

TOEFL READING PRACTICE PAPER

QUESTION: 1

A very brief history of time

These days, time is everything. We worry about being late, we rush to get things done or to be somewhere and our daily schedules are often planned down to the minute. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the humble clock. The internationally accepted division of time into regular, predictable units has become an essential aspect of almost all modern societies yet the history of time keeping is almost as old as civilisation itself. Nearly 3000 years ago, societies were using the stars in order to keep track of time to indicate agricultural cycles. Then came the sundial, an Egyptian invention in which the shadow cast by the sun was used to measure the time not of the seasons but of the day.

The first manufactured clock, believed to have come from Persia, was a system which recreated the movements of the stars. All the celestial bodies which had been used to tell the time of year were plotted onto an intricate system in which the planets rotated around each other. Not being dependent on either sunlight or a clear night, this was one of the earliest systems to divide a complete day. Although ingenious for its time, this method suffered from incorrect astrological assumptions of the period, in which it was believed that the Earth was the centre of the universe.

The Greeks were next to develop a more accurate clock using water to power a mechanism that counted out the divisions of the day. The simplest water clock consisted of a large urn that had a small hole located near the base, and a graduated stick attached to a floating base. The hole would be plugged while the urn was being filled with water, and then the stick would be inserted into the urn. The stick would float perpendicular to the surface of the water, and when the hole at the base of the urn was unplugged, the passage of time was measured as the stick descended farther into the urn.

Then, for nearly one thousand years, there was little in the way of progress in time keeping until the European invention of spring-powered clocks in the late fourteenth century. Unreliable and inaccurate, the early models of these clocks were useful in that they gave direction to new advances. In 1656 Christiaan Huygens, a Dutch scientist, made the first pendulum clock, which had an error of less than one minute a day, the first time such accuracy had been achieved. His later refinements reduced his clock's error to less than 10 seconds a day. Some years later, Huygens abandoned the pendulum for a balance wheel and spring assembly which allowed for a whole new generation of time piece – the wristwatch. Still found in some of today's wristwatches, this improvement allowed portable seventeenth-century watches to keep time to 10 minutes a day.

While clock making and musical chime clocks became increasingly popular, it was the invention of the cuckoo clock, designed and made by Franz Anton Ketterer, which really caught people's imagination. The design was not particularly complex. The clock was mounted on a headboard, normally a very elaborate carving reflecting the tastes of the artist. Many of the original cuckoo clocks are still kept today because of the artwork on the headboard. Using the traditional circular pendulum design, the clock could run accurately for up to a week, using a weight to keep the pendulum in motion. Again, the weight was often carved with a design making the whole clock an art form as well as a timepiece. The most innovative feature of these cuckoo clocks, as the name implies, is that a small carved cuckoo came out of the clock to chime the hour. Particularly ingenious was the placement of bellows inside the clock, which were designed to recreate the sound made by the bird, although later models included a lever on the bottom of the clock which could be used to stop this hourly chime.

Refinements to this original pendulum concept meant that by 1721 the pendulum clock remained accurate to within one second per day by compensating for changes in the pendulum's length due to temperature variations. Over the next century, further refinements reduced this to a hundredth of a second a day. In the 1920s, a new era of clock making began which is still popular today – the quartz

clock. When under pressure, quartz generates an electric field of relatively constant frequency, and it was discovered that this electric signal was sufficient to power a clock. Quartz crystal clocks were better because they had fewer moving parts to disturb their regular frequency. Even so, they still rely on a mechanical vibration and this depends on the size of the crystal, and as no two crystals can be exactly alike, there is a degree of difference in every quartz watch.

Comparing performance to price, it is understandable that quartz clocks still dominate the market. Yet they are no longer the most accurate. Scientists had long realised that each chemical element in the universe absorbs and emits electromagnetic radiation at its own specific frequencies. These resonances are inherently stable, thus forming the basis for a reliable system of time measurement, all the more so because no moving parts are needed to record these resonances. Yet the cost of these atomic clocks mean that such timekeeping precision is a long way from becoming common.

QUESTIONS 1 – 15

Questions 1–8

Match a type of clock to a description. Write the correct letter **A – H** in boxes **1 – 8** on your answer sheet.

