How to Decide on the Best Prep Method for YOU?

Why You Are Prepping the Wrong Way (And How to Find Your Ideal Course)

By PrepScholar TOEFL Prep
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Learn more at:
https://www.prepscholar.com/toefl/s/

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Hi there! I’m Yuan, the TOEFL Director at PrepScholar. I wrote this guide to help you find **YOUR ideal prep method**. Let’s get started.

There are all kinds of TOEFL test prep methods out there. Some students spend a lot of money hiring dedicated
1-on-1 TOEFL tutors. Other students attend classes in person. Still others try to study by themselves. With recent advanced technology, online prep and online tutoring options are becoming popular.

Each of these methods has its own pros and cons. Each method is ideal for specific types of students. **You need to pick the right method for you.** If there’s a mismatch, you’ll lose out on TOEFL points and spend much more money than you should.

In each of the following chapters, we’ll be discussing a major test prep method and how to tell whether or not it’s right for you.
Many people think tutoring is the most effective form of test prep. 1-on-1 attention is much better than a boring class: the TOEFL tutor customizes teaching for the student, and the student can ask all the questions he or she wants and get individual feedback. Meet for enough hours and you can ace the TOEFL, right? Below we’ll talk about what tutoring involves, and myths and realities of their effectiveness.

In the best case, tutoring can indeed be extremely effective. The tutor has the chance to sit with the student
1-on-1 and work in close detail, diagnosing errors and suggesting customized strategies. The tutor can help motivate the student and keep the student on track each week. If the tutor can build good rapport, you will enjoy the learning time and feel supported in this often anxiety-provoking situation.

Unfortunately, most practical tutoring cases do not deliver what they promise to deliver.

There are two key issues to be aware of. First is cost: the best TOEFL tutors often cost over $100 per hour. (If you think you’ve skirted the issue by hiring a $20/hour TOEFL tutor, think again. We’ll discuss why below.) Almost all tutors bill on an hourly basis, so, just like lawyers, they’re incentivized to bill as many hours as they can. They’re not rewarded for efficient teaching methods - often they’ll sit quietly by a student’s side watching the student solve problems. This is great for the tutor because it racks up easy, billable time. But it’s bad for you - at 40 hours of tutoring, this means over $4,000 in spending!

Second, TOEFL tutors vary dramatically in quality. While you might find an affordable tutor who speaks English and has taught students before, but often that tutor has had limited success. That $50/hour local English tutor? Even if he or she has a good enough TOEFL score, chances are the person doesn’t have the experience to know the TOEFL inside and out. Teaching any student is hard - you have to
understand the student’s thinking process in detail to find and fix mistakes. Most tutors find this hard to do because they suffer from the curse of knowledge: they don’t understand what it’s like not to know English. As a result, they just go through the same strategies over and over again, even when the strategies don’t work for the student. This is like hitting your head against the wall. All the while, the tutor is racking up tutoring hours, and you might be none the wiser until test day comes along, scores come out, and it’s far too late.

We surveyed trusted grad school counselors and they agree: 75% of tutors are not effective.

“Of tutors I’ve personally witnessed, most just go through the motions. They solve a problem in front of the student and ask whether the student understands. The student nods no matter what, and this repeats over and over again.”

–Ivy League Grad School Counselor

At PrepScholar, we designed our Complete TOEFL Prep to solve both problems of cost and quality. Our comprehensive online TOEFL prep program has thousands of practice problems and gives instant feedback to you so you can learn from your mistakes. But there’s more: our adaptive learning algorithm will customize the ideal, hour-by-hour study schedule. Imagine having the best TOEFL tutor with decades of experience ready to teach you the most efficient, customized strategies to raise your TOEFL score, and give you personalized, 1:1 feedback!
Conclusion: Traditional tutoring is expensive, and if you don’t find the rare tutor who’s truly effective, a waste of money. At PrepScholar, we reduce costs by making every minute count, and we hire only the nation’s best tutors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare &amp; Contrast</th>
<th>PrepScholar Online TOEFL Prep</th>
<th>1-on-1 Tutoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smart Diagnostic to Identify Your Weakness</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Personalized, Hour-by-Hour Lesson Plan</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Likely No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-on-1 Lessons with Individualized Feedback</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Whenever and Wherever You Want</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Likely No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic, online-simulated TOEFL practice questions</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost of TOEFL Prep (assuming 40 hours of lessons)</td>
<td>$398* $9.8 per hour</td>
<td>$4,200** $100 per hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Currently on SALE! Click to find out more!
** $4000 tutoring cost plus $200 for books and study materials.
Test prep classes take place in classrooms where one teacher lectures to many students. They usually follow a pre-determined curriculum along a fixed schedule. Popular examples include many local TOEFL course that vary by city and by country.

