you to look for the answer in paragraph 2. You do not need to skim the entire passage to find the relevant information.

Choice 1 says that sculptors stopped putting cannonballs under the raised legs of horses in statues because they learned how to make the statue weigh less and not require support for the leg. The passage does not mention making the statues weigh less; it says that sculptors learned a better way to support the weight. Choice 3 says that the change occurred only because people's taste changed, meaning that the cannonballs were never structurally necessary. That directly contradicts the passage. Choice 4 says that the cannonballs weakened the structure of the statues. This choice also contradicts the passage. Choice 2 correctly identifies the reason the passage gives for the change: sculptors developed a way to strengthen the statue from the inside, making the cannonballs physically unnecessary.

### **Type 2: Negative Factual Information Questions**

These questions ask you to verify what information is true and what information is NOT true or not included in the passage based on information that is explicitly stated in the passage. To answer this kind of question, first locate the relevant information in the passage. Then verify that three of the four answer choices are true and that the

remaining choice is false. Remember, for this type of question, the correct answer is the one that is NOT true.

### ***How to Recognize Negative Factual Information Questions***

You can recognize negative fact items because either the word "NOT" or "EXCEPT" appears in the question in capital letters.

- According to the passage, which of the following is NOT true of X?
- The author's description of X mentions all of the following EXCEPT

### ***Tips for Negative Factual Information Questions***

- Usually a Negative Factual Information question requires you to check more of the passage than a Factual Information question. The three choices that are mentioned in the passage may be spread across a paragraph or several paragraphs.
- In Negative Factual Information questions, the correct answer either directly contradicts one or more statements in the passage or is not mentioned in the passage at all.
- After you finish a Negative Factual Information Question, check your answer to make sure you have accurately understood the task.

### ***Example***

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** "The United States in the 1800's was full of practical, hardworking people who did not consider the arts—from theater to painting—useful occupations. In addition, the public's attitude that European art was better than American art both discouraged and infuriated American artists. In the early 1900's there was a strong feeling among artists that the United States was long overdue in developing art that did not reproduce European traditions. Everybody agreed that the heart and soul of the new country should be reflected in its art. But opinions differed about what this art would be like and how it would develop."

According to paragraph 1, all of the following were true of American art in the late 1800's and early 1900's EXCEPT:

- Most Americans thought art was unimportant.
- American art generally copied European styles and traditions.
- Most Americans considered American art inferior to European art.
- American art was very popular with European audiences.

### ***Explanation***

Sometimes in Negative Factual Information questions, it is necessary to check the entire passage in order to make sure that your choice is not mentioned. However, in this example, the question is limited to one paragraph, so your answer should be based just on the information in that paragraph. Choice 1 is a restatement of the first sentence in the paragraph: since most Americans did not think that the arts were useful occupations, they considered them unimportant. Choice 2 makes the same point as the third sentence: ". . . the United States was long overdue in developing art that did not reproduce European traditions" means that up to this point in history, American art did reproduce European traditions. Choice 3 is a restatement of the second sentence in the paragraph: American artists were frustrated because of "the public's attitude that European art was better than American art. . . ." Choice 4 is not

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mentioned anywhere in the paragraph. Because you are asked to identify the choice that is NOT mentioned in the passage or that contradicts the passage, the correct answer is choice 4.

### **Type 3: Inference Questions**

These questions measure your ability to comprehend an argument or an idea that is strongly implied but not explicitly stated in the text. For example, if an effect is cited in the passage, an Inference question might ask about its cause. If a comparison is made, an Inference question might ask for the basis of the comparison. You should think about not only the explicit meaning of the author's words, but the logical implications of those words.

#### **How to Recognize Inference Questions**

Inference questions will usually include the word *infer*, *suggest*, or *imply*.

- ▶ Which of the following can be inferred about X?
- ▶ The author of the passage implies that X . . .
- ▶ Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 1 about X?

#### **Tips for Inference Questions**

- ▶ Make sure your answer does not contradict the main idea of the passage.
- ▶ Don't choose an answer just because it seems important or true. The correct answer must be inferable from the passage.
- ▶ You should be able to defend your choice by pointing to explicitly stated information in the passage that leads to the inference you have selected.

#### **Example**

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** ". . . The nineteenth century brought with it a burst of new discoveries and inventions that revolutionized the candle industry and made lighting available to all. In the early-to-mid-nineteenth century, a process was developed to refine tallow (fat from animals) with alkali and sulfuric acid. The result was a product called stearin. Stearin is harder and burns longer than unrefined tallow. This breakthrough meant that it was possible to make tallow candles that would not produce the usual smoke and rancid odor. Stearins were also derived from palm oils, so vegetable waxes as well as animal fats could be used to make candles . . ."

Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 1 about candles before the nineteenth century?

