Get 26+
on TOEFL Speaking Guide
By Paul Austin – the TOEFL Speaking Teacher

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Hi TOEFL Speaking student!

In this brief guide, I’m going to share with you...

• Why most TOEFL test takers never get 26+ (hint: it’s NOT the reason you think...)
• Two almost unknown secrets for “tricking” TOEFL evaluators and sounding like a native speaking American.
• Why evaluating your own responses is 100% necessary to improving your TOEFL score
• My personal and highly effective study plan for mastering the TOEFL Speaking Section in less than 1 month...
• 6 words/phrases you MIGHT be pronouncing incorrectly and why they are preventing you from getting 26+
• One simple and easy way to perfect your American intonation
• And, as a BONUS, the 7 Grammar mistakes you must fix to get 26+ on TOEFL Speaking
Why Most TOEFL Speaking Students Do Not 26+

Pronunciation and Intonation are the primary two reasons why many TOEFL test takers cannot get 26+ on the TOEFL Speaking section.

If, as a TOEFL student, you learn all the important information related to TOEFL Speaking (like how to take notes, how to organize your responses and you have decent grammar), then pronunciation and/or intonation is likely preventing you from getting the 26+ score you need.

In my TOEFL Speaking 26+ course, I lay out the exact methods you must use to improve your intonation and pronunciation so you can get 26+.

Just remember one thing: both of these skill areas take quite a bit of time to develop.

Unlike reducing your umm’s and uhh’s or fixing a single grammatical problem, pronunciation and intonation often take weeks, if not months, to perfect.

This is why many TOEFL test takers do not get 26+ on TOEFL Speaking: they don’t spend the required time studying intonation and pronunciation.

The last and final reason why many test takers cannot earn 26+ is because of their word choice.

TOEFL Evaluators award scores of 26+ to students who exhibit the ability to have natural, free-flowing conversations just like a native speaker would in America.
When you listen to a native speaker from America, you’ll notice they use certain types of words. This is what we call ‘spoken register’.

It is much different than ‘written register’.

One reason many students struggle getting 26+ is because they use ‘written register’ when speaking, instead of ‘spoken register’.

Some examples of written register include: States, Holds that, As I’ve stated, Moreover, Furthermore, Additionally

Compare this to examples of spoken register: says that, thinks that, like I said, so that’s why, the other thing is that

When you give responses on the TOEFL Speaking section, it’s critically important to use words from the ‘spoken register’.

This is one of the ways to ‘trick’ TOEFL evaluators into thinking you’re a native speaker.

The second way to ‘trick’ TOEFL evaluators into thinking you’re a native speaker is by using adverbs in your responses.

Words like ‘basically’, ‘completely’, and ‘definitely’ all help you to sound like a native American speaker.

So, how do you improve all three of these skills? Well first you start by evaluating your TOEFL Speaking responses...
Evaluate Your TOEFL Speaking Responses

Now, it’s time to evaluate (or have a friend evaluate) your TOEFL Speaking responses using 3 criteria:

1. **Language Use**
2. **Topic Development**
3. **Delivery**

These are the three areas TOEFL Evaluators judge you on for the TOEFL Speaking section.

Here are the questions you need to use to evaluate yourself:

1. **Language Use**
   
   b. Do you make any major mistakes with grammar? If yes, which ones? Write down the specific grammatical mistakes you made.
   
   c. Do you have any typical pronunciation mistakes with specific sounds? Write down the specific sounds you had difficulty with.

2. **Topic Development:**
   
   c. Are your sentences logical? Is it easy or difficult to understand the meaning?
   
   d. Tasks 1 and 2:
      
      i. Did you give some kind of personal experience – summarize a story or discuss a future plan?
      
      ii. Did you make comparisons?
      
      iii. Did you make an “if” sentence?

   c. Tasks 3, 4, 5 and 6:
      
      iv. How many main points did the speakers discuss in this dialogue or lecture?
      
      v. Did you clearly explain all of those the main points of the dialogue or lecture?
      
      vi. Did you accurately summarize the relationship of the original information?
3. Delivery

a. Task 1—2 should be 45 seconds. All the others should be 60 seconds. Did you finish early? Late?
b. Did you sound energetic or robotic and depressed?
c. Did you say “uhh” more than four times?
d. Did you take long pauses between sentences?

