TOEFL iBT 2026 — Full-Length Mock Test 4 (Rising Difficulty)

Total Time: 100 minutes | 4 Sections | No scheduled break *Questions progress from easier to harder within each section.*

SECTION 1: READING (35 minutes | 20 questions)

Adaptive format — Stage 1 determines Stage 2 difficulty. Answers cannot be revisited once Stage 2 begins.

STAGE 1 — Passage 1 (Easier) — 10 questions, 17 minutes

The Growth of Repair Cafés

In the early 2010s, a new kind of community event began appearing across Europe: the repair café. At these free gatherings, volunteers with skills in electronics, sewing, woodworking, and small appliance repair help visitors fix broken items — toasters, lamps, torn jackets, wobbly chairs — rather than throwing them away and buying new ones.

The idea started in Amsterdam in 2009 and has since spread to thousands of locations worldwide, often organized by local volunteers in community centers, libraries, or churches. Most repair cafés operate on a simple model: visitors bring in a broken item, and a volunteer with relevant expertise works alongside them to diagnose and fix the problem, teaching basic repair skills in the process rather than simply fixing the item for them.

Organizers say the appeal goes beyond simply saving money. Many participants describe a sense of satisfaction in extending the life of an object rather than discarding it, and repair cafés have become associated with the broader "right to repair" movement, which advocates for consumers' ability to fix their own devices rather than being forced to rely on manufacturers or pay for costly replacements.

Not every item can be saved, of course. Volunteers estimate that roughly 70% of items brought to a typical repair café session are successfully repaired, while the rest are deemed unfixable due to unavailable parts or damage too extensive to reverse. Even so, organizers consider this a strong success rate, particularly given that many participants arrive assuming their item is already beyond saving.

Questions:

1. What is a repair café? *(1 mark)*

   A) A coffee shop that sells refurbished furniture

   B) A community event where volunteers help people fix broken items

   C) A store that sells repair tools

   D) An online forum for repair tips

2. Where did the repair café concept begin? *(1 mark)*

   A) London

   B) Amsterdam

   C) Berlin

   D) Paris

3. According to paragraph 2, what happens during a typical repair café visit? *(1 mark)*

   A) Volunteers fix the item without the visitor's involvement

   B) Visitors work alongside a volunteer and learn basic repair skills

   C) Visitors pay a fee for repairs

   D) Items are shipped away for repair

4. **Complete the Words:** "Repair cafés are linked to the broader 'right to r_p__r' movement." *(1 mark)*

5. What does the "right to repair" movement advocate for? *(1 mark)*

   A) Banning the sale of new appliances

   B) Consumers' ability to fix their own devices instead of relying on manufacturers

   C) Free appliances for low-income households

   D) Stricter recycling laws

6. What percentage of items are successfully repaired at a typical session, according to the passage? *(1 mark)*

   A) 50% B) 70% C) 90% D) 30%

7. Why are some items not repairable? *(1 mark)*

   A) Volunteers lack the necessary skills

   B) Unavailable parts or damage too extensive to reverse

   C) Visitors refuse to pay for parts

   D) There isn't enough time during the session

8. The word "discarding" in paragraph 3 is closest in meaning to — *(1 mark)*

   A) repairing

   B) throwing away

   C) selling

   D) donating

9. What motivates participants beyond saving money, according to the passage? *(1 mark)*

   A) Winning prizes

   B) A sense of satisfaction in extending an object's life

   C) Meeting new people exclusively

   D) Avoiding store visits

10. Which best describes the passage's overall structure? *(1 mark)*

    A) It only criticizes repair cafés

    B) It introduces the concept, explains how it works, and discusses its appeal and limitations

    C) It compares repair cafés to recycling centers

D) It focuses only on statistics

STAGE 2 — Passage 2 (Harder — dense argument, abstract vocabulary) — 10 questions, 18 minutes

Path Dependence and Technological Lock-in

Economists and historians of technology have long grappled with a puzzling question: why do inferior technologies sometimes persist in widespread use long after superior alternatives become available? The concept of path dependence offers one influential explanation, positing that early, often somewhat arbitrary choices in a technology's development can become self-reinforcing over time, making later deviation increasingly costly even when an objectively better alternative exists.

The often-cited, though contested, example is the QWERTY keyboard layout, designed in the 1870s partly to address mechanical constraints in early typewriters that have long since become irrelevant. Despite the emergence of alternative layouts claiming greater typing efficiency, QWERTY has remained dominant, not necessarily because it is optimal, but because the accumulated infrastructure surrounding it — training programs, existing keyboards, muscle memory developed over a lifetime, and interoperability expectations — creates substantial switching costs that discourage individual and institutional adoption of alternatives, regardless of their theoretical superiority.

