



IELTS and TOEFL analytical comparison

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Abstract:

This article provides an analytical overview of IELTS and TOEFL, comparing their structure, assessment criteria, task types, scoring, and learner suitability. IELTS offers face-to-face speaking, diverse question formats, and band-based scoring, making it suitable for learners who prefer natural communication and variety in tasks. TOEFL emphasizes computer-based integrated academic tasks with standardized scoring, catering to learners comfortable with digital testing and academic contexts. The comparison enables candidates to make informed decisions according to their strengths and goals.

Keywords: IELTS, TOEFL, English proficiency tests, test comparison, academic English, task types, scoring system, learner suitability

This analytical article provides a comprehensive comparison of IELTS and TOEFL, two of the most widely recognized international English proficiency tests. It examines test structure, assessment criteria, task types, scoring, interpretation, and learner suitability. IELTS and TOEFL are globally accepted for academic admissions, immigration, and professional certification. Although both tests assess English proficiency, they differ significantly in format, content, scoring methods, and skill evaluation. IELTS includes Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking sections, offered in Academic and General Training versions. The speaking test is conducted face-to-face with an examiner, allowing candidates to demonstrate natural communication skills. It can be taken either on paper or computer. TOEFL iBT is entirely computer-based, with Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing sections. Speaking responses are recorded digitally and evaluated later. TOEFL emphasizes integrated academic tasks, requiring learners to combine reading, listening, and speaking or writing skills. Assessment in IELTS uses a band system from 1 to 9, with detailed descriptors for each skill, particularly for Writing and Speaking. TOEFL



employs a point-based system, scoring up to 120 points, with a combination of human raters and automated scoring for standardization and reliability.

IELTS tasks include short answers, matching, summary completion, essays, and face-to-face speaking interviews. TOEFL tasks focus on academic contexts, with multiple-choice questions, integrated writing tasks, and lecture-based listening passages. Each test reflects different learner strengths and contexts: IELTS suits those who prefer human interaction and diverse task formats, while TOEFL is ideal for candidates comfortable with digital, academic-style tasks. Scores in IELTS are interpreted using the band scale, with typical university requirements ranging from 6.0 to 7.5. TOEFL scores accumulate up to 120 points, with most institutions expecting 80–100 points. Understanding these differences helps candidates select the test that aligns best with their personal strengths, academic goals, and the requirements of institutions or immigration authorities.

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