Once you answer all of these questions, you will have a much better idea as to what you must focus on in the coming chapters.

If you struggle with pronunciation, then spend more time on pronunciation. If you struggled with grammar, spend more time on grammar.

If you did GREAT with your note—taking, then spend less time on note—taking.

In the following chapters I will tell you exactly HOW to improve all of these skills.

The most important part of this self—evaluation is to determine which skills you’ve mastered and which skills you still struggle with.

Focus on the three we talked about above: intonation, pronunciation and naturally spoken phrases.

And then create your TOEFL Speaking study plan....
Effective TOEFL Speaking Study Plan

How Many Hours You Need to Study

I want to _____ as a score on the TOEFL Speaking section. Last time, I received _____. This means I need to improve my score by _____ points.

For every point that I want to increase my score, I should speak out loud for at least 10 hours. So...

I need to find _____ (10 x number of points you want to increase) hours to speak English and study for the speaking section of TOEFL before ______________. (insert date you plan to take TOEFL)

Deadline

I take the TOEFL on ______________. So, my deadline is ____ weeks from today. I have ____ weeks to speak every day.

____(total number of hours) ÷ ____ (number of weeks until test) = ____ hours is the number of hours I need to speak every week.
Example From a Previous Student

I want to get a score of 26 on the TOEFL Speaking section. I received 23 on my last speaking section. This means that I need to improve my score by 3 points.

For every point that I want to increase my score, I should speak out loud for at least 15 hours.

So...

I need to find 30 (10 x number of points you want to increase) hours to speak English and study for TOEFL’s speaking section before June 2, 2015.

Deadline

I take the TOEFL on June 2, 2015. Therefore, my deadline is 6 weeks from today. I have 6 weeks to speak every day.

30 (total number of hours) ÷ 6 (number of weeks until test) = 5 hours is the number of hours I need to speak every week

I can find 5 hours for speaking practice on...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>1 hour between 7 and 8 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>0.5 between 6:30 and 8 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1 hour between 7:00 and 8:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1 hour between 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>0 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1 hour between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>0.5 hours between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stay Accountable

I will use TWO of the following techniques to make sure I follow through on my study schedule:

1. Gmail’s calendar function + adding the widget to my inbox, so I always see my schedule
2. My smartphone’s agenda application
3. A paper calendar that I will put on my fridge/bathroom door/bathroom mirror

Fail Proof Daily TOEFL Study Plan

1. (3---4 minutes) Review new words or grammar from the previous day’s study session. So, if you worked on using adverbs in your responses then practice the new adverbs by following the directions.
2. (2--3 minutes) Review concepts from yesterday’s lesson or “new material” study time.
3. (15---20 minutes) Study new concepts from a section you struggle with – including strategies, grammar or phrases. Each day, choose a clear new topic (intonation, pronunciation, natural phrases, etc.), go to the location of the information and study that thing.
4. (20-30 minutes) – Practice the new material

Simulate Exam Conditions

1. Carefully monitor your time
2. Do not use a dictionary or any website to help
3. Limit distraction by logging out of Facebook and turning off your phone
4. Go to a public place (e.g. Loud Cafe) and practice an entire TOEFL Speaking exam (more on this later)

Now that you’ve created an effective study plan, you’ve got to know what issues to fix. Remember, we want to focus on pronunciation, intonation and using naturally spoken phrases.
Master the Pronunciation of These Six Groups of Words

1. **Because**: Youtube Video
2. **This and These**: Youtube Video
3. **Woman, Women, Man, Men**: Youtube Video
4. **Say, says, said**: Youtube Video
5. **Professor, Her, Research**: Youtube Video
6. **Advantage/Disadvantage**: Youtube Video

Once you’ve mastered the pronunciation of these six words/phrases, you will sound even more like a native speaker.