Critics of the path-dependence narrative, however, argue that the QWERTY case has been overstated in popular accounts. Economic historians who have revisited the original efficiency claims for alternative layouts note that the purported advantages were often based on methodologically weak studies, some conducted by parties with a financial interest in promoting the alternative. This has led some scholars to argue that QWERTY's persistence may reflect a layout that, while not perfect, was never meaningfully inferior enough to justify the switching costs in the first place — a subtly different claim from the stronger path-dependence thesis, which holds that a genuinely superior technology was locked out.

This distinction matters considerably for policy implications. If technological lock-in genuinely traps societies in inferior equilibria, it would justify deliberate policy intervention — subsidizing transition costs, for instance — to shift toward superior alternatives. If, however, apparent cases of lock-in largely reflect exaggerated claims about alternatives' superiority, then such interventions risk misallocating resources toward switches that offer little genuine improvement, while the underlying theoretical insight about switching costs remains valid in principle but is less frequently applicable in practice than commonly assumed.

Questions:

11. What puzzle does path dependence attempt to explain? *(1 mark)*

    A) Why new technologies are always adopted quickly

    B) Why inferior technologies sometimes persist despite better alternatives being available

    C) Why typewriters became obsolete

    D) Why economists disagree about efficiency

12. According to the passage, why does QWERTY remain dominant? *(1 mark)*

    A) It is objectively the most efficient layout

    B) Accumulated infrastructure and switching costs discourage adoption of alternatives

    C) No alternatives have ever been proposed

    D) Government regulation requires it

13. What original purpose did the QWERTY layout serve? *(1 mark)*

    A) To maximize typing speed

    B) To address mechanical constraints in early typewriters

    C) To standardize keyboards internationally

    D) To reduce manufacturing costs

14. What do critics of the path-dependence narrative argue about the original efficiency studies for alternative layouts? *(1 mark)*

    A) They were rigorous and conclusive

    B) They were often methodologically weak, sometimes from biased sources

    C) They proved QWERTY was clearly inferior

    D) They were never conducted

15. The word "purported" in paragraph 3 most nearly means — *(1 mark)*

    A) proven

B) claimed but not necessarily verified

C) disproven

D) irrelevant

16. What is the "subtly different claim" mentioned in paragraph 3? *(1 mark)*

    A) That QWERTY is the best possible layout

    B) That QWERTY may not have been meaningfully inferior enough to justify switching, rather than a superior alternative being genuinely locked out

    C) That alternative layouts were never real

    D) That switching costs don't exist

17. **Complete the Words:** "Economic historians revisited the original eff_c__ncy claims for alternative layouts." *(1 mark)*

18. Why does the distinction described in paragraph 3 matter for policy, according to paragraph 4? *(1 mark)*

    A) It has no practical implications

    B) It determines whether intervention to shift technologies is justified or risks misallocating resources

    C) It only matters for typewriter manufacturers

    D) It proves all lock-in theories are false

19. What does the passage conclude about the theoretical insight behind switching costs? *(1 mark)*

    A) It is completely invalid

    B) It remains valid in principle but may be less frequently applicable in practice than commonly assumed

    C) It applies only to keyboards

    D) It has been fully proven in every documented case

20. Which best describes the tone of the passage? *(1 mark)*

    A) One-sided advocacy for path-dependence theory

    B) Analytically balanced, presenting a theory alongside serious critiques of its most famous example

    C) Purely historical, with no analysis

    D) Dismissive of economic theory in general

SECTION 2: LISTENING (29 minutes | 28 questions)

Part A — Listen and Choose a Response (Easier — 6 items, audio only)

1. You hear: "Is the computer lab open late during finals week?" *(1 mark)*

    A) "Yes, it's open until midnight."

    B) "I have three finals this week."

    C) "The lab has new computers."

2. You hear: "Can you recommend a good place to print posters on campus?" *(1 mark)*

    A) "The design center on the second floor does large prints."

    B) "I printed my resume yesterday."

    C) "Posters are expensive."

3. You hear: "Did you find a parking spot okay?" *(1 mark)*

    A) "Yes, there was one near the entrance."

    B) "Parking is expensive here."

    C) "I don't have a car."

4. You hear: "Is this the line for the campus shuttle?" *(1 mark)*

A) "Yes, it should arrive in about five minutes."

B) "The shuttle is usually on time."

C) "I took the shuttle yesterday."

5. You hear: "Have you picked a topic for your research paper yet?" *(1 mark)*

   A) "Not yet, I'm still deciding between two ideas."

   B) "The paper is due next month."

   C) "Research papers take a long time."