- A** Relied on basic scientific principles
- B** was the first to replace the pendulum
- C** Is the most common method of timekeeping
- D** Is the most accurate clock
- E** Is the earliest known method of measuring time during the day
- F** Was inaccurate because of misconceptions of the age
- G** Was often highly ornamental
- H** Had only a 10-second margin of error per day

1. Quartz clock

2. Cuckoo clock

3. Sundial

4. Persian clock

5. Wristwatch

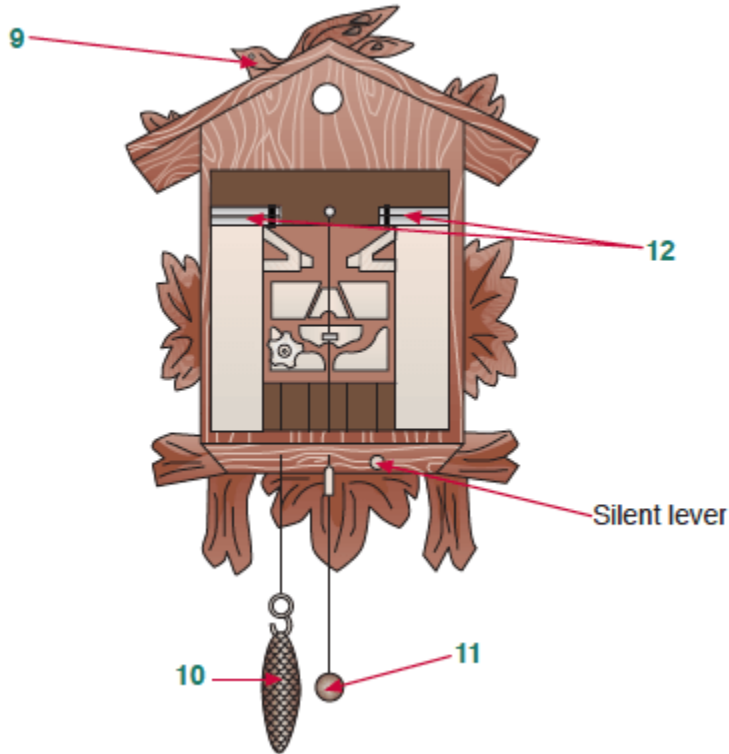
6. Pendulum

7. Atomic clock

8. Water clock

Questions 9–12

Label the diagram below using words from the text. Use **NO MORE THAN ONE WORD**.



9.

10.

11.

12.

Questions 13–15

Complete the following summary using words from the box below. Write the correct letter **A – F** in boxes **13 – 15**.

A: cheaper

B: the least accurate

C: accurate

D: more expensive

E: precision

F: exactly the same

G: chronological

H: mechanical vibration

I: moving parts

Although quartz clocks are (13) , the atomic clock is the most (14) as it does not rely on any (15) .

QUESTION: 2

Holiday Blues

A. The holiday season has always been a cause for celebration around the world. The opportunity to take a break from work, be frivolous, go on holiday, meet family and friends – all good reasons to look forward to the holidays with enthusiasm and anticipation. Or at least that is what we are led to believe.

B. Research carried out in America suggests that these feelings of euphoria may be somewhat misplaced. A study recently carried out by New York University Child Study Centre has concluded that one in three people of varying ages suffer 'holiday blues' to varying extents, from a mild feeling of sadness to severe, sometimes even suicidal, depression. The effects can manifest themselves in many ways, such as an inability to sleep or sleeping too much, overeating or undereating, headaches or drinking too much. The report also concluded that not only are there a number of complex causes that can trigger such depression (psychological and biological), there are an equal number of opinions as to the best solution.

C. According to Dr Frank Pittman, a leading family psychiatrist, the most significant cause for holiday depression actually stems from our concerns about our family. During the holiday season, families meet, often for the first time since the last holiday season, and try to make these reunions 'perfect'. In fact, says Pittman, we count on the holidays to compensate for the rest of the year. He himself comments that 'I wanted to make up to the family for not having been a good enough father and uncle all year'. However, such good intentions are often thwarted by old family arguments, feelings of not being appreciated or being used, all of which result in holiday stress. It seems that the idyllic picture of our family we wish to build in our minds cannot be sustained in reality.

D. Although Pittman holds family to be the source of much of the problem, others point to a more general social context. Gift shopping, for example, does not help reduce tensions – crowded shops, long queues, the pressure of choosing just the right present – all of these things contribute to a feeling of stress and anxiety. On the other end of the scale, there are those without family who experience a sense of extreme loneliness and isolation throughout this period, often spending the long holidays alone. Any feelings of inadequacy they may harbour throughout the year can often become unbearable at a time when friends are unavailable and enjoying an apparently cosy break with their loved ones. In fact, such is the extreme nature of this isolation that many organisations have been established to offer some help and support to those who feel most alone over what should be the 'festive' season.

