

**Materi PPM**

# **TOEIC: THE READING COMPREHENSION**



By:  
Erna Andriyanti, M.Hum.  
NIP. 19710319 199903 2 002

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# **TOEIC: THE READING COMPREHENSION**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) test is an English proficiency test for non-native English speakers. This test measures the everyday listening and reading skills of people working in an international workplace environment. The scores indicate how well people can communicate in English with others in business, commerce and industry. The test does not require specialized knowledge or vocabulary beyond that of a person who uses English in everyday work activities.

Learners who are preparing to take any of the TOEIC test components (Listening and Reading) generally do best when they are familiar with the test format. A thorough understanding of test directions and task requirements allow the test taker to focus fully on demonstrating his or her language proficiency. Because the TOEIC test is a proficiency test that assesses a wide range of language, test takers who have become familiar with the TOEIC test format should concentrate on improving their overall language skills.

## **B. THE READING COMPREHENSION OF TOEIC**

The TOEIC test was designed to meet the needs of the working world. The test questions are developed from samples of spoken and written language collected from various countries around the world where English is used in the workplace. Test questions in the reading section of TOEIC include the following settings and situations:

- General Business: contracts, negotiations, marketing, sales, business planning and conferences
- Manufacturing: plant management, assembly lines, quality control

- Finance and Budgeting: banking, investment, taxes, accounting and billing
- Corporate Development: research, product development
- Offices: board meetings, committees, letters, memoranda, telephone, fax and e-mail messages, office equipment and furniture, office procedures
- Personnel: recruiting, hiring, retiring, salaries, promotions, job applications and advertisement
- Purchasing: shopping, ordering supplies, shipping and invoice
- Technical Areas: electronics, technology, computers, laboratories, technical specifications
- Housing/ Corporate Property: construction, specifications, buying and renting, electric and gas services
- Travel: trains, airplanes, taxis, buses, ships, tickets, schedules, car rentals, delay and cancellations
- Dining Out: business and informal lunches, banquets, receptions and restaurant reservation
- Entertainment: cinema, theater, music, art, media
- Health: medical insurance, visiting doctors, dentists, clinics, hospitals

The reading materials are all authentic texts taken from the above settings and situations. The forms include:

- Brochures
- Magazines
- Mail-order Catalogs
- Menus
- Newspaper
- Letters
- E-mails
- Memos
- Advertisements
- Notices

The reading section of TOEIC can be outlined as the followings:

- The reading section consists of questions 101-200 which is divided into three parts:

PART V: Incomplete Sentences

PART VI: Error Recognition

PART VII: Reading Comprehension

(Note: Part V and VI often contain questions related to Structure)

- This section takes 75 minutes to finish

The Reading Comprehension (Part VII) can be explained briefly as follows:

- This part consists of a number of reading passages, each followed by a set of between two or five questions.
- There are 40 questions in all.
- The passages vary in format and include both formal and informal English.

While the questions in the Reading Comprehension part cover:

- Identifying the main idea of a text or the purpose for which it was written
- Looking for details, sometimes in different words from those in the text itself
- Making inferences about the texts

To be successful in the test, a (new) test taker can learn the following tips:

**TIP 1: Allow enough time to read and reread the passages**

This part of the test will take longer than the two previous reading parts. You may need to spend more than half of the 75 minutes on the reading passages.

**TIP 2: Become familiar with the layout of texts used in the workplace**

We will often be able to make predictions about the content of the text. Familiarity with the layout may help us locate some of the most important information in the text. For example, we may be asked to identify the recipient of a letter or the name or the title of the writer. Usually the name of the sender or the

writer is at the bottom of the page in a business letter, while the recipient's name and title are found at the top. In an office memorandum, the names of both sender and receiver are at the top of the page, under the date. Knowing this can help us locate the required information quickly.

**Examples of the reading test items:**

Questions 1-3 refer to the following letter

Alberto Romero  
3254 Turney Road  
Garfield Heights  
OH 44125  
USA

Dear Mr. Romero,

This letter is to thank you for your application to join our international sales team. Unfortunately, we must inform you that due to the large number of highly-qualified applicants that applied for the position of eastern European sales representative, we have already filled all the positions that were advertised in the May issue of the *Human Resources Bulletin*.

As you know, administrative and marketing positions in our European and Asia-Pacific offices regularly become available during the year and we would welcome your application for future international postings.