6. You hear: "Do you want to split a pizza for dinner?" *(1 mark)*

   A) "Sure, that sounds great."

   B) "I had pizza yesterday."

   C) "The dining hall closes at 8."

Part B — Listen to a Conversation (Medium — 2 conversations × 2 questions)

Conversation 1 — *A student speaks with a career services advisor.*

Student: Hi, I'm putting together my resume for internship applications, but I'm not sure how to list a part-time job that isn't really related to my major.

Advisor: That's a common question. Even if a job seems unrelated, you can usually highlight transferable skills — things like communication, time management, or problem-solving — that apply to almost any role.

Student: That makes sense. Should I still include the dates and job title, or focus mainly on the skills?

Advisor: Include both — employers do want the basic details — but weight your bullet points toward the transferable skills rather than the day-to-day tasks.

7. What is the student unsure about? *(1 mark)*

A) How to find an internship

B) How to list an unrelated part-time job on their resume

C) How to write a cover letter

D) Whether to apply for an internship at all

8. What does the advisor suggest? *(1 mark)*

A) Leaving the job off the resume entirely

B) Highlighting transferable skills while still including basic job details

C) Only listing the job title, not the dates

D) Rewriting the resume from scratch

Conversation 2 — *Two students discuss a lab report deadline.*

Student A: Are you done with the lab report? It's due tomorrow at noon.

Student B: Almost — I'm just waiting on my data analysis to finish running. It's taking longer than expected.

Student A: Do you think it'll be done in time?

Student B: Probably, but if not, I read that the professor allows a 24-hour grace period with a small penalty. I'd rather submit late than rush and make mistakes.

Student A: That's fair. I'd rather be accurate than fast too.

9. What is Student B waiting on? *(1 mark)*

A) Feedback from the professor

B) Their data analysis to finish running

C) A lab partner's contribution

D) Access to the lab

10. What does Student B say about submitting late? *(1 mark)*

A) Late submissions are not allowed under any circumstances

B) There's a 24-hour grace period with a small penalty

C) The professor never enforces deadlines

D) Late submissions receive no penalty

Part C — Listen to an Announcement (Medium — 2 announcements × 2 questions)

Announcement 1

"A quick note for anyone using the recreation center this month: the pool will be closed for resurfacing from the 10th through the 17th. All other facilities, including the gym and courts, will remain open on their normal schedule during this time."

11. What is the purpose of the announcement? *(1 mark)*

    A) To announce the recreation center's permanent closure

    B) To inform users of a temporary pool closure for resurfacing

    C) To advertise new gym equipment

    D) To announce new membership pricing

12. What will remain open during the closure? *(1 mark)*

    A) Nothing — the entire center will close

    B) The gym and courts

    C) Only the locker rooms

    D) The pool, on a limited schedule

Announcement 2

"Before we wrap up today, I want to remind everyone that the final project proposal is due next Wednesday, not Friday as originally listed on the syllabus. I know this is a change, so I've also posted an updated syllabus online to avoid any confusion."

13. What change does the professor announce? *(1 mark)*

A) The project is now optional

B) The proposal deadline moved from Friday to Wednesday

C) The project topic has changed

D) The syllabus was removed from the course website

14. What did the professor do to prevent confusion about the change? *(1 mark)*

A) Sent a personal email to each student

B) Posted an updated syllabus online

C) Extended office hours

D) Cancelled the assignment

Part D — Academic Lecture (Harder — 2 lectures, 7 questions)

Lecture 1 — *Biology: Convergent Evolution*

"Convergent evolution refers to the process by which unrelated species independently evolve similar traits, typically because they face similar environmental pressures rather than because of shared ancestry. The classic example is the streamlined body shape shared by dolphins, a mammal, and sharks, a fish — two lineages that diverged hundreds of millions of years ago, yet arrived at strikingly similar solutions to the shared problem of moving efficiently through water.

What makes convergent evolution particularly interesting to biologists is what it suggests about the constraints and possibilities of evolutionary change. If a trait evolves independently multiple times across unrelated lineages, that recurrence suggests the trait represents a particularly effective, perhaps even close to optimal, solution to a given environmental challenge — one that natural selection tends to arrive at repeatedly when the underlying problem is sufficiently similar, even via entirely different genetic pathways.

This raises a deeper question that has occupied evolutionary biologists for decades: to what extent is the trajectory of evolution constrained toward certain outcomes, versus being fundamentally open-ended and contingent on historical accident? The paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould famously argued that if the tape of evolutionary history were replayed, the outcomes would look dramatically different

each time, emphasizing contingency over constraint. Other researchers, pointing to the sheer frequency of convergent evolution across the tree of life, argue this suggests evolution is considerably more constrained and predictable than Gould's thought experiment implies, funneled repeatedly toward a limited set of effective solutions by the physical and biological pressures organisms face."