The classroom often seems like a good choice because it’s familiar: in school, students sit in classrooms for most of the day, so shouldn’t test prep be taught the same way?

While classes can be okay for some students, by and large prep classes are the worst way to prep for your money.
Research studies show that **classes typically raise TOEFL scores by only 2 points**. Having taken classes ourselves before we found better methods, we can confirm that they’re just not worth the time and financial cost.

It’s true that classes have a few benefits for specific types of students. If you’re impossible to motivate and will spend literally **no time** studying by yourself, classes are a good way to ensure that you get at least some exposure to the TOEFL. Because you’ll be sitting in a classroom for 30 hours, you should theoretically be absorb something from the classes, even if you find it boring and get distracted.

If you’re performing at way below the average level and
just want a broad overview of how the TOEFL works, classes are also **good introductions to the basics**. You’ll get basic exposure to what’s tested on the TOEFL and do some practice questions.

Outside of these limited benefits, however, prep classes fail students in many ways.

First, classrooms offer zero customization to the student. Classes don’t have the ability to adapt to every student - instead, they put every single student through the exact same curriculum. You’ll spend most of the time on material that is either too easy or too hard for you, making little progress and wasting time.

Second, classes don’t leave time for individual instruction - students don’t get a chance to ask questions, and they often feel afraid of being judged by peers for asking a dumb question.

Third, most companies hire teachers with **little teaching experience and in-depth understanding of the TOEFL**. Since all they have to do is walk students through a pre-set curriculum. They may advertise a famous teacher, but 99.99% of their students will never get that teacher.

Finally, classes are **not cheap**: despite all these failures, classes can still exceed $1,000.
Beware of What Classes Promise!

In their promotional materials, classes may promise all sorts of things – customized instruction, guaranteed results, and more. Ask them tough questions to dig beneath the surface:

• Do you customize instruction to the student? How exactly do you accomplish this? What percentage of total time is spent on customized instruction?
• What is your average score improvement per student? Not your best students. Average across all students.

PrepScholar offers a great alternative to classes with our Complete TOEFL Prep. For the same price as a class, you succeed where classes fail.

You get full customization so that you’re always training at the level that pushes your abilities to the limit. You have unlimited access to your practice program: you can prep on your schedule.

Finally, you get access to the expertise of the world’s top TOEFL instructors, who’ve drawn on decades of teaching experience to craft questions that exactly match what the TOEFL will test you on. You also get instant, personalized practice feedback.
Conclusion: Classes fail to teach you in many key ways and are expensive for minimal results. PrepScholar’s Complete Online TOEFL Prep solves the problems of classes at a much lower price.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare &amp; Contrast</th>
<th>PrepScholar Online TOEFL Prep</th>
<th>In-Class TOEFL Prep</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smart Diagnostic to Identify Your Weakness</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Personalized, Hour-by-Hour Lesson Plan</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-on-1 Lessons with Individualized Feedback</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Whenever and Wherever You Want</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic, online-simulated TOEFL practice questions</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Maybe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes Advanced verbal and quant questions</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>Likely No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost of TOEFL Prep (assuming 40-hour lessons)</td>
<td>$398* $9.8 per hour</td>
<td>$1,500** $138 per hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Currently on SALE! Click to find out more!

** $1,500 basic in-class TOEFL Prep; often excludes advanced questions and charges more to learn them in a separate class.
3: Self-Study

> Works for very-motivated, high performing, insightful students. For most other students, it doesn’t work.

Self-study is the cheapest option of all test prep methods. Students who self-study create their own prep programs. They buy their own books and determine what they want to study and when. They might research what other students have done and cobble together resources they find online.

Beware - you have to do this well using best practices, or you won’t make progress. Even worse, you might study incorrectly and get worse on the TOEFL!
To self-study effectively, there are several steps you’ll need to take. We’ve broken it down into three phases below.

First, you need to choose the **right materials for your level**. For books, Kaplan is good for low and medium level scorers, while Barron’s has the detail for high level scorers.

Second, you need to **create a study plan** from today all the way up to your test date.

Figure out when you have time to study, pencil it into your calendar, and **stick to it**. Assign yourself practice tests at the right times - when you’ve had enough time to practice to build your skills.