Yours truly,  
Alex Andreas  
p.p. Benjamin Weintraub  
Human Resources Manager  
London Office  
John Teirney & Sons Ltd.

1. For whom is the letter intended?
  - A. Alberto Romero
  - B. Benjamin Weintraub
  - C. John Terney
  - D. Alex Andreas
2. What kind of job does the applicant want?
  - A. Human resources
  - B. Advertising
  - C. Marketing
  - D. Sales
3. Where did Mr. Romero want to work?
  - A. In Britain
  - B. In North America
  - C. In Eastern Europe
  - D. In Asia

Since it is a business letter, the name of the recipient is found at the top of the letter. So the letter is intended for **A. Albert Romero**; while question no. 2 and 3 refer to the body of the letter, especially paragraph 1. The kind of job the applicant wants is found in the first line saying "... to join our international sales team". Therefore, the answer of no. 2 is **D. Sales**. Question no. 3 refers to the third line saying "...applied for the position of eastern European sales representative", so the answer is **C. In Eastern Europe**.

Question 4 refers to the following memorandum:

**Date:** July 31

**To:** Marketing Division

**From:** Stephen Schneider, Director – Planning & Research

**Re:** *The Market Monthly* Newsletter

Attached is a copy of *The Market Monthly*, a newsletter published by the Marketing Division, designed to keep you updated on competitors, trends, and events that impact the markets of interest to this company. If there are individuals in your area who do not receive the newsletter and should be added to the distribution list, please contact the Monthly's managing editor, Maria Lopez, at ext. 240.

I would appreciate receiving any comments or suggestions you have regarding *The Market Monthly*. Please feel free to contact me at ext. 167.

4. Whom should readers contact with suggestions?

- A. The company director
- B. The marketing manager
- C. Mr. Schneider
- D. Ms. Lopez

At the bottom of the memo, the writer invites suggestions. If you are familiar with office memos, you will know that the writer's name is usually at the top of the memo, following the word **From**. Readers should contact Mr. Schneider, choice C.

**TIP 3: Read the sentence that introduces the text**

The introduction to the text will often tell us important information about the kind of text we are about to read. For example, we may be asked to identify a particular step in an instruction that starts with: "Our FAX machine is easy to use".

We can assume that the steps following the introductory statement will be written in the order in which they will be carried out.

**Tip 3: Skim the entire passage to get the main idea**

Skimming, or quickly reading the text, can give us an idea of what the passage is about. We can pick out key words and phrases that we are familiar with. We also need to draw attention to the title (if there is), which can give information about the main idea

**Examples of the reading test items:**

Questions 5 refers to the following letter

**Economic Slump Blamed on Bad Weather**

The recent downturn in the economy has been attributed to last year's typhoon. The destruction of several key electronics manufacturing plants on the eastern side of the nation has led to much smaller production figures in that key industry. The resulting demand has driven prices up and affected overall consumer sales.

5. What is the main idea of the article?
- A. A major storm is approaching the area.
  - B. New manufacturing plants have been constructed.
  - C. A large company is going out of business.
  - D. A major storm has affected business.

The correct answer is D. If we read only the words or phrases *economic slump*, *blamed*, *downturn*, *typhoon*, *destruction* and *affected overall consumers*, we can know that a storm, or a typhoon, has affected businesses.



**Tip 4: Read the questions before reading the text to find the answers**

When we read a real advertisement, memo or agenda, for example, we usually have some reason for reading it. We might want to know the price of an object, the time a meeting starts, a telephone number or details about a change in procedures. A quick look at the questions can help us determine what we should be reading for.

**C. CLOSING**

The TOEIC test measure our ability to understand English as it is used in everyday work and life situations. The more capable and comfortable we are in using natural English, both spoken and written, the better we will do on the TOEIC test. Making an effort to use English to communicate as much as we can will improve our score faster than if we just study the test items, grammar and vocabulary.

However, if we want to prepare ourselves through TOEIC books available in the market or in the internet, we must understand well the strategies of how to deal with each type of questions. Having many practices will help us much to be quite familiar with the test items and therefore answer the questions well.

**References**

Arbogast, Bo, Elizabeth Ashmore, et al. 2008. *30 Days to the TOEIC Test*. Canada: Thomson Peterson's.

Trew, Grant. 2007. *Tactics for TOEIC Listening and Reading Test*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.