15. What is convergent evolution? *(1 mark)*

    A) The process by which related species diverge over time

    B) The process by which unrelated species independently evolve similar traits due to similar environmental pressures

    C) A theory about the origin of life

    D) A pattern found only in aquatic animals

16. What example does the professor use to illustrate convergent evolution? *(1 mark)*

    A) The similar body shapes of dolphins and sharks

    B) The wings of birds and insects

    C) The shells of turtles and snails

    D) The eyes of humans and octopuses

17. Why do biologists find convergent evolution significant? *(1 mark)*

    A) It proves evolution doesn't occur

    B) It suggests some traits represent especially effective solutions that selection arrives at repeatedly

    C) It shows that all species are closely related

    D) It disproves the theory of natural selection

18. What did Stephen Jay Gould argue, according to the lecture? *(1 mark)*

    A) Evolution is highly predictable and constrained

    B) If evolutionary history were replayed, outcomes would look dramatically different, emphasizing contingency

C) Convergent evolution doesn't actually occur

D) All species eventually evolve identical traits

19. How do other researchers respond to Gould's argument? *(1 mark)*

    A) They agree completely

    B) They argue the frequency of convergent evolution suggests evolution is more constrained and predictable than Gould implies

    C) They argue evolution doesn't exist

    D) They claim Gould's thought experiment is untestable and therefore meaningless

20. **Complete the Words:** "Organisms are funneled toward a limited set of eff_ct_ve solutions." *(1 mark) (1 mark)*

21. What is the overall purpose of the lecture?

    A) To describe a specific animal species

    B) To explain convergent evolution and the broader debate it raises about constraint versus contingency in evolution

    C) To argue against the theory of evolution

    D) To compare mammals and fish exclusively

(Items 22–28 continue in the same format at adaptive Stage 2 difficulty.)

SECTION 3: SPEAKING (16 minutes | 4 tasks)

Task 1 & 2: Listen and Repeat (~4 minutes)

Task 1 (Easier):

"The recreation center will be closed for maintenance next week." *(2 marks)*

Task 2 (Harder — longer, embedded clause):

"Even though the data analysis was taking longer than expected, the research team remained confident they would meet the deadline." *(2 marks)*

Task 3 & 4: Take an Interview (~12 minutes)

Task 3 (Easier — personal/familiar topic):

Prompt: "A classmate asks: 'What's one skill you'd like to improve this year, and why?' Respond naturally." *(Response time: 60 seconds, with an adaptive follow-up question.) (5 marks)*

Task 4 (Harder — abstract reasoning, requires taking and defending a position):

Prompt: "Your professor asks: 'Some argue that convergent evolution shows nature tends toward a limited set of optimal solutions, while others believe evolutionary outcomes are largely shaped by chance. Which view do you find more convincing, and why?' Respond as if speaking directly to your professor, with a clear position and supporting reasoning." *(Response time: 60 seconds, followed by an adaptive follow-up question that may challenge your position.) (5 marks)*

SECTION 4: WRITING (20 minutes | 3 tasks)

Task 1: Build a Sentence (~3 minutes)

Easier:

1. "the / center / recreation / maintenance / for / closed / week / will / next / be"

Harder (more clauses, subordinate structure): 2. "confident / remained / team / research / the / longer / although / taking / was / than / analysis / data / the / expected / deadline / meet / would / they / the" *(2 marks each)*

Task 2: Write an Email (~7 minutes)

Prompt: You signed up for a workshop through your university's career services office, but a scheduling conflict now prevents you from attending. Write an email to the office explaining the situation and asking whether you can join a different session. (~80–120 words) *(5 marks — Task Achievement, Coherence, Grammatical Accuracy)*

Task 3: Academic Discussion (Harder — abstract policy topic, ~10 minutes)

Professor's Prompt: "Given that convergent evolution suggests nature repeatedly arrives at similar solutions, should this idea influence how engineers approach design problems — for example, by deliberately imitating natural forms (biomimicry)?"

Classmate 1 (Sofia): "I think biomimicry makes a lot of sense — if nature has already 'tested' a solution over millions of years, why not learn from it instead of starting from scratch?"

Classmate 2 (Jamal): "I'd be cautious about over-relying on that logic. Natural solutions are optimized for biological constraints, not necessarily for materials or goals humans care about, so blindly copying nature could lead engineers astray."

Write a response that states your own position and directly engages with at least one classmate's point. (~100–150 words) *(5 marks — Task Achievement, Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Accuracy)*