E. Others, however, argue that more scientific explanations carry an equal weight in explaining holiday blues. Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD as it is more commonly known, is also held responsible for winter depression. A natural reaction to falling levels of sunlight, the pineal gland secretes the hormone melatonin, which has the effect of slowing the body down. When days get shorter, more of the hormone is released causing sufferers to become lethargic and miserable. From being industrious people with plenty of energy, SAD sufferers find themselves increasingly weary and unable to sustain any prolonged activity, a situation which often leads to depression. In addition, for many people this has a major impact not only on their personal life but also on their professional life, as employers often see this lack of productivity in terms of laziness or unwillingness to work. As a result, SAD has been linked directly to the high rate of suicide in a number of Scandinavian countries during winter months, when there are often a few hours of sunlight a day.

F. The good news for SAD sufferers is that there is a cure, and as far as many medical cures go this is relatively simple. As the cause is lack of bright light, the treatment is to be in bright light every day. This can obviously be achieved by staying in a brightly lit climate, explaining why skiing holidays are so popular as they allow people to get plenty of sunlight as well as providing a stimulating activity. Another method is by using light therapy, in which patients sit in front of a lamp which acts in the same way as sunlight. To be more specific, the light should be about as bright as early morning sunshine, and the user should allow the light to reach the eyes for anything up to one hour a day in order to alleviate the symptoms. There are a number of companies currently manufacturing these lights as a health aid and they are even being prescribed by some doctors. In addition, they can be bought at considerably less than the cost of a holiday.

G. Whatever fundamental reason underpins holiday depression, it seems reasonable to argue that the phenomenon does indeed exist. Voluntary support services, offering counseling services to those who need the unbiased and friendly voice of a stranger to help them work through their unhappiness report a significant increased demand for their services during holiday periods such as Christmas and the New Year.

QUESTIONS 16 – 26

Questions 16–17

Choose the correct answer **A – C**

16. Research has shown that

- A** we become more depressed during the holidays
- B** poor diet can lead to depression
- C** simple things can lead us to feel varying degrees of depression.

17. Dr Pittman believes holiday depression comes from

- A** feelings of inadequacy
- B** being alone
- C** over-compensation.

Questions 18–21

Answer the following questions using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the text.

18. What is the chemical that can cause for lethargy in SAD sufferers?

19. Which area is identified as having a problem with the connection between suicide and reduced sunlight?

20. What daily treatment can SAD sufferers benefit from?

21. For whom are the holiday periods the busiest time?

Questions 22–26

Choose the most suitable headings (**I–IX**) for sections **B – F** from the list below. Use each heading once only.

I Family cures

II Addressing the problem

III Impact of personality

IV Psychological factors

V Biological factors

VI Avoiding stress

VII Manifestations of depression

VIII Depression in children

IX Pressures of the holiday period

22. Section B

23. Section C

24. Section D

25. Section E

26. Section F

QUESTION: 3

Weakness of the school system

A. By attempting to fit in as much as possible, the school day is continually being added to. In many ways, this would appear to be a good idea, as our knowledge and understanding of the world is always growing and it would seem logical to incorporate this into schools. The reality, however, has some decided drawbacks. There is a growing feeling amongst many that the modern school curriculum, in an effort to teach as many varied subjects as possible, is actually teaching students less. It seems that by constantly adding to what should be taught in the classroom, the classes are less focused, not offering the deeper learning that institutions perhaps should.

B. With classes sometimes only 30 minutes long, the overwhelming amount of information teachers are required to present often only gives students time to learn facts, not to think in any great detail about what they are being presented with. The problem is that students are not getting the opportunity to absorb what they are being taught as the curriculum expands in order to keep what has already been taught and supplement it with everything new that comes along. The weaknesses of such a system are clear – well informed though such students may be, there is the risk of an increasing number of graduates who have no real creative or intellectual ability. By denying students the opportunity to sit and think their way through problems, or even consider their own opinion, some schools are not always providing a truly educational atmosphere. There are, of course, certain aspects of education which need to be taught by simply inputting the information. Basic mathematics, for example. But there are many other subjects which could be best learned by having an opportunity to think and discuss what is being taught. Literature, writing and the social sciences are good examples of subjects which cannot be considered as 'covered' by a mass of information without the opportunity to discuss, debate or consider meaning or implications. There are also important social skills to be learned during such periods of open discussion, skills which are not addressed by an endless flow of teacher-centred information.