Third, you need to be able to **figure out your own mistakes**. For Speaking and Writing, you need to know what you are scoring today, and where the human graders are deducting points.

**If you can’t figure this out on your own, you’ll make the same mistakes over and over again.** I highly recommend you first try to understand how you are doing today and where you need to improve, instead of mindlessly watching YouTube videos or doing hours of TPOs.
As you might be able to see, self study works only for a very specific group - **students who are high-performing and very self-motivated**.

These students are determined to put in immense amounts of work to succeed. They are ruthless about their study techniques and need little motivation to work. They are deeply insightful into their own thinking, so they know what mistakes they’re making and why. They also spend a lot of time researching TOEFL prep to design the best program for themselves.

All of this usually means that the student is **already performing at a high level** - this might be a student already scoring at his target score on the TOEFL who wants to score a near perfect TOEFL score in order to stand out from the crowd.

**For students who don’t fit this profile, self-study usually doesn’t work.** Most students aren’t experts at the TOEFL,
which means they don’t understand how to create an effective prep program for themselves.

The average student just buys a book and reads it cover to cover, which doesn’t give them the right type of practice to actually improve.

Some students who do research find methods that aren’t appropriate for them. Furthermore, students often don’t know enough about the TOEFL to be able to diagnose their own mistakes. Finally, most students lack the motivation to study by themselves. They’ll promise to study, but they end up spending their nights on their phones or watching YouTube videos with their minds wondering off.
In our view, this is like a professional soccer player getting injured and deciding to treat his injury himself instead of seeking the advice of his sports doctor. You might get lucky, but you have a much better shot to recover if you follow to the doctor’s orders!
Financial Logic – Investing in Your Future

There is one major benefit of self study – low cost. To students shackled with student loans, even $400 is out of their budget range.

But in our perspective, this is missing the forest for the trees. Research shows that improving your TOEFL score by 5 points doubles your odds of getting into a better graduate program or your career profession. A great TOEFL score can dramatically improve your lifetime income by tens of thousands of dollars, if not more. Getting a higher TOEFL score can get you scholarships for years. It’s simple logic, but most people don’t realize this until it’s too late.
At PrepScholar, we’ve created a Complete online prep program that’s affordable and gives you the best independent study program possible. The program was created by top 1% TOEFL scorers with decades of TOEFL teaching experience.

The Complete program guides you through the exact lessons and practice questions you need to work on to improve the most. For each of our thousands of practice questions, we give you a detailed answer explanation that shows you where you went wrong and how to avoid the mistake in the future. Furthermore, we’ve built in scheduling and motivational features to keep you on track all the way to test day.

“Before PrepScholar, I tried to study TOEFL by myself. I did ten practice tests, and I felt good about myself because I was spending time to study. But my score never went up. This was really frustrating and I wanted to cry because I wasn’t getting anywhere.

When I used PrepScholar, I realized what I was doing wrong. I wasn’t focusing on the skills that I was weak in, and I wasn’t training those skills in the right way. I love PrepScholar because it tells me exactly what I need to work on at all times. This time, I saw my score go up to a 105 which is 5 points more than what I needed to get scholarships from U.S. grad schools.”

- Jingbo, China
**Conclusion:** Self study works for highly motivated, high-performing students who know exactly what they need to do. For everyone else, it’s ineffective. The investment in an affordable program like PrepScholar is worth your future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Self Study</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smart Diagnostic to Identify Your Weakness</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
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<td>Realistic, online-simulated TOEFL practice questions</td>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Score Increase on the TOEFL</td>
<td>7 to 15 points! (top 50% → top 5%!) (full scholarship!) (3x admission chance)</td>
<td>0 to 2 points. (top 50% → top 50%) (no scholarship) (same admission chance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hours Spent Studying</td>
<td>40 hours (2.5x efficiency)</td>
<td>100 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost of TOEFL Prep (assume 40-hour lesson)</td>
<td>$398 $9.8 per hour</td>
<td>$200 $5.00 per hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Currently on SALE! Click to find out more!*
With the spread of the internet, online test prep programs have appeared over the last ten years to teach students nationwide. They usually feature practice questions and lessons and are designed to be used independently by the student, without a human teacher. They’re a great alternative to self study because, for a low cost, you can get the benefit of TOEFL experts and a program that guides your learning.

Even though many such programs cost about the same - a few hundred dollars - they differ dramatically in quality. It’s important to study what these different programs
offer and which one is best for you. We’ve studied and purchased nearly all the online prep programs available to form these opinions.