- They did not smoke when they were burned.
- They produced a pleasant odor as they burned.
- They were not available to all.
- They contained sulfuric acid.

#### **Explanation**

In the first sentence from the excerpt the author says that "new discoveries and inventions" made "lighting available to all." The only kind of lighting discussed in the passage is candles. If the new discoveries were important because they made candles available to all, we can infer that before the discoveries, candles were not available to everyone. Therefore, choice 3 is an inference about candles we can make from the passage.

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Choices 1 and 2 can be eliminated because they explicitly contradict the passage ("the usual smoke" and "rancid odor").

Choice 4 can be eliminated because sulfuric acid was first used to make stearin in the nineteenth century, not before the nineteenth century.

#### **Type 4: Rhetorical Purpose Questions**

*Rhetoric* is the art of speaking or writing effectively. In Factual Information questions you are asked **what** information an author has presented. In Rhetorical Purpose questions you are asked **why** the author has presented a particular piece of information in a particular place or manner. Rhetorical Purpose questions ask you to show that you understand the rhetorical function of a statement or paragraph as it relates to the rest of the passage.

Sometimes you will be asked to identify how one paragraph relates to another. For instance, the second paragraph may give examples to support a statement in the first paragraph. The answer choices may be expressed in general terms, (for example, "a theory is explained and then illustrated") or in terms that are specific to the passage. ("The author explains the categories of adaptation to deserts by mammals and then gives an example.")

A Rhetorical Purpose question may also ask why the author mentions a particular piece of information (*Example*: Why does the author mention "the ability to grasp a pencil"? *Correct answer*: It is an example of a motor skill developed by children at 10 to 11 months of age) or why the author quotes a certain person.

#### **How to Recognize Rhetorical Purpose Questions**

These are examples of the way Rhetorical Purpose questions are typically worded:

- The author discusses X in paragraph 2 in order to . . .
- Why does the author mention X?
- The author uses X as an example of . . .

#### **Tips for Rhetorical Purpose Questions**

- Know the definitions of these words or phrases, which are often used to describe different kinds of rhetorical purposes: "definition," "example," "to illustrate," "to explain," "to contrast," "to refute," "to note," "to criticize," "function of."
- Rhetorical Purpose questions usually do not ask about the overall organization of the reading passage. Instead, they typically focus on the logical links between sentences and paragraphs.

#### **Example**

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** ". . . Sensitivity to physical laws is thus an important consideration for the maker of applied-art objects. It is often taken for granted that this is also true for the maker of fine-art objects. This assumption misses a significant difference between the two disciplines. Fine-art objects are not constrained by the laws of physics in the same way that applied-art objects are. Because their primary purpose is not functional, they are only limited in terms of the materials used to make them. Sculptures must, for example, be stable, which requires an understanding of the properties of mass, weight distribution, and stress. Paintings must have rigid stretchers so that the canvas will be taut, and the paint must not deteriorate, crack, or discolor. These are problems that must be overcome by the artist because they tend to intrude upon his or her conception of the work. For example, in the

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early Italian Renaissance, bronze statues of horses with a raised foreleg usually had a cannonball under that hoof. This was done because the cannonball was needed to support the weight of the leg . . .”

Why does the author discuss the bronze statues of horses created by artists in the early Italian Renaissance?

- To provide an example of a problem related to the laws of physics that a fine artist must overcome
- To argue that fine artists are unconcerned with the laws of physics
- To contrast the relative sophistication of modern artists in solving problems related to the laws of physics
- To note an exceptional piece of art constructed without the aid of technology

### **Explanation**

You should note that the sentence that first mentions “bronze statues of horses” begins “For example . . .” The author is giving an example of something he has introduced earlier in the paragraph. The paragraph overall contrasts how the constraints of physical laws affect the fine arts differently from applied arts or crafts. The fine artist is not concerned with making an object that is useful, so he or she is less constrained than the applied artist. However, because even a fine-arts object is made of some material, the artist must take into account the physical properties of the material. In the passage, the author uses the example of the bronze statues of horses to discuss how artists had to include some support for the raised foreleg of the horse because of the physical properties of the bronze. So the correct answer is choice 1.

### **Type 5: Vocabulary Questions**

These questions ask you to identify the meanings of individual words and phrases as they are used in the reading passage (a word might have more than one meaning, but *in the reading passage*, only one of those meanings is relevant.) Vocabulary is chosen as it actually occurs in the passage. There is no “list of words” that must be tested. Usually a word or phrase is chosen to be tested as a vocabulary item because understanding that word or phrase is important to understanding a large or important part of the passage. On the TOEFL iBT, words in the passage that are unusual, technical, or have special meanings in the context of the topic are defined for you. If you click on the word in the passage, a definition will appear in a box. In this book, words of this type are defined at the end of the passage. Naturally, words that are tested as vocabulary questions are not defined for you.

