
A Taste of
TOEFL
by Jeremiah Bourque


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About The Author

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The following explanations are based on a collection of short, multiple-choice exercises intended to prepare English learners for the TOEFL test. I have added a great deal of explanation and context to demonstrate **why** the correct answers are correct, and **why** the incorrect answers are wrong.

1. A Movie After Work

"Do you have <u>much work</u> to do this afternoon? If not, I'd like to take you to a movie."

"Do you have ___?" is a simple present question. This is modern English's 2nd person equivalent of "Do I have ___?"

Example: "Do I have something on my face?" This asks if someone has a piece of food on his or her face, or something similar. You might be asked this if you are staring at someone's face to a degree the other person finds unusual.

The only other key element in these sentences is "work." Work is an abstract concept. In English, abstract concepts are **singular**. Furthermore, a word giving detail to "work" (in other words, an **adjective**) must agree with "work" being a singular word.

"Do you have many work?" <- Wrong. "Work" is singular.

"Do you have much works?" <- Wrong. Much is singular; work is plural.

"Do you have many works?" <- Still wrong. In agreement, but "work" is **singular**.

When "work" is an abstract concept, it is always singular.

Can there be multiple **works**? Oh, yes! When we describe a book, a screenplay, or a poem, as a **work** by an author (a piece of work), multiple books etc. may be called **works.** In this case, "work" describes **a tangible object**, and therefore is not abstract at all.

2. A Concert That Was Lacking

"We were disappointed by that concert."

"We were disappointed" is a complete sentence, but begs for more detail. In this example, "that concert" is a tangible thing that is part of a prepositional phrase adding detail to "we were disappointed."

"We were disappointed of that concert." <- Wrong. Just does not match.

"We were disappointing that concert." <- Wrong. "Were" is past; "disappointing" is present.

"We were disappointing in that concert." <- Wrong, for the same reason as above, "in" is simply extra.

It's not that you can't say, "We were disappointed **in** someone." But, that is a pattern generally used for a **person**.

Here, we have the pattern, "We were disappointed **by** some**thing**." A concert is a **thing** in English. (Thing is a catch-all word for an "object" and originates from Old English.) So, since a concert is a thing, "We were disappointed **by** that concert" is acceptable.

Note that if a sentence is written, "We were disappointed **by** Robert's performance," the issue is Robert's performance, not Robert, so "by" is still used. "We were disappointed in Robert" suggests disappointment in *the person himself*.

3. Ten Long Years

"Mr. Johnson has lived here <u>for</u> ten years."

The real problem here is realizing that "ten years" is meant as **a specific span of time**. It is not a general span of time; it is ten years, not nine or eleven.

"Mr. Johnson has lived here during ten years." <- Wrong. During the 80's, maybe, but not during ten years.

"Mr. Johnson has lived here since ten years." <- Wrong. Maybe since 1990, or maybe since ten years **ago**, but that is since one moment in time, ten years ago. Not "ten years"

" Mr. Johnson has lived here while ten years." <- Wrong. While studying, maybe. While working at a factory, maybe. Not "while ten years." That makes no sense.

In this case, the issue is simply a process of elimination... once you understand that **ten years** is a specific span of time.

Example: "Mr. Johnson has lived here **for roughly ten years**." This uses "for" in a natural way while adding a little extra detail, and would also be completely correct.

4. The Popularity of Money Orders

"The fact that money orders can usually be easily cashed has made them a popular form of payment."

Here, we can reduce this to two parts easily:

Part A: **The fact that...** Part B: **...has made them**

The fact that ____ has made them ____.

Thus, "the fact that" is used in this construction because it is Part A of a two-part sentence.

"The fact of money orders..." <- Wrong. No relation to the rest of the sentence.

"The fact is that money orders..." <- Wrong. This would be used in a declarative statement, like, "The fact is that money orders are a popular form of payment." This does not fit within our Part A/ Part B structure.

"The fact which is money orders..." <- Wrong. This just makes the sentence a big mess.

In this case, differentiating between "The fact that" and "The fact is that" relies on **identifying the structure of the sentence and adjusting accordingly.**

5. Mozart's Social Graces (Or Lack Thereof)

"Gifted though he was by remarkable natural musical talent, Mozart seemed to have had little knack for the necessities of social life at court."

In this example, we need to be aware that after the comma, **the sentence comes to a natural end.**

"talent, Mozart, who seemed to have had little knack for the necessities of social life at court." <- Wrong, wrong, wrong! This could **only** be right if the sentence did *not* end after "court" and had another comma, followed by yet another phrase. (That would make this a long sentence.)

"talent, it was Mozart that seeming to have had..." <- Wrong!!! This is a complete mess. There is no "that seeming" construction. There is "that seemed to have had," but again, this answer is nothing but a mess.

"talent, Mozart, seeming to have had..." <- Wrong. Again, this **might** be acceptable if the sentence did not end with "little knack for the necessities of social life at court." Given that the sentence **does** end there, any "Mozart, seeming to" construction is a grammatical dead end; it leads nowhere except into a wall.

So, "Mozart seemed to have had..." "...at court." Neat, simple, effective; it is perfectly good English.

6. The Gentle, Deadly Hippopotamus

"Even though they are widely perceived as gentle creatures, hippopotamuses are responsible for more human deaths in Africa than any other animal."

Here, we are given a choice between different ways to start a sentence, all of which are improperly used **except for** the above.

"Despite of they are..." <- Wrong!!! "Despite of" is terrible English. "Despite the fact that..." etc. fits a Part A/ Part B formulation, as an example of **proper** usage.

"In spite of they are..." <- Wrong!!! Wrong for exactly the same reason; it is terrible English. "In spite of the fact that..." works similarly to "Despite the fact that..." In fact, "in spite of" and "despite" are obviously related to each other.

"Nonetheless they are widely..." <- Wrong!!! The proper usage of this would be radically different. Example: "Hippopotamuses are widely perceived as gentle creatures. Nonetheless," <- This *would* be correct.

In this case, the learner must simply use a process of elimination and discard everything but the "Even though they are..." construction.