Listening: Spoken Meaning, Changes and Evidence

TOEFL iBT

Hear what the speaker needs you to understand

A student says, "I thought the desk stayed open until six." The desk has already closed. A useful reply explains the hours or offers another way to get help. Repeating the word desk does not make an answer right or wrong. The reply must fit the speaker's meaning and the situation.

This supplement adds original practice to the preserved Listening notes. It covers short responses, a conversation, an announcement and an academic talk. All scripts, questions and answers are new classroom material, not official ETS items. The printed scripts support teaching and review. Reading them alone does not test listening.

For spoken practice, ask a partner to read each script once while you cover it. Read the questions and options, listen, then record your choices before uncovering the script. For short-response practice, the partner reads the prompt without naming its function. The partner should speak clearly at a natural pace, without stressing the answer words. This is classroom practice, not a copy of the live test's question sequence or interface. The lesson audio remains a separate production step.

Choose a reply that fits the whole turn

An **indirect request** 间接请求 can ask for help without saying "Please help me." "I can't reach that shelf" may invite someone to reach it. Context matters: the same sentence in another conversation might simply explain a problem. Do not decide from a single word or from a fixed rising-or-falling rule. Tone supports meaning; grammar, context and the rest of the turn support it too.

■ Six original spoken prompts

1. "Could I borrow your pen for a moment?" A Yes, here you are. B I borrowed a book yesterday. C The lecture lasted an hour. D I wrote the date on Tuesday.
2. "That box looks heavy. Shall I carry it upstairs for you?" A The stairs were painted last year. B A box has four sides. C Thanks, that would help. D The room is on the next floor.
3. "Sorry I'm late. The bus stopped for road repairs." A The repairs cost a lot. B That's all right; we've only just started. C This road leads to the station. D I prefer walking in the morning.
4. "I was hoping to use this room, but I see your group has booked it." A Yes, rooms can hold groups. B Our booking was made online. C We meet every week. D We're leaving in five minutes, if you can wait.

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5. “We could discuss the project after lunch, if you’re free.” A Lunch usually has two courses. B Yes, two o’clock works for me. C I bought a notebook. D Our project has several pages.
6. “The form won’t open on my phone. Is there another way to register?” A Phones can show websites. B Registration is an English word. C You can use the computer beside the desk. D I keep my phone in my bag.

■ Explain the responses

1. **A.** The speaker asks to borrow a pen. A accepts and offers it. B matches borrow but changes the object and time. C and D do not answer the request.
2. **C.** The speaker offers help. C accepts that offer. A mentions the stairs without responding. B describes a box; D gives a location already implied by upstairs.
3. **B.** The speaker apologises and gives a reason. B accepts the apology and explains the present situation. A and C follow words in the reason, not the apology. D gives an unrelated personal preference.
4. **D.** The speaker wants to use an occupied room. D gives a possible solution with a waiting condition. A is a general fact. B and C may be true, but neither helps resolve the room problem. D does not promise the room immediately: five minutes still matters.
5. **B.** The speaker suggests meeting after lunch. B accepts and proposes a suitable time. A discusses food. C and D do not agree to, refuse or arrange the proposed discussion.
6. **C.** The speaker needs a different registration method. C offers a working alternative. A repeats the phone topic without fixing the problem. B defines a word; D describes a habit.

A repeated word can appear in a suitable response: “Yes, you can borrow my pen.” A response with different words can still be irrelevant: “The weather is lovely.” Test the conversational job, not a ban on matching vocabulary.

Follow a conversation from problem to agreed solution

■ Original script: borrowing filming equipment

Student: I’d like to film a short interview for our class project on Thursday. My phone records clearly, but it moves when I hold it. Can I borrow a tripod?

Assistant: All our full-height tripods are booked on Thursday. We do have a small phone stand. It sits on a table, so it works well if your speaker is seated.

Student: That’s fine. We’re filming at a table in the study room. Can I collect it Thursday morning?

Assistant: Actually, the stand comes back from another borrower at two. You can collect it from three onwards. Bring your student ID to the equipment desk.

Student: Three works. We start the interview at four. When should I return it?

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Assistant: By four on Friday. Return it to the equipment desk, not the library book box. I'll reserve the stand under your name now.

■ Questions 7–11

7. What problem does the student want to solve? A Unclear sound from a microphone. B An unstable phone while filming. C A missing interview partner. D A study room with no table.

8. Why does the assistant suggest a phone stand? A Full-height tripods are unavailable that day, and a table stand suits the planned interview. B The student must film outdoors. C Phones cannot record interviews. D The study room bans tripods.