### **How to Recognize Vocabulary Questions**

Vocabulary questions are usually easy to identify. You will see one word or phrase highlighted in the passage. You are then asked a question like this:

- ▶ The word **X** in the passage is closest in meaning to . . .

In the case of a phrase, the question might be:

- ▶ In stating **X**, the author means that . . .

### **Tips for Vocabulary Questions**

- ▶ Remember that the question is not just asking the meaning of a word; it is asking for the meaning *as it is used in passage*. Do not just choose an answer just because

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it can be a correct meaning of the word; understand which meaning the author is using in the passage.

- Reread the sentence in the passage, substituting the word or phrase you have chosen. Confirm that the sentence still makes sense in the context of the whole passage.

### **Examples**

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** "In the animal world the task of moving about is fulfilled in many ways. For some animals **locomotion** is accomplished by changes in body shape . . ."

The word **locomotion** in the passage is closest in meaning to

- evolution
- movement
- survival
- escape

### **Explanation**

*Locomotion* means "the ability to move from place to place." In this example, it is a way of restating the phrase "the task of moving" in the preceding sentence. So the correct answer is choice 2.

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** "Some poisonous snake bites need to be treated immediately or the victim will **suffer paralysis** . . ."

In stating that the victim will **suffer paralysis** the author means that the victim will

- lose the ability to move
- become unconscious
- undergo shock
- feel great pain

### **Explanation**

In this example, both the words tested from the passage and the possible answers are phrases. *Paralysis* means "the inability to move," so if the poison from a snake bite causes someone to "suffer paralysis," that person will "lose the ability to move." The correct answer is choice 1.

### **Type 6: Reference Questions**

These questions ask you to identify referential relationships between the words in the passage. Often, the relationship is between a pronoun and its antecedent (the word to which the pronoun refers). Sometimes other kinds of grammatical reference are tested (like *which* or *this*).

### **How to Recognize Reference Questions**

Reference questions look similar to vocabulary questions. In the passage, one word or phrase is highlighted. Usually the word is a pronoun. Then you are asked

- The word **X** in the passage refers to

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The four answer choices will be words or phrases from the passage. Only one choice is the word to which the highlighted word refers.

### **Tips for Reference Questions**

- ▶ If the reference question is about a pronoun, make sure your answer is the same number (singular or plural) and case (first person, second person, third person) as the highlighted pronoun.
- ▶ Substitute your choice for the highlighted word or words in the sentence. Does it violate any grammar rules? Does it make sense?

### **Examples**

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** "... These laws are universal in their application, regardless of cultural beliefs, geography, or climate. If pots have no bottoms or have large openings in their sides, they could hardly be considered containers in any traditional sense. Since the laws of physics, not some arbitrary decision, have determined the general form of applied-art objects, **they** follow basic patterns, so much so that functional forms can vary only within certain limits ..."

The word **they** in the passage refers to

- applied-art objects
- the laws of physics
- containers
- the sides of pots

### **Explanation**

This is an example of a simple pronoun-referent item. The highlighted word *they* refers to the phrase "applied-art objects," which immediately precedes it, so choice 1 is the correct answer.

Often the grammatical referent for a pronoun will be separated from the pronoun. It may be located in a preceding clause or even in the preceding sentence.

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** "... The first weekly newspaper in the colonies was the *Boston Gazette*, established in 1719, the same year that marked the appearance of Philadelphia's first newspaper, the *American Mercury*, where the young Benjamin Franklin worked. By 1760 Boston had 4 newspapers and 5 other printing establishments; Philadelphia, 2 newspapers and 3 other presses; and New York, 3 newspapers. The distribution, if not the sale, of newspapers was assisted by the establishment of a postal service in 1710, **which** had a network of some 65 offices by 1770, serving all 13 colonies ..."

The word **which** in the passage refers to

- distribution
- sale
- newspaper
- postal service

### **Explanation**

In this example, the highlighted word is a relative pronoun, the grammatical subject of the relative clause "which had a network of some 65 offices . . . ." The relative clause is describing the postal service, so choice 4 is the correct answer.



**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** "... Roots anchor the plant in one of two ways or sometimes by a combination of the two. The first is by occupying a large volume of shallow soil around the plant's base with a *fibrous root system*, one consisting of many thin, profusely branched roots. Since these kinds of roots grow relatively close to the soil surface, they effectively control soil erosion. Grass roots are especially well suited to **this purpose**. Fibrous roots capture water as it begins to percolate into the ground and so must draw their mineral supplies from the surface soil before the nutrients are leached to lower levels . . ."

The phrase **this purpose** in the passage refers to

- combining two root systems
- feeding the plant
- preventing soil erosion
- leaching nutrients

### **Explanation**

In the example, the highlighted words are a phrase containing a demonstrative article (*this*) and a noun (*purpose*). Because a fibrous root system can keep soil in place, it can be used to stop erosion, and grassroots are a fibrous root system. The sentence could be reworded as "Grass roots are especially well suited to preventing soil erosion," so choice 3 is the correct answer.

