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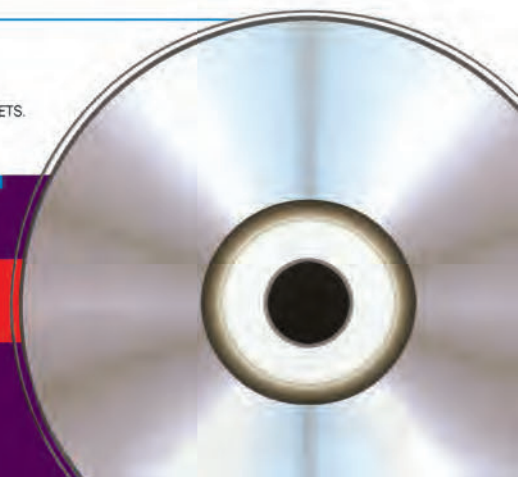
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SKILLS FOR THE TOEFL iBT® TEST

Listening and Speaking

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Guide to Speaking

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Overview

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Main Idea Questions

A main idea question asks you to identify the general gist, or main idea, of a lecture or conversation. There is almost always one main idea question per academic lecture, so it's important that you know the keys to answering them.


Main idea questions may be worded as follows:

- » *What is the main idea of the lecture / conversation?*
- » *What is the professor mainly discussing?*
- » *What was the lecture / conversation mostly about?*
- » *What problem does the speaker have?*
- » *What are the speakers mainly discussing?*

QUICK GUIDE: Main Idea Questions

Definition	Main idea questions ask you about the gist, or general theme, of a lecture / conversation. They are based on the main topic of an <u>entire</u> lecture / conversation, not just detailed parts or sections.
Targeted Skills	In order to correctly answer a main idea question, you must be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen for the most important ideas in the passage. • distinguish between main ideas and minor details. • generalize the information presented in the entire lecture / conversation.
The Correct Answer	The correct answer for a main idea question accurately reflects the most important idea of the lecture / conversation. The correct answer will <u>not</u> include minor details.
Wrong Answer Options	Watch out for answer options that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minor details from the passage. This information may be factual but does not represent the main idea of the entire passage. • information that contradicts the information given in the lecture / conversation. • exact wording from the audio script. The correct answer usually rewords the information found in the audio script. Remember, the testers are interested in checking your comprehension of the ideas, not your ability to recognize phrases that you've heard.

WALK THROUGH: Main Idea Questions

Below is a sample script and sample main idea question for a test item based on part of a lecture in a history class. While you listen, underline words in the script that you think might indicate what the main idea of the lecture is.  CD1, Track 2

SAMPLE SCRIPT ►
for reference only,
not available in test

Professor: OK, everybody . . . so last time, we talked about the Columbian Exchange. As I mentioned earlier, this term is named for Christopher Columbus, the explorer who sailed from Spain to the Americas. His contact with the Americas in . . . uh . . . 1492 marked the beginning of the European colonization of the Americas. Anyway, who can tell us what the Columbian Exchange was?

Student 1: Wasn't it . . . um . . . it was the exchanges between cultures that started taking place after Columbus reached the Americas?

Professor: Yes, that's right. OK . . . well, as you may remember, we also discussed the negative effects of the Columbian Exchange. But let's put those negative effects aside for today. See, there was something we didn't get to talk about in class last time: the advantages of the Columbian Exchange. That's what we'll be addressing today. One advantage that comes to mind is the exchange of animals. See, when Columbus arrived, most of the original inhabitants in the Americas didn't have beasts of burden.

Student 1: Like donkeys and horses?

Professor: Yes. These animals were important because they are able to do, um, hard work, like carry heavy materials. Their introduction made life easier for the peoples of the Americas. OK, and that's just one thing . . . now let's continue with some others.



Glossary:

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colonize: to go and live in and take control of a place

exchange: to give something to each other

Now look at the sample main idea question below. Review the parts of the script that you underlined above to choose the best answer.

TOEFL Listening

Question 1 of 34

1. What is the main idea of the lecture?

- ☐ Some problems and solutions associated with exploration
- ☐ The positive impact of exchanges between cultures
- ☐ How Europe was influenced by the Columbian Exchange
- ☐ The exchange of animals that resulted from the Columbian Exchange

GET IT RIGHT: Tips and Tasks for Answering Correctly

- » **TIP 1: Listen carefully to the beginning of the lecture / conversation.** The main idea of a lecture / conversation may appear anywhere, but it typically appears within the first minute of the audio track.

TASK 1: Underline the introduction of the main idea in the lecture on page 14.