9. When can the student collect the stand? A Thursday morning. B Thursday at two. C Thursday from three. D Friday after four.

10. What must the student bring when collecting it? A The finished video. B A printed booking form. C A library book. D Student ID.

11. Why does the assistant say "Actually"? A To cancel the interview. B To correct the student's proposed collection time. C To express doubt about the student's name. D To explain how a phone records sound.

■ Explained answers and compact notes

7. B. The phone moves when held. A confuses clear recording with a sound problem. C and D invent missing people or furniture.

8. A. Join two details: tripods are booked, and the seated interview can use a table stand. B contradicts the study-room setting. C contradicts the phone recording clearly; D invents a ban.

9. C. Two is when the stand returns; three is when collection starts. A is the student's first request, not the final arrangement. D uses the return deadline as collection time.

10. D. The assistant directly asks for student ID. None of the other items is requested. Do not add a plausible equipment-office rule that the script never states.

11. B. Actually introduces a correction to morning collection. The assistant then explains availability and offers a later time. The other purposes are absent.

Useful notes could read: phone shakes → table stand; Thu collect $\geq$3 + ID; Fri return $\leq$4, equipment desk. The symbols $\geq$ and $\leq$ mean at or after, and at or before, in these personal notes. They are not a requirement to use mathematical notation during the test. Keep collection and return on separate lines if symbols slow you down.

Listen for changes and actions in an announcement

■ Original script: a film evening

This is a message for students attending Friday's film evening. The start time is still six, but the event has moved from Room 5 to Hall B. Room 5 needs electrical repairs. Please use the north entrance to Hall B. The east entrance is closed, and the north

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entrance opens at half past five.

If you already reserved a seat, your reservation remains valid; you do not need to book again. Please arrive by ten to six so staff can check reservations before the film starts. At ten to six, any reserved seat that has not been claimed becomes available to waiting students. Students without reservations can join the waiting line at the north entrance. Joining that line does not guarantee a seat.

■ Questions 12–16

12. What is the main purpose? A Explain updated arrangements for a film evening. B Invite students to repair a room. C Announce a different film date. D Close the whole campus.

13. Which arrangement is unchanged? A The room. B The east entrance being available. C The six o'clock start. D Every seat being open to everyone.

14. A student already reserved a seat. What should the student do? A Book again. B Arrive by 5:50 at Hall B using the north entrance. C Enter Room 5 at six. D Join the waiting line after the film ends.

15. What happens to an unclaimed reserved seat at 5:50? A It is removed from the hall. B It stays empty all evening. C It becomes available to waiting students. D It is saved until next Friday.

16. What can a student without a reservation reasonably expect? A A guaranteed seat. B Admission through the closed east entrance. C An earlier film start. D A chance of a seat by joining the waiting line.

■ Explained answers

12. A. The message explains location, entrance and reservation procedures. B mistakes the reason for the move for the students' task. C changes a date that remains Friday. D turns one closed entrance into a campus-wide closure.

13. C. "Still six" explicitly preserves the start time. A is the changed room. B contradicts the closure; D ignores the reservation procedure.

14. B. Combine the new hall, correct entrance and arrival deadline. The existing reservation remains valid, so A adds an unnecessary action. C ignores the move; D ignores the deadline and purpose of the reservation.

15. C. Unclaimed seats are released to the waiting line at ten to six. A, B and D invent rules. Ten to six means 5:50, not 6:10.

16. D. Waiting students may get released seats, but availability is not guaranteed. A strengthens a possibility into certainty. B ignores the closed entrance; C changes the start time.

Separate three times: entrance opens 5:30; claim reserved seat by 5:50; film starts 6:00. A number is useful only when attached to the correct action.

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Hear the structure of a short academic talk

■ Original script: cooling a classroom

When a classroom feels hot, people often open every window immediately. But whether that helps depends on the air outside and the way air moves. Today I'll compare two simple observations, then explain what they cannot prove.

In one classroom, staff opened opposite windows when the outside air was cooler than the room. Air could enter on one side and leave on the other. The room temperature fell during that period. Opening both sides created a path for moving air; an open window alone does not ensure the same movement.

In another classroom, staff opened windows at noon when the outside air was warmer. The room did not cool during their observation. Bringing warmer air inside did not provide the same cooling effect. This does not mean windows should never open at noon. Outside conditions can differ from day to day.