### **Type 7: Sentence Simplification Questions**

In this type of question you are asked to choose a sentence that has the same essential meaning as a sentence that occurs in the passage. Not every reading set includes a Sentence Simplification question. There is never more than one in a set.

### **How to Recognize Sentence Simplification Questions**

Sentence Simplification questions always look the same. A single sentence in the passage is highlighted. You are then asked

- ▶ Which of the following best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence? *Incorrect* answer choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

### **Tips for Sentence Simplification Questions**

- ▶ Make sure you understand both ways a choice can be incorrect:
  - ◆ It contradicts something in the highlighted sentence.
  - ◆ It leaves out something important from the highlighted sentence.
- ▶ Make sure your answer does not contradict the main argument of the paragraph in which the sentence occurs, or the passage as a whole.

### **Example**

**PASSAGE EXCERPT:** "... Although we now tend to refer to the various crafts according to the materials used to construct them—clay, glass, wood, fiber, and metal—it was once common to think of crafts in terms of function, which led to their being known as the "applied arts." Approaching crafts from the point of view of function, we can divide them

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into simple categories: containers, shelters, and supports. There is no way around the fact that containers, shelters, and supports must be functional. The applied arts are thus bound by the laws of physics, which pertain to both the materials used in their making and the substances and things to be contained, supported, and sheltered. These laws are universal in their application, regardless of cultural beliefs, geography, or climate. If a pot has no bottom or has large openings in its sides, it could hardly be considered a container in any traditional sense. **Since the laws of physics, not some arbitrary decision, have determined the general form of applied-art objects, they follow basic patterns, so much so that functional forms can vary only within certain limits.** Buildings without roofs, for example, are unusual because they depart from the norm. However, not all functional objects are exactly alike; that is why we recognize a Shang Dynasty vase as being different from an Inca vase. What varies is not the basic form but the incidental details that do not obstruct the object's primary function . . . "

Which of the following best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence? *Incorrect* answer choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

- Functional applied-art objects cannot vary much from the basic patterns determined by the laws of physics.
- The function of applied-art objects is determined by basic patterns in the laws of physics.
- Since functional applied-art objects vary only within certain limits, arbitrary decisions cannot have determined their general form.
- The general form of applied-art objects is limited by some arbitrary decision that is not determined by the laws of physics.

### ***Explanation***

It is important to note that the question says that *incorrect* answers change the original meaning of the sentence or leave out essential information. In this example, choice 4 changes the meaning of the sentence to its opposite; it says that the form of functional objects is arbitrary, when the highlighted sentence says that the forms of functional objects are *never* arbitrary. Choice 2 also changes the meaning. It says that the functions of applied-art objects are determined by physical laws. The highlighted sentence says that the *form of the object* is determined by physical laws but the function is determined by people. Choice 3 leaves out an important idea from the highlighted sentence. Like the highlighted sentence, it says that the form of functional objects is not arbitrary, but it does not say that it is physical laws that determine basic form. Only choice 1 makes the same point as the highlighted sentence and includes all the essential meaning.

### **Type 8: Insert Text Questions**

In this type of question, you are given a new sentence and are asked where in the passage it would best fit. You need to understand the logic of the passage, as well as the grammatical connections (like pronoun reference) between sentences. Not every set includes an Insert Text question. There is never more than one in a set.

### ***How to Recognize Insert Text Questions***

In the passage you will see four black squares. The squares are located at the beginnings or ends of sentences. Sometimes all four squares appear in one paragraph.

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Sometimes they are spread across the end of one paragraph and the beginning of another.

You are then asked this question:

Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.

**[You will see a sentence in bold.]**

Where would the sentence best fit?

Your job is to click on one of the squares and insert the sentence in the text.

***Tips for Insert Text Questions***

- ▶ Try the sentence in each of the places indicated by the squares. You can place and replace the sentence as many times as you want.
- ▶ Look at both the structure of the sentence you are inserting and the logic. Pay special attention to logical connecting words; they can provide important information about where the sentence should be placed.
- ▶ Frequently used connecting words:
  - On the other hand
  - For example
  - On the contrary
  - Similarly
  - In contrast
  - Further, or Furthermore
  - Therefore
  - In other words
  - As a result
  - Finally
- ▶ Make sure that the inserted sentence connects logically to both the sentence before it and the sentence after it.

***Example***

**PASSAGE EXCERPT WITH EXAMPLE SQUARES:** "Scholars offer three related but different opinions about this puzzle. ■ One opinion is that the paintings were a record of the seasonal migrations made by herds. ■ Because some paintings were made directly over others, obliterating them, it is probable that a painting's value ended with the migration it pictured. ■ Unfortunately, this explanation fails to explain the hidden locations, unless the migrations were celebrated with secret ceremonies. ■"

Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.