- » **TIP 2: Listen for lecture style markers.** The correct answer for main idea questions usually reflects the style of the lecture, e.g., advantages / disadvantages of something, steps in a process, etc. The table below shows several lecture styles and common key words and expressions you might hear in them.

Lecture Style	Common Key Words and Expressions
Pros / cons	<i>the advantages / disadvantages of . . .</i> <i>the positive / negative influence of . . .</i> <i>ways that X positively / negatively impacted Y</i>
Compare and Contrast	<i>similarities / differences between X and Y</i> <i>a comparison of . . .</i>
Process	<i>the development / formation / steps / ways to . . . [do something]</i> <i>a method for . . . / a process of . . . [doing something]</i>
Cause and Effect	<i>the cause / basis / purpose / source of . . .</i> <i>the effect / result / outcome of . . .</i> <i>the consequences of . . .</i>
Definition	<i>a theory about . . . / problems with . . . / solutions for . . .</i>
Classification	<i>various types of . . . / the kinds of . . . / different forms of . . .</i>

TASK 2: Circle three key words or expressions that indicate the style of the lecture on page 14. What lecture style is it?

- » **TIP 3: Listen for main idea signpost words.** Listen for certain expressions that speakers use to introduce the main idea of a lecture, as noted in the table below.

Main Idea Signposts	
<i>What I want to talk about today is . . .</i>	<i>What we really need to discuss today is . . .</i>
<i>Today, we'll be discussing . . .</i>	<i>The point we'll be addressing today is . . .</i>
<i>Today's lecture will focus on . . .</i>	<i>So today, we'll look into . . .</i>

TASK 3: Double underline one signpost that indicates a main idea in the lecture on page 14.

- » **TIP 4: Watch out for distracter topics!** Distracting information is often included in the beginning of the lecture / conversation. This may include the topics of previous lectures or explanations of terms.

TASK 4: Name one distracter topic mentioned in the first few lines of the lecture on page 14.

- » **TIP 5: Eliminate answer options about minor points.** Correct answers are based on the entire lecture / conversation. Reject answer options that focus on secondary points or minor details.

TASK 5: Draw a line through one answer option on page 14 that focuses on a minor point.

- » **TIP 6: Check the language in the answer options against your notes.** The correct answer is often reworded information. Carefully study any answer option that includes the exact same language before choosing it.

TASK 6: Which answer option on page 14 rewords the introduction of the main idea from the lecture?

Detail Questions

A detail question asks you about factual information presented in a conversation or lecture. There are typically no more than two detail questions per conversation / lecture. You'll find detail questions for both academic lectures and conversations.


Detail questions may be worded as **Wh-** questions like the following:

- » According to the professor, **what** is true about X?
- » **Who** was responsible for . . . ?
- » **Why** was X important?
- » **How** does X affect Y?
- » **Where** did X occur?

QUICK GUIDE: Detail Questions

Definition	Detail questions ask about important facts presented in the lecture that support the main points of the lecture. You will <u>never</u> be asked about a trivial fact, such as the spelling of a name or the exact year that something occurred. You will, however, need to know the definitions of key terms and the order of events.
Targeted Skills	In order to correctly answer a detail question, you must be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the main points of the lecture / conversation and the details used to support them. Often, detail questions relate directly to the main gist of the lecture / conversation. However, in some cases, you will be asked about details of secondary points as well. • understand the relationships between two events or concepts. Is one caused by the other? Did one occur after the other? Is one more important than the other?
The Correct Answer	The correct answer for a detail question contains factual information that was presented in the lecture / conversation. Correct answers typically contain reworded information from the lecture / conversation. For some questions, you may need to choose <u>two</u> correct answers. For questions with five answer options, you may need to choose <u>three</u> correct answers.
Wrong Answer Options	Watch out for answer options that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information that contradicts the information from the lecture / conversation. • the exact wording from the audio script but that don't answer the question. (The correct answer usually rewords the information. Sometimes distracters use exact wording but don't give the correct information.) • information that is <u>not</u> mentioned or supported by the lecture / conversation.

WALK THROUGH: Detail Questions

Below is a sample script and sample detail question for a test item based on part of a lecture in an art class. While you listen, underline words and phrases in the script that you think might be important details.  CD1, Track 3

SAMPLE SCRIPT ►

for reference only,
not available in test

Professor: Another type of art that emerged in the early twentieth century is kinetic art. "Kinetic" means "moving." So it makes sense that kinetic art is an art object with moving parts. Let me give you an example. All of you know what a mobile is, right? It's . . . um . . . a structure that often hangs from ceilings. And the components of the structure are meant to move freely in the air. A lot of people hang them . . . um . . . in nurseries to entertain their babies. Anyway, because the parts of the mobile are meant to move, it's an example of kinetic art. So this is important, now . . . basically, kinetic art is any type of art that depends on movement in order to achieve its full effect, right?

