

(1) The TOEFL grading criteria. What exactly is the grader looking or listening for in your **speaking task**? It's really useful to, we say "plan backwards", begin at the end. And what I mean by that is to **familiarize** yourself with the scoring rubric so that you can use that as a guideline, or a checklist to ensure that you are essentially doing these things, and doing them at a high level so that you can earn the score that you want.

(2) So, the first thing that you want to consider is that there are three main criteria in the **scoring rubric**. The first is the DELIVERY OF THE RESPONSE and I'm going to read you some sentences from this description.

(3) The response is **fluent, smooth and highly comprehensible**. There may be minor problems involving pronunciation stress and intonation, but these do not affect speaker's intelligibility - the ability to make oneself understood.

(4) So, I interpret that as, you know, a reminder that fluency is really critical. Speaking without long pauses, hesitations or utterances of umm.. umm.. umm, uhh... uhh... uhh. We have to be sure that our language is fluent, smooth, that's a key word.

(5) Students are always **concerned about their pronunciation**, that's like a number one question that I get in speaking evaluations, "How is my pronunciation?"

(6) And I know a lot of students who have got a 26 or higher, have strong accents. They don't sound identical to a native English speaker. However, the pronunciation is not the most **critical aspect** of the response.

(7) I think a student who speaks really fluently and smoothly, with a good **intonation**, can have minor pronunciation issues and still receive a really high score.

(8) The next category is known as the USE OF LANGUAGE in terms of your grammar and vocabulary. So, this category says – and this to earning a high score, score 4 - "The response shows that the speaker has an effective command of high level grammatical structures and uses sophisticated vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. There may be some minor grammatical errors".

(9) So, what I interpret as being the most important **takeaway message from** that category is the idea of using a variety of vocabulary. In my private lessons, I always point out when my students **repeat** the same vocabulary words. You know, I find students who say, "It was really hard, it was really hard, it was really hard". In 45 seconds it's not advisable to repeat any of the same vocabulary words. Ideally, you want to **showcase** a large variety of vocabulary. So, for example, in a situation number 3 when you have the man or woman speaking, you might use **different verbs** such as *the woman explains, the woman describes, the woman feels, the woman states, the woman believes*. In that style we want to **showcase** a lot of vocabulary.

(10) In these criteria, they say that you have to have high-level grammatical structures. Yes, you have to have a very strong grasp of English spoken grammar. And if that's something that's difficult for you, that's something we address in our program and we can help you **remedy** those issues.

(11) They also mention using **sophisticated** vocabulary and **idiomatic** expressions. In our program, we believe that it's highly advisable to sound natural and conversational. So, sophisticated does not necessarily mean sophisticated academic vocabulary, you want to sound sophisticated conversationally. So, you want to sound like a natural, conversational **native speaker**.

(12) So, again in my private lessons, I help students identify the best casual **phrases**, the best casual **expressions**, that are going to be really useful to help you sound sophisticated.

(13) The final criteria we have to consider is the DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOPIC. So, to earn a score of 4 in these criteria it states, "The response is coherent and unified, the speaker clearly provides a topic statement and adequately supports this statement with specific reasons and examples. The speaker uses transitional words to connect parts of the response". So, to earn a score of 4 you have to have a coherent unified response.

(14) Again, in our program, this is one of the biggest areas that we help students, their structure, and organization. For all 6 questions, how do you approach them, what is the structure that is advisable?

(15) So, it mentions a **topic sentence**. How do I begin my response? Yes, certainly you could just to restate the question, but I think that's really boring, and I have some **great strategies** to help students have some clever or more interesting introductory lines.

(16) It says that we have to give specific reason and examples. I can help students brainstorm those ideas more quickly, so that you have good **substance** for a response.

(17) And lastly, it mentions **transitional phrases**. One of the most common recurring errors that I see in my students' evaluations are when students say to me, "My first reason is ... My second reason is..." I think those are terrible transition phrases, to be honest, although I wouldn't say it so rudely in the **evaluation**.

(18) In a private lesson, I advise my students by sharing a list of much more casual, conversational, natural sounding transitional phrases, that are going to help you **organize** and **introduce** your ideas in a more natural way.

(19) "My first reason is..." is really boring and robotic. So, we want to break away from those habits.

(20) In my opinion, to complete the development of the topic, it's really advisable to have a strong conclusion. And again that's an area where I've collected, you now, devised a lot of very effective conclusion sentences for the 6 questions to help students, you know, experiment with different **concluding phrases**.

(21) So, I think if you understand the scoring rubric very well and you know what your goals are to earn scores of 4 or whatever you are aiming for, you will be well on your way to success.

(22) So, if you want **guidance in this project** you can check out our website and our services. Again, my name is Jamie and I would love to help you succeed in your TOEFL journey. So, [toeflspekingteacher.com](http://toeflspekingteacher.com), we want to help you, guide you through this process.

(23) I hope my advice was useful for you today and I hope I get another chance to work with you in the future. Alright, take care. Bye!

1. In paragraph 3, the word, is **comprehensible** is closest in meaning to...

- a. complete
- b. reliable
- c. understandable**

2. The word **showcase** in paragraph 9 is closest in meaning to

- a. perform
- b. keep
- c. display**

3. The word **remedy** in paragraph 10 is closest in meaning to

- a. medicine
- b. fix**
- c. remain

4. The word **substance** in paragraph 16 is closest in meaning to

- a. matter
- b. content**
- c. import

5. What are the three main criteria in the TOEFL speaking section?

- a. delivery, language use, topic development**
- b. pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary
- c. grammatical structure, topic format, word usage

6. Why does the professor mention intelligibility in paragraph 3?

- a. to emphasize the importance of individual intelligence
- b. to emphasize the importance of being understood by the listener
- c. to emphasize the importance of stress and intonation in your response

7. Which of the following does the professor say is a terrible transitional phrase?

- a. To sum up
- b. I remember when
- c. My first reason is

8. According to paragraph 20, it's also important to have a strong...

- a. transitional phrase
- b. personal example
- c. conclusion

9. What do you think is the main idea of this lesson?

The main idea is to help students understand the way that the TOEFL speaking section is graded because when you understand the way it's graded, you can prepare a better response that fits with what the graders are looking for.

10. List two of the most important lessons you have learned from this lesson:

A.

B.

11. What do you plan on doing next? How will you apply what you have learned?