**All three of them have strengths and weaknesses, but none adequately answers all of the questions the paintings present.**

Where would the sentence best fit?

- Scholars offer three related but different opinions about this puzzle. **All three of them have strengths and weaknesses, but none adequately answers all of the questions the paintings present.** One opinion is that the paintings were a record of the seasonal migrations made by herds. ■ Because some paintings were made directly over others, obliterating them, it is probable that a painting's value ended with the migration it pictured. ■ Unfortunately, this explanation fails to explain the hidden locations, unless the migrations were celebrated with secret ceremonies. ■
- Scholars offer three related but different opinions about this puzzle. ■ One opinion is that the paintings were a record of the seasonal migrations made by herds. **All three of them have strengths and weaknesses, but none adequately answers all of the questions the paintings present.** Because some paintings were made directly over others, obliterating them, it is probable that a painting's value ended with the migration it pictured. ■ Unfortunately, this explanation fails to explain the hidden locations, unless the migrations were celebrated with secret ceremonies. ■
- Scholars offer three related but different opinions about this puzzle. ■ One opinion is that the paintings were a record of the seasonal migrations made by herds. ■ Because some paintings were made directly over others, obliterating them, it is probable that a painting's value ended with the migration it pictured. **All three of them have strengths and weaknesses, but none adequately answers all of the questions the paintings present.** Unfortunately, this explanation fails to explain the hidden locations, unless the migrations were celebrated with secret ceremonies. ■
- Scholars offer three related but different opinions about this puzzle. ■ One opinion is that the paintings were a record of the seasonal migrations made by herds. ■ Because some paintings were made directly over others, obliterating them, it is probable that a painting's value ended with the migration it pictured. ■ Unfortunately, this explanation fails to explain the hidden locations, unless the migrations were celebrated with secret ceremonies. **All three of them have strengths and weaknesses, but none adequately answers all of the questions the paintings present.**

### ***Explanation***

In this example, choice 1 is the correct answer. The new sentence makes sense only if it occurs in the first position, after the first sentence. In that place, "All three of them" refers back to "three related but different opinions." The information in the sentence is a commentary on all three of the "opinions"; the opinions are related, but none is a complete explanation. Logically, this evaluation of all three opinions must come either as an introduction to the three opinions, or as a conclusion about all three. Only the introductory position is available, because the paragraph does not include all three opinions.

### **READING TO LEARN QUESTIONS**

Reading to Learn items are a new question category that is being introduced in the TOEFL iBT test. There are two types of Reading to Learn questions: "Prose Summary" and "Fill in a Table." Reading to Learn questions will require you to do more than the Basic Information questions. As you have seen, the Basic Information questions focus on your ability to understand or locate specific points in a passage at the sentence level. The Reading to Learn questions will also involve

- recognizing the organization and purpose of the passage
- organizing the information in the passage into a mental framework

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- ▶ distinguishing major from minor ideas and essential from nonessential information
  - ▶ understanding rhetorical functions such as cause-effect relationships, compare-contrast relationships, arguments, and the like

In other words, these questions will require you to demonstrate an understanding of the passage as a whole, not just specific information within it.

Reading to Learn questions require you to show that you are able not only to comprehend individual points, but also to place the major ideas and supporting information from the passage into an organizational framework or structure such as a prose summary or a table. By answering correctly, you will demonstrate that you can recognize the major points of a text, how and why the text has been organized, and the nature of the relationships within the text. Having an organized mental representation of a text is critical to learning because it allows you to remember important information from the text and apply it in new situations. If you have such a mental framework, you should be able to reconstruct the major ideas and supporting information from the text. By doing so, you will demonstrate a global understanding of the text as a whole. On the TOEFL iBT, each reading passage will have one Reading to Learn item. It will be either a Prose Summary or a Fill in a Table item, never both.

### **Type 9: Prose Summary Questions**

These items measure your ability to understand and recognize the major ideas and the relative importance of information in a passage. You will be asked to select the major ideas in the passage by distinguishing them from minor ideas or ideas that are not in the passage. The correct answer choice will synthesize major ideas in the passage. Because the correct answer represents a synthesis of ideas, it will not match any particular sentence from the passage. To select the correct answer, you will need to create a mental framework to organize and remember major ideas and other important information. Understanding the relative importance of information in a passage is critical to this ability.

In a Prose Summary question, you will be given six answer choices and asked to pick the three that express the most important ideas in the passage. Unlike the Basic Information questions, each of which is worth just one point, a Prose Summary question can be worth either one or two points depending on how many correct answers you choose. If you choose no correct answers or just one correct answer, you will earn no points. If you choose two correct answers, you will earn one point. If you choose all three correct answers, you will earn two points. The order in which you choose your answers does not matter for scoring purposes.