OK, so . . . a lot of people argue that the first piece of kinetic art was created by a French artist named Marcel Duchamp. In 1913, he created a sculpture called *Bicycle Wheel*. And this piece was basically a bicycle wheel mounted on a stool. What you would do is go up to it and spin the wheel. Duchamp described the experience of viewing the spinning wheel as an excellent distraction. In fact, he compared it to viewing a fire in a fireplace. You don't really have to know that much about that, but I found it interesting. So, uh, let's move on . . .



Glossary:

POWERED BY COBUILD

mount: to fix something firmly to something else

distraction: something intended to entertain and amuse

Now look at the sample detail question below. Review the parts of the script that you underlined above to choose the best answer.

TOEFL Listening

Question 1 of 34

VOLUME ? HELP ? OK NEXT

HIDE TIME 00:00:00

1. According to the professor, why are mobiles considered kinetic art?

- ☐ They can be moved from place to place.
- ☐ They serve as distractions to observers.
- ☐ "Kinetic" means "moving."
- ☐ They contain components that move.

GET IT RIGHT: Tips and Tasks for Answering Correctly

- » **TIP 1: Listen for repeated information.** Many detail questions are based on information that the professor repeats several times. Pay attention to any repeated ideas or definitions, and make sure to write them down in your notes.

TASK 1: Underline one word or idea that is repeated more than once in the lecture on page 17. What word or idea is the most often repeated?

- » **TIP 2: Listen for expressions that introduce details.** Certain expressions are used by speakers to introduce details. Some of these expressions are listed in the table below.

Expressions for Important Details	Expressions for Minor Details
<i>This is important . . .</i>	<i>Now, this isn't so important, but it's interesting.</i>
<i>You might want to write this down.</i>	<i>You won't be tested on this, but you might be interested to know that . . .</i>
<i>It's really important that you understand . . .</i>	<i>You don't really need to know about that.</i>

TASK 2: Circle three key words or expressions that introduce important or minor details in the lecture on page 17.

- » **TIP 3: Watch out for exact word matches!** Correct answers for detail questions usually contain reworded information from the lecture / conversation. Be cautious about answer options that contain the exact wording from the lecture / conversation—they may not include the information that the question is asking for.

TASK 3: Which answer option on page 17 contains exact wording from the lecture but doesn't answer the question?

- » **TIP 4: Make guesses related to the main idea if you're unsure.** Detail questions are often asked about supporting details for main points. If you are stuck, choosing the answer option that coincides with the main idea of the lecture / conversation might be a good guessing strategy. (See page 13 for more about finding main ideas.)

TASK 4: Which answer option on page 17 is most closely related to the main topic of the lecture, kinetic art?

TEST TIP!

- Be sure to take as
- many notes as possible
- while listening during
- the test. You won't
- see the questions until
- after you've heard the
- conversation / lecture,
- so you need to get as
- much information as
- you can for reference!

PROGRESSIVE PRACTICE: Get Ready

- A** Listen to part of a discussion in a music class and check (✓) the points written in the notes below as you hear them. 🎧 CD1, Track 4

- History of the piano
 - ☐ Invented in early 1700s by B. Cristofori in Italy
 - ☐ At 1st, only royals had \$ to buy them
 - ☐ 1800s > more common in wealthy and ↑ mid-class households b/c wider dist. of wealth throughout Eu.
- What did piano rep. in Eu. cultures?
 - ☐ Status symbols: \$ and education: parents paid for lessons
 - ☐ In-home entertainment: no radios, TV, comp., so families made music tog.; pop. of 4-hand piano



- B** Review the questions. What kinds of questions are they? Then, answer the questions. Note the correct answers and read why the answer options are correct or incorrect.

1. What aspect of pianos does the professor mainly discuss in the lecture?
- ☐ The role of the piano in European society
 - ☐ The importance of the piano in Western music
 - ☐ Differences between early and modern pianos
 - ☐ Reasons for the high cost of early pianos



ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

Question Type: Main Idea

- ✓ At the beginning of the lecture, the professor mentions that the assigned reading was about the history of the piano. The main points of the lecture show what the piano represented in European society.
- ✗ The lecture focuses on events in the West (throughout Europe) but does not deal specifically with Western music.
- ✗ He says that early pianos were expensive but does not make comparisons between early pianos and modern pianos.
- ✗ The high cost of early pianos is mentioned briefly in the lecture, but it is not the main idea of the lecture.