C. Teachers themselves have also voiced concerns about the amount of information they are required to impress upon their students. There is a feeling in many educational establishments that students are no longer being educated, but taught how to pass tests. In a world where academic success is too often measured by examination results, this is a serious concern. If there is too much information to simply be memorised and not enough time to truly assimilate it, what happens to students who fail to meet the grade? By current standards, they are failures, yet they may have great potential in areas not covered by the test and there are many students who, despite clear intellectual ability, simply do not perform well in tests. Again, the problem is one of focus, as education authorities are looking at the outcome of schooling rather than the content presented in the class.

D. It is here that many teachers feel the situation could be addressed at a local level. By giving more discretion to teachers, school courses could be tailored to suit the students rather than tailoring students to meet ever-expanding course requirements. In addition, by running a curriculum that gives options rather than defines an entire course, considerably more freedom would be possible. As it is, progression through most primary and secondary schools is regimented, and there is little room for students to identify and develop their own skills and strengths. If material could be chosen on the basis of its merits rather than simply because it has been put in the curriculum, then what is selected may be taught to a depth that would serve some purpose. There is, of course, a counter-argument, which claims that such open guidelines could lead to vast differences in standards between schools. What one teacher may see as essential for a student's education, another may see as irrelevant, and this will result in students with widely different educational strengths.

E. With such a high-pressure learning environment, there are also a number of social aspects to schooling which need to be considered. The increased student workload cannot be covered in the classroom alone for the simple reason that there is not enough time in the average school week, and much of this extra workload has been pushed into the realm of homework. At its best, homework should be the opportunity to look in greater detail at what has been studied. In other words, to actually think about it and its relevance. The reality, however, is often very different. Concerned parents and overextended students are finding that homework is taking an increasingly large part of a student's evening, cutting into time many feel should be spent as part of a child's social education. Other social pressures have compounded the situation, as many of the areas of educating a young child which should be the responsibility of the parents have ill-advisedly become the school's

responsibility. Drug awareness and health issues, for example, are occupying an increasingly large part of the school day.

F. Many people believe that we should be teaching less, but teaching it better, and it is here that they think a solution can be found. Yet the process of rewriting a curriculum to incorporate only that which is essential but can be well learned would take far longer than most educational authorities have, and would be considered by many to be a 'regressive' step. Changes in the curriculum have largely been motivated by changes in the nature of employment, as job mobility demands that people know something about considerably more areas than were traditionally necessary. A little about a lot allows for the job mobility which has become so common. No matter what the final verdict may be, one thing is for sure – change will be slow, and not always for the best.

QUESTIONS 27 – 40

Questions 27–32

Choose the most suitable headings (**I-X**) for sections **A – F** from the list below. Use each heading once only.

- I.** A question of time
- II.** Lack of teacher training
- III.** Student success
- IV.** The argument for flexibility
- V.** Importance of teaching experience
- VI.** Extra-curricular pressures
- VII.** The benefits of a varied curriculum
- VIII.** Imbalanced focus
- IX.** Over-reliance on examinations
- X.** Quality of quantity?

27. Section A

28. Section B

29. Section C

30. Section D

31. Section E

32. Section F

Questions 33–37

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer?

In boxes **33-37** on your answer sheet write

YES if the statement agrees with the writer
NO if the statement does not agree with the writer
NOT GIVEN if there is no information about this in the passage

33. All classes are only 30 minutes long.

34. No subjects can be comprehensively learned without time to discuss and debate the facts.

35. Tests are a fair measure of ability.

36. Schools are trying to be responsible for too many aspects of a child's education.

37. Future changes in the curriculum will improve the situation.

Questions 38–40

Complete the summary below using words from the box. Write the correct letter **A-I** in the boxes provided.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A. more discretion | B. in detail | C. differences in standards |
| D. the extra workload | E. job mobility | F. shorter classes |
| G. facts | H. a regimented progression | I. a weaker system |

Too much emphasis is placed on learning (38) . The modern school curriculum is largely a response to increased (39) for which graduates are expected to have a much broader general knowledge. One potential solution to this could be to give individual schools (40) regarding what is taught.