



# TOEFL Speaking Templates

## Interview Task

By the experts at [Magoosh](#)

The TOEFL Interview task gives you **45 seconds** to answer each question, with **no preparation time**. The moment the interviewer finishes speaking, you have to start. This guide gives you a **four-slot response skeleton** that works for every question in the set, plus **phrase menus for each slot**: ready-to-use language that frees up your thinking for what you actually want to say. These phrases give you scaffolding, not a script. The rubric rewards original language and real elaboration, so use them as a starting point, not a fill-in-the-blank formula.

Preparing for the Writing section too? We've got companion sets of templates for [Write an Email](#) and [Academic Discussion](#).

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## How Templates Fit Into Your Speaking Strategy

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If you've watched our Interview lessons, you already know the core strategy: pick the easy answer, organize a 45-second response into Commit → Detail → Elaborate → Finish, fill it with specific examples and details, keep a conversational pace, and use transitions to connect your ideas. Templates don't replace any of that; they layer on top of it.

**The lessons teach you what to do:** pick the easiest answer to explain, organize your 45 seconds into the four-part shape, invent realistic examples, weave in transitions, and sound conversational rather than formal.

**Templates give you language for how to start each part:** preset phrases for committing to an answer, launching into a reason, providing another example, wrapping up, and smoothly connecting your sentences along the way.

Both matter, but the substance always comes first. A response full of polished phrases that doesn't actually answer the question won't score well. A response with real ideas but no clear structure will also lose points.

The 45-second clock makes these templates quite