#### **Example**

Because the Prose Summary question asks you to show an understanding of the different parts of the passage it is necessary to read the entire passage. Parts of the following passage have already been used to illustrate other question types.

#### **Applied Arts and Fine Arts**

Although we now tend to refer to the various crafts according to the materials used to construct them—clay, glass, wood, fiber, and metal—it was once common to think of crafts in terms of function, which led to their being known as the “applied arts.” Approaching crafts from the point of view of function, we can divide them into simple categories: containers, shelters, and supports.

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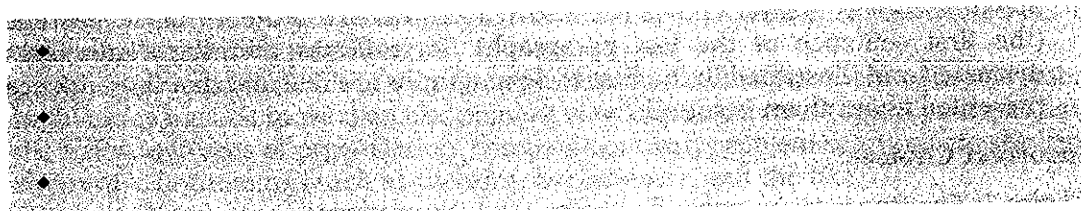
There is no way around the fact that containers, shelters, and supports must be functional. The applied arts are thus bound by the laws of physics, which pertain to both the materials used in their making and the substances and things to be contained, supported, and sheltered. These laws are universal in their application, regardless of cultural beliefs, geography, or climate. If a pot has no bottom or has large openings in its sides, it could hardly be considered a container in any traditional sense. Since the laws of physics, not some arbitrary decision, have determined the general form of applied-art objects, they follow basic patterns, so much so that functional forms can vary only within certain limits. Buildings without roofs, for example, are unusual because they depart from the norm. However, not all functional objects are exactly alike; that is why we recognize a Shang Dynasty vase as being different from an Inca vase. What varies is not the basic form but the incidental details that do not obstruct the object's primary function.

Sensitivity to physical laws is thus an important consideration for the maker of applied-art objects. It is often taken for granted that this is also true for the maker of fine-art objects. This assumption misses a significant difference between the two disciplines. Fine-art objects are not constrained by the laws of physics in the same way that applied-art objects are. Because their primary purpose is not functional, they are only limited in terms of the materials used to make them. Sculptures must, for example, be stable, which requires an understanding of the properties of mass, weight distribution, and stress. Paintings must have rigid stretchers so that the canvas will be taut, and the paint must not deteriorate, crack, or discolor. These are problems that must be overcome by the artist because they tend to intrude upon his or her conception of the work. For example, in the early Italian Renaissance, bronze statues of horses with a raised foreleg usually had a cannonball under that hoof. This was done because the cannonball was needed to support the weight of the leg. In other words, the demands of the laws of physics, not the sculptor's aesthetic intentions, placed the ball there. That this device was a necessary structural compromise is clear from the fact that the cannonball quickly disappeared when sculptors learned how to strengthen the internal structure of a statue with iron braces (iron being much stronger than bronze).

Even though the fine arts in the twentieth century often treat materials in new ways, the basic difference in attitude of artists in relation to their materials in the fine arts and the applied arts remains relatively constant. It would therefore not be too great an exaggeration to say that practitioners of the fine arts work to *overcome* the limitations of their materials, whereas those engaged in the applied arts work *in concert with* their materials.

An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage. ***This question is worth 2 points.***

**This passage discusses fundamental differences between applied-art objects and fine-art objects.**



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### Answer Choices

1. The fine arts are only affected by the laws of physics because of the limitations of the materials that are used.
2. Applied-art objects are bound by the laws of physics in two ways: by the materials used to make them, and the function they are to serve.
3. Crafts are known as "applied arts" because it used to be common to think of them in terms of their function.
4. In the fine arts, artists must work to overcome the limitations of their materials, but in the applied arts, artists work in concert with their materials.
5. Making fine-art objects stable requires an understanding of the properties of mass, weight, distribution, and stress.
6. In the twentieth century, artists working in the fine arts often treat materials in new ways whereas applied arts specialists continue to think of crafts in terms of function.

### **Explanation**

#### **Correct Choices:**

*Choice 2:* Applied-art objects are bound by the laws of physics in two ways: by the materials used to make them, and the function they are to serve.

*Explanation:* This answer is correct because it represents the major theme of the first paragraph. It is a broad statement of a general, overriding fact. The paragraph then provides support for that general statement with several specific examples of how the laws of physics apply to all applied-art objects. The examples are presented in over five or six sentences.

*Choice 4:* In the fine arts, artists must work to overcome the limitations of their materials, but in the applied arts, artists work in concert with their materials.