The reason I pick these six words/phrases is because they are some of the most common words and phrases used on the TOEFL, and they often prevent huge problems for non-native speakers.

Once you’ve perfected your pronunciation of these words and phrases, you should work on intonation.

How?

Go on to the next section...
How to Quickly Improve Your Intonation

Assuming that you can speak English well, but your intonation is off (which usually implies that your rhythm is off too), the fix is simple: just sing a lot.

Here’s the big secret: the simpler the song, the better it is to practice with.

In the beginning, use nursery rhymes. Sing along to this Youtube video for example:
Nursery Rhymes Youtube Video

(I know you’re older and you’ve grown up. But I want to do EVERYTHING I can to help you get 26+ on TOEFL Speaking. And singing nursery rhymes WILL help you master American English intonation.)

Feel the melody and rhythm! Embrace it. Absorb it. Let it flow into you.

Once you feel comfortable with intonation, move on to incorporating some ‘spoken register’ phrases into your vocabulary.

Here’s how....
Natural Phrases You Can Use

These are some phrases you can use to introduce topics, examples and to conclude your responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction Phrases</th>
<th>Ways to Introduce</th>
<th>How to Conclude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If my friend...I would</td>
<td>Like</td>
<td>So I think that..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do agree that...</td>
<td>A few days/weeks/years</td>
<td>So I think if...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally, I used to...</td>
<td>I found in my own experience</td>
<td>So that’s why</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adverb Phrases To Use

Adverbs are words that modify verbs. In other words they give comparative or relative meaning to certain verbs: “The man ran quickly”, “John speaks loudly”, “Mary lives locally”. And so on.

But adverbs can ALSO modify adjectives AND other adverbs.

For example: “He is really handsome”, “That was extremely kind of you”, “He drives extremely fast”.

Now let’s get to some examples you can use on TOEFL.

General Adverbs to Sound More Natural:

• Pretty
• Just
• Really
• Extremely
• Actually
• Probably
• Especially
BONUS: Master 7 Major Areas of Grammar

As a bonus for this 26+ guide, I’m giving you one extra part: the 7 areas of grammar you must master to get 26+.

Although grammar doesn’t usually prevent people from getting 26+, there are rare cases where it might.

If you struggle with any of the below grammar rules, do your best to perfect them before taking the TOEFL again.

2. Final ‘s’ – both for plural nouns and present simple, positive (with ‘verb-s’/is) and negative (doesn’t verb/Isn’t + adjective)
3. Past simple – including the right ‘past simple verb’ or pronouncing the ‘ed’ correctly at the end of each verb – and negative (didn’t verb/wasn’t + adjective)
4. ‘If’ sentences – It is no problem if you ignore third conditional. However, you must be accurate with first and second.
5. Comparisons with ‘although’, ‘even though’, ‘however’, and ‘but’
6. Basic use of ‘the’
7. Correctly using should/must/have to/can
What Are the Next Steps?

If you need more help in order to get 26+, I recommend doing a few different things.

1. **Check out my Youtube channel.** I have dozens of free videos about how you can master the TOEFL Speaking section. Be sure to click ‘Subscribe!’ so you can get all the new updates!

2. **Take Private Lessons** - If you have taken TOEFL several times, and still have not earned your goal score, then I recommend private lessons. I have helped many students earn scores of 26+ on TOEFL Speaking - including students who have tried EVERYTHING else (like Notefull) without success. Also, if you need a high TOEFL score as soon as possible (like if you’re applying for your MBA or LLM), then I also recommend Private Lessons. You can get started with private lessons by signing up for a TOEFL Speaking Evaluation.

3. **Join my ‘Master TOEFL Speaking’ Facebook Group.** In this exclusive Facebook group, you can connect with other TOEFL students who are also preparing for the TOEFL test. It is an excellent community to keep you motivated in your TOEFL studying.

Thanks for reading through this Guide to 26+ on TOEFL Speaking.

If you have any questions, or just want to say Hi, send me an email.

Talk to you soon and good luck!