The **IDEAL** online prep program is comprehensive and covers all aspects of the student’s learning. It guides the student through a **structured study program** so the student knows what to work on at every point in time. It **customizes the learning** to the student’s strengths and weaknesses so the student can make the most progress with every minute spent.

Unfortunately, many online prep programs fail in these respects. We think of **bad online prep programs** as online textbooks that are **no better than paper books**.

Bad online prep programs will just present a collection of lessons and questions to you. They offer **no customized guidance** to you on what to work on, when, and how. They also **don’t customize** to you, so you get the same experience as everyone else, regardless of your unique strengths and weaknesses. These programs still charge you hundreds of dollars with little benefit, because most students don’t know better. Beware of online programs that do this!

Instead, at PrepScholar we’ve created a prep program that succeeds in all the ways we described above. This is based on our founders’ own study methods when they got their
top-notch TOEFL scores that got themselves admitted to graduate programs at Harvard and MIT. They honed over time with the thousands of students they’ve taught.

Our Complete TOEFL program guides you through a structured study plan from beginning to end. You come in and take a diagnostic, and we automatically determine your strengths and weaknesses through advanced statistics. Next, we create a customized study plan for you, assigning you the right lessons and practice questions to work on every week. We track your progress and automatically adjust your schedule so that you’re always working on what’s best for you. We also integrate real practice tests into your program so you get training for the real test.

We also go above and beyond the teaching by caring about making it interesting. We know that it’s easy for you to get distracted, even if you know that TOEFL is important. That’s why we send out progress reports every week to you know you’re on track. We also help you schedule prep...
into your schedule and help you commit to your study times. These features have been proven to increase study time by over 200%, leading to better scores sooner.

Our online program is accessible on any device that has a connection to the internet, so you can study whenever and wherever you want. This means you can fit in TOEFL prep whenever is most convenient for you.
Conclusion: Online prep is an affordable method that can lead to better results than self study and textbooks. Only some online programs are actually effective. At PrepScholar we avoid the mistakes that other programs make and deliver a comprehensive prep program.
AND NOW WHAT?

If you found this guide helpful, please share it with any other people who might benefit.

Got questions? Email us at toefl@prepscholar.com

Are you looking to increase your TOEFL score? Need a 100 on the TOEFL score? Need a 26 on Speaking? Learn more about PrepScholar TOEFL Prep, the only TOEFL course in the world guaranteed to get you your target score. https://www.prepscholar.com/toefl/s/

See a 15+ point increase on your TOEFL. Guaranteed.
See why PrepScholar TOEFL Prep is ideal for you!
PrepScholar’s Complete TOEFL Prep Course comes with a 5-day free trial... but we don’t stop there. We promise you will get a 15-point score increase on the TOEFL. We promise you’ll get instant access and can take the course on your own terms. We promise to assess and identify your weakness and strength across 50 skills tested on the TOEFL via our adaptive Diagnostic Test. We promise you will receive a completely customized course focused on teaching YOU your weakest areas so that you can improve the most on the TOEFL. We promise we’ll work together to keep you on track. You will see a dramatically improved TOEFL score, and you will achieve your target TOEFL score at a faster pace than you would with any other TOEFL program in the world. There’s a good reason that PrepScholar is the #1 Online Test Prep company in the United States. If you follow our Complete TOEFL Prep Course, you will succeed.

If you achieve your target TOEFL score through our customized Complete TOEFL Prep Course, you will have crushed the TOEFL and be be one step closer to getting attending your dream graduate program, one step closer to reaching your dream life. And I want to
offer you more. If you don’t get the 15-point increase we promised, I will shoulder 100% of the responsibility and return 100% of your money back. This is our promise to you, our signed, sealed, and delivered guarantee. You can find all the information about our refund policy on our PrepScholar TOEFL website. Just for the record, we have sold thousands of these courses with the test prep industry’s MOST ambitious guarantee and have had only a handful of refunds!

So **TRY US FOR FREE** for 5 days, no strings attached. And even after the 5-day period, you are STILL guaranteed to get your money back if you don’t get our promised score increase! (See detailed terms and conditions [here](https://www.prepscholar.com/toefl)). You have NOTHING TO LOSE, and EVERYTHING TO GAIN. We shoulder all of the risks, and you capture all the win. We designed our guarantee this way because we are just this confident in our program.

If you learned a lot from this guide, I ask you to do ONE thing NEXT: **Try our Complete TOEFL Prep Course FOR FREE.** Take this next step to change your life.

- Yuan