*Explanation:* This answer is correct because it summarizes the basic compare-contrast relationship of the entire passage. Although the last sentence of the passage is nearly identical to this answer choice, the able reader with a well-developed mental framework of the passage will recognize that this is not a minor, discrete point. Like the first correct answer choice, this is a broad, general statement, in this case about both applied and fine arts. The first two paragraphs of the passage are devoted to providing support for this statement with numerous examples throughout the passage.

*Choice 6:* In the twentieth century, artists working in the fine arts often treat materials in new ways whereas applied arts specialists continue to think of crafts in terms of function.

*Explanation:* This answer is also correct in that it is a general statement about the ongoing and fundamental distinction between applied arts and fine arts. Like the previous correct answer choice it is nearly identical to a sentence in the passage (the first sentence of the last paragraph). It reaffirms that the distinctions discussed and illustrated in the first two paragraphs are real and that the evidence presented about them is sound.

#### **Incorrect Choices:**

*Choice 1:* The fine arts are only affected by the laws of physics because of the limitations of the materials that are used.

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*Explanation:* This answer is incorrect because it is a minor point mentioned in sentence 4 of paragraph 2. The statement is true, but it is made only to support the broader theme (of the second correct answer choice above) about the differences between the two forms of art. Thus, it is used as an example in support of a major idea and is not itself one of the major themes in the passage.

*Choice 3:* Crafts are known as “applied arts” because it used to be common to think of them in terms of their function.

*Explanation:* This choice is not correct because it is a minor point. It is mentioned as part of the passage’s first, introductory sentence and then is never developed further. It is a true statement from the text, but is merely stated once without further elaboration.

*Choice 5:* Making fine-art objects stable requires an understanding of the properties of mass, weight, distribution, and stress.

*Explanation:* This answer choice is also a minor point and is therefore not correct. Like the other incorrect choices, it is true and mentioned in the passage (in paragraph 2, sentence 5). However, it too is raised only as an example. Much like the first incorrect answer choice, it is presented as an example of how fine artists are constrained by physics and is not itself a major theme in the passage.

### **Type 10: Fill in a Table Questions**

In this kind of item, you will be given a partially completed classification table based on information in the passage. Your job is to complete the table by clicking on correct answer choices and dragging them to their correct locations in the table.

Fill in a Table items measure your ability to conceptualize and organize major ideas and other important information from across the passage and then to place them in appropriate categories. This means that you must first recognize and identify the major points from the passage, and then place those points in their proper context.

Just as for Prose Summary questions, the able reader will create a mental framework to organize and remember major ideas and other important information.

Doing so requires the ability to understand rhetorical functions such as cause-effect relationships, compare-contrast relationships, arguments, and the like.

When building your mental framework, keep in mind that the major ideas in the passage are the ones you would include if you were making a fairly high-level outline of the passage. The correct answer choices are usually ideas that would be included in a slightly more detailed outline. Minor details and examples are generally not included in such an outline because they are used only to support the more important, higher-level themes. The distinction between major ideas/important information and less important information can also be thought of as a distinction between essential and nonessential information.

Passages used with Fill in a Table items have more than one focus of development in that they include more than one point of view or perspective. Typical passages have the following types of organization: compare/contrast, problem/solution, cause/effect, alternative arguments (such as theories, hypotheses), and the like.

*Correct answers* represent major ideas and important supporting information in the passage. Generally these answers will not match specific phrases in the passage.



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They are more likely to be abstract concepts based on passage information or phrases of passage information. Correct answers will be easy to confirm by able readers who can remember or easily locate relevant text information.

*Incorrect answers* may include information about the topic that is not mentioned in the passage or that is not directly relevant to the classification categories in the table. They may also be obviously incorrect generalizations or conclusions based on what is stated in the passage. Be aware that incorrect answers may include words and phrases that match or resemble words or phrases in the passage.

### **Table Rules**

Tables can have 2 or 3 columns/rows containing bullets representing either 5 or 7 correct answer choices. So there are four possible types of tables, as follow:

Type 1: 2-column/row table with 5 correct answer choices

Type 2: 3-column/row table with 5 correct answer choices

Type 3: 2-column/row table with 7 correct answer choices

Type 4: 3-column/row table with 7 correct answer choices

There will always be more options than correct answer choices. Some answer choices will not be used.

An answer choice can be used only once in the table. If an answer choice applies to more than one category, or to no category in a table, a row or column labeled "both" or "neither" will be available in the table for placement of that answer choice.

### **Scoring**

To earn points, you must not only select correct answer choices, but also organize them correctly in the table. You may receive partial credit, depending upon how many correct answers you choose.

*For tables with 5 correct answers* (both type 1 and type 2), you can earn up to a total of 3 points, depending on how many correct answers you select and correctly place. For 0, 1, or 2 correct answers you will receive no credit. For 3 correct answers you will receive 1 point; for 4 correct answers you will receive 2 points; and for all 5 correct answers you will receive the entire 3 points.