There is a further caution. These were different rooms, used by different groups. Staff did not keep sunlight, numbers of people or equipment use the same. So the observations are useful examples, but they do not isolate window arrangement as the only cause. A stronger comparison would check these other conditions while comparing arrangements. The takeaway is to connect a cooling decision with conditions, rather than follow one rule in every room.

■ Questions 17–22

17. What is the main idea? A Every open window cools every room. B Cooling decisions depend on conditions, and the observations have limits. C All classrooms have identical temperatures. D Equipment never affects a classroom.

18. What did opposite windows provide in the first classroom? A A path for air to enter and leave. B Proof that sunlight had no effect. C Warmer outside air. D A room without people.

19. Why does the speaker mention warmer outside air in the second classroom? A To say noon is always the hottest time. B To explain why everyone should close windows permanently. C To explain why opening windows did not produce the same cooling effect. D To prove that the second room had no equipment.

20. How is the talk organised? A A list of people, then a timetable. B A complaint, then an apology. C An equipment advertisement, then a price comparison. D Two observations, followed by a caution and a general lesson.

21. What can be inferred about a stronger comparison? A It should check other conditions that might affect temperature. B It must use only one classroom observation. C It should ignore sunlight. D It already proved that window arrangement is the only cause.

22. What does "takeaway" mean here? A Food collected from a restaurant. B The main lesson to remember. C A window removed from its frame. D The act of leaving campus.

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Explain the talk without adding outside knowledge

17. B. The observations show different conditions; the final paragraph limits the causal claim. A turns a conditional effect into a universal rule. C and D contradict differences and unchecked influences.

18. A. The speaker explains entry on one side and exit on the other. B and D invent controlled conditions. C belongs to the other observation.

19. C. The detail explains the contrast with cooler outside air in the first room. A claims always; B ignores the explicit warning against a fixed noon rule. D invents evidence about equipment.

20. D. The speaker announces two observations, gives them, then explains evidence limits and the practical lesson. A, B and C describe structures the talk does not use.

21. A. The speaker names unchecked conditions and proposes checking them in a stronger comparison. B and C remove useful checks. D mistakes a proposed improvement for an already established result.

22. B. The final sentence gives the lesson from the observations. The food meaning is possible elsewhere, but not in this explanation. An **idiom** 习语 or a familiar word used in a different way needs its local context.

A **causal claim** 因果结论 says that one factor produced an effect. A **confounding factor** 混杂因素 is another difference that may help explain an observed result. Here, sunlight, people and equipment were not kept the same. The speaker's **cautious attitude** 谨慎态度 appears in the limits and the proposed stronger comparison. You do not need to know extra physics to answer. Use what the talk actually states.

Useful notes: cooler outside + opposite windows → fall; warmer outside → no cooling observed; different rooms/groups; sunlight/people/equipment unchecked → stronger comparison needed. This records the explanation, not every spoken word.

Review listening errors with a specific next step

After a first attempt, uncover the script and mark the evidence for each answer. If you misheard a time, compare the spoken phrase with the action it describes. If you heard the words but chose the wrong reply, identify the conversational function. If you selected an old plan, locate the correction and write the final agreement. If your inference was too strong, replace always or guaranteed with what the evidence supports.

A replay after your first scored attempt can help diagnose an error. Use it for review, then attempt a different recording once. Repeated listening to one familiar script does not measure transfer to new speech. Shadowing may help some learners hear word groups, but is not a guaranteed fastest method for everyone. Choose a method that addresses your recorded difficulty.

Try a small personal routine: one short listening set, evidence review, then one fresh set later. Increase difficulty when your answers and reasons improve, not after a

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promised number of days. A missed detail does not imply a fixed number of lost later marks. Return attention to the current speaker rather than calculating imaginary losses. Follow the live task's navigation instructions instead of assuming a marking or revisit option exists.

Check six listening decisions

1. Does repeating a prompt word automatically make a response wrong?
2. Why is two o'clock not the stand's collection time?
3. What distinguishes 5:30, 5:50 and 6:00 in the announcement?
4. Does the waiting line guarantee entry?
5. Why cannot the talk prove that window arrangement alone caused the temperature difference?
6. Does completing this worksheet by reading certify your listening performance?

■ Explained answers

1. No. A reply can repeat a word and still answer the request naturally. Check function and context.
2. Two is the previous borrower's return time. Collection begins at three after that return.
3. Entrance opening, reservation-claim deadline and film start are different events.
4. No. Students may receive unclaimed seats, but a seat is not guaranteed.
5. The rooms and groups differed, and other relevant conditions were not kept equal.
6. No. Use spoken delivery with the script covered, then a fresh recording to check listening transfer.

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