2. According to the professor, what is true about early pianos?

- ☐ They did not have keyboards.
- ☐ They were extremely expensive.
- ☐ They replaced the harpsichord.
- ☐ They were meant to be played by royalty.

ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

Question Type: Detail

- ✗ The professor says that both harpsichords and pianos had keyboards.
- ✓ The professor states that only royalty could afford pianos because they were very expensive.
- ✗ While it's true that the harpsichord is less common than the piano, there is no information given to support this.
- ✗ In the lecture, the professor says that only royalty could afford pianos when they were first invented. This does not mean that the piano was invented specifically for royalty.

3. According to the professor, what change led to the increased popularity of pianos in the 1800s?

- ☐ The price of the materials used to make pianos decreased.
- ☐ People stopped regarding pianos as luxury items.
- ☐ Individuals in Europe were becoming wealthier.
- ☐ Royals encouraged people to learn how to play the piano.

ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

Question Type: Detail

- ✗ The professor does not indicate that the price of pianos or the materials used to make them decreased.
- ✗ In the lecture, the professor states that pianos were considered luxury items in the 1800s.
- ✓ He explains that wealth was distributed more during the 1800s, meaning that more people were able to become wealthy.
- ✗ The professor does not mention the royals' attitudes toward the piano in the lecture.

4. According to the professor, what role did pianos play in European society?

Choose 2 answers.

- ☐ They indicated a family's level of wealth.
- ☐ They led to music education in schools.
- ☐ They provided a recreational activity for families.
- ☐ They helped talented individuals gain wealth.

ANSWER ANALYSIS ► NOTE This is a two-answer detail question. Be sure to choose two answers for this question type.

Question Type: Detail

- ✓ The student says that the piano was a status symbol, and the professor agrees. He says that having a piano showed a family's wealth and access to education.
- ✗ The professor says that parents paid instructors to teach children within the home. There is no mention of music education in schools in the lecture.
- ✓ The professor says that music was a source of entertainment for families. They played the piano for fun.
- ✗ The professor says that pianos were a symbol of a family's wealth. He does not mention that playing the piano helped individuals become rich.

5. What was an advantage of four-hands piano?


- ☐ It allowed family members to play the piano together.
- ☐ It let piano players perform complicated pieces.
- ☐ It could be played by musicians with different skill levels.
- ☐ It made playing the piano more affordable for families.

ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

Question Type: Detail

- ✓ The student states that four-hands piano involves two people playing the piano at once. The professor says that "the piano has the power to bring families together and provide in-home entertainment."
- ✗ Neither the professor nor the students directly say that four-hands piano allows people to play more complicated pieces.
- ✗ The skill of the players when playing four-hands piano is not mentioned in the discussion.
- ✗ There is no information about the added affordability of four-hands piano in the discussion.

PROGRESSIVE PRACTICE: Get Set

A Listen to part of a discussion in a history class. Then, complete the notes below.  CD1, Track 5

- ① _____ BC - bronze in E. and M.E. for knives, cookware, swords (Bronze Age)
② _____ BC - Iron Age

Q: Why shift?

A: ③ _____ devlp'd tech to make

④ _____ better than ⑤ _____
(stronger, durable, hold edge)

Techniques

1. Iron extraction (smelting) improved
iron ore = iron + other stuff
melting pt iron ore = 1500°C > invented hotter furnaces that could ⑥ _____ iron
2. Pure iron is ⑦ _____. Dissolve carbon into iron to create steel (harder than iron): carburization



B Answer the questions. Then, write the letter of each answer option next to the reason why it is correct or incorrect in the *Answer Analysis* box.

1. What is the discussion mainly about?

- ☐ A comparison of metal use in Europe and the Middle East [A]
- ☐ The differences between bronze and iron [B]
- ☐ The social history of Europe during the Bronze Age [C]
- ☐ Reasons for the transition into the Iron Age [D]

ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

- _____ ✓ The professor says she wants to focus on why the shift from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age occurred. The rest of the discussion is centered on the technologies that enabled the shift.
- _____ ✗ While the professor mentions aspects of European history, she does not refer to the social history of Europe during the Bronze Age.
- _____ ✗ The professor and students talk about ways that bronze and iron are different, but this is a minor point and is not the main idea of the discussion.
- _____ ✗ In the discussion, the students mention metal use in Europe and the Middle East but do not make comparisons between the two regions.

2. According to the professor, what is true about the Iron Age?

- ☐ It occurred in Europe before reaching the Middle East. [A]
- ☐ The exact date that it began is unclear. [B]
- ☐ People started using bronze only for decorative items during this time. [C]
- ☐ Many regions used iron extensively before it started. [D]

ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

- _____ ✗ A student describes some uses for bronze at the beginning of the discussion, but there is no further mention of its uses in the rest of the discussion.
- _____ ✓ After a student gives an approximate date for the start of the Iron Age, the professor says that there's not an exact date for when the Iron Age started.
- _____ ✗ The professor says that in the Iron Age, iron was the most commonly used metal in Europe and the Middle East.
- _____ ✗ There is no information in the discussion to support the claim that any region used iron before the Iron Age.

3. According to the professor, why was bronze preferred to early types of iron?

Choose 2 answers.

- ☐ Tools made from bronze were more durable. [A]
- ☐ Bronze weapons held their edges better. [B]
- ☐ Bronze did not rust over time. [C]
- ☐ Bronze costs more to mine than iron ore. [D]

ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

- _____ ✗ During the discussion, nobody mentions the cost of mining bronze or iron ore.
- _____ ✗ There is no mention in the discussion of whether or not bronze rusts.
- _____ ✓ The professor explains that swords made of bronze held a sharp edge longer than early types of iron.
- _____ ✓ She states that bronze lasted a long time because it was harder than early forms of iron. Thus, it was more durable.

4. According to the professor, what is true about most naturally occurring metals?

- ☐ They are generally difficult to find. [A]
- ☐ Separating metals from ores requires heat. [B]
- ☐ They are combined with other materials. [C]
- ☐ They have melting points over 1500 degrees Celsius. [D]

ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

- _____ ✗ The professor does not discuss separating ores or the melting point for metals other than iron.
- _____ ✓ The professor says that the majority of metals are typically mixed with other substances.
- _____ ✗ She does not mention that naturally occurring metals are rare or hard to find.
- _____ ✗ The melting point of iron—not most naturally occurring metals—is said to be over 1500 degrees Celsius.

5. According to the professor, what limitation did early ironworkers face?

- ☐ Their furnaces did not burn hot enough. [A]
- ☐ They didn't have the tools to mine iron ore. [B]
- ☐ They couldn't measure the melting points for different metals. [C]
- ☐ They lacked the proper techniques for creating iron ore. [D]

ANSWER ANALYSIS ►

- _____ ✗ She does not mention the tools needed in order to mine iron ore.
- _____ ✓ The professor states that the furnaces of early metalworkers could not reach the melting point of iron. When hotter-burning furnaces were invented, ironworkers were able to smelt iron more easily.
- _____ ✗ The professor does not say that measuring melting points for metals presented a challenge for early ironworkers.
- _____ ✗ The professor describes iron ore as a substance that occurs naturally. Ironworkers wouldn't need to create iron ore.

PROGRESSIVE PRACTICE: Go for the TOEFL Test

Listen to part of a lecture in a photography class and take notes. 🎧 CD1, Track 6

NOTES:



TOEFL TEST PRACTICE

Now answer the questions. You may use your notes.

1. What is the main topic of the lecture? 🎧 CD1, Track 7

- ☐ The origins of the camera obscura
- ☐ Different types of early cameras
- ☐ The life of Joseph Nicéphore Niépce
- ☐ The history of early photography

2. According to the professor, what is true about photography? 🎧 CD1, Track 8

- ☐ It was developed to assist painters and sculptors.
- ☐ It is a relatively recent art form.
- ☐ It was not considered an art form in the past.
- ☐ Its invention occurred as a result of an accident.

3. What role did the study of optics play in the development of modern photography? 🎧 CD1, Track 9

- ☐ It led to the invention of the camera obscura.
- ☐ It gave insight about the power of light.
- ☐ It provided a scientific background for artists.
- ☐ It helped develop photographic methods.

4. According to the professor, how was the camera obscura improved? 🎧 CD1, Track 10

Choose 2 answers.

- ☐ It became more portable.
- ☐ It was able to produce color reproductions of scenes.
- ☐ It was modified to produce clearer images.
- ☐ Its walls were altered to prevent the entry of light.

5. According to the professor, what was the significance of Johann Schulze's discovery? 🎧 CD1, Track 11

- ☐ It allowed the projection of images outside of a camera obscura.
- ☐ It inspired other scientists to combine optics and chemistry.
- ☐ It enabled photographers to capture images with light-sensitive material.
- ☐ It demonstrated the ability to create light-sensitive images.

6. What was the problem with Wedgwood's photographs?

🎧 CD1, Track 12

- ☐ They were destroyed when exposed to light.
- ☐ They took a long time to produce.
- ☐ They required expensive materials.
- ☐ They could not be reproduced.

Collins

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