*For tables with 7 correct answers* (both type 3 and type 4), you can earn up to a total of 4 points, depending on how many correct answers you select and correctly place. For 0, 1, 2, or 3 correct answers you will receive no credit. For 4 correct answers you will receive 1 point; for 5 correct answers you will receive 2 points; for 6 correct answers you will receive 3 points, and for all 7 correct answers you will receive the entire 4 points.

### **Example**

(*Note:* The passage used for this example is the same one that was used above for the Prose Summary example question.)

**Directions:** Complete the table below to summarize information about the two types of art discussed in the passage. Match the appropriate statements to the types of art with which they are associated. *This question is worth 3 points.*

TYPES OF ART	STATEMENTS
The Applied Arts	Select 3 ▶ ▶ ▶
The Fine Arts	Select 2 ▶ ▶

### Statements

- An object's purpose is primarily aesthetic.
- Objects serve a functional purpose.
- The incidental details of objects do not vary.
- Artists work to overcome the limitations of their materials.
- The basic form of objects varies little across cultures.
- Artists work in concert with their materials.
- An object's place of origin is difficult to determine.

Drag your answer choices to the spaces where they belong. To review the passage, click on [View Text](#).

### Correctly Completed Table

**Directions:** Complete the table below to summarize information about the two types of art discussed in the passage. Match the appropriate statements to the types of art with which they are associated. *This question is worth 3 points.*

TYPES OF ART	STATEMENTS
The Applied Arts	Select 3 ▶ Objects serve a functional purpose. ▶ The basic form of objects varies little across cultures. ▶ Artists work in concert with their materials.
The Fine Arts	Select 2 ▶ An object's purpose is primarily aesthetic. ▶ Artists work to overcome the limitations of their materials.

### Explanation

#### Correct Choices:

*Choice 1:* An object's purpose is primarily aesthetic. (Fine Arts)

*Explanation:* This is an example of a correct answer that requires you to identify an abstract concept based on text information and paraphrases of text information.

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In paragraph 2, sentence 5, the passage states that the primary purpose of Fine Art is not function. Then, in paragraph 2, sentence 11, the passage mentions a situation in which a sculptor had to sacrifice an aesthetic purpose due to the laws of physics. Putting these statements together, the reader can infer that fine artists, such as sculptors, are primarily concerned with aesthetics.

**Choice 2:** Objects serve a functional purpose. (Applied Arts)

*Explanation:* This is stated more directly than the previous correct answer. Paragraph 1, sentences 1, 2, and 3 make it clear how important function is in the applied arts. At the same time, paragraph 2 states that Fine Arts are not concerned with function, so the only correct place for this statement is in the Applied Arts category.

**Choice 4:** Artists work to overcome the limitations of their materials. (Fine Arts)

*Explanation:* This is stated explicitly in the last paragraph of the passage. In that paragraph, it is made clear that this applies only to practitioners of the fine arts.

**Choice 5:** The basic form of objects varies little across cultures. (Applied Arts)

*Explanation:* In paragraph 1, sentence 5, the passage states that certain laws of physics are universal. Then in sentence 7, that idea is further developed with the statement that functional forms can vary only within limits. From these two sentences, you can conclude that because of the laws of physics and the need for functionality, the basic forms of applied art objects will vary little across cultures.

**Choice 6:** Artists work in concert with their materials. (Applied Arts)

*Explanation:* This is stated explicitly in the last paragraph of the passage. In that paragraph, it is made clear that this applies only to practitioners of the applied arts.

**Incorrect Choices:**

**Choice 3:** The incidental details of objects do not vary.

*Explanation:* This idea is explicitly refuted by the last sentence of paragraph 1 in reference to the applied arts. That sentence (referring only to applied arts) states that the incidental details of such objects *do* vary, so this answer cannot be placed in the applied arts category. This subject is not discussed at all in reference to fine art objects, so it cannot be correctly placed in that category either.

**Choice 7:** An object's place of origin is difficult to determine.

*Explanation:* This answer choice is implicitly refuted in reference to applied arts in the next to last sentence of paragraph 1. That sentence notes that both Shang Dynasty and Inca vases are identifiable as such based upon differences in detail. By inference, then, it seems that it is not difficult to determine an applied-art object's place of origin. Like the previous incorrect answer, this idea is not discussed at all in reference to fine art objects, so it cannot be correctly placed in that category either.

## Improving Your Performance on TOEFL iBT Reading Questions

Now that you are familiar with the ten question types that are used in TOEFL iBT Reading, you are ready to sharpen your skills by working on whole reading sets. In the following pages, you can practice on six reading sets created by ETS for TOEFL iBT. The question types are not labeled, but you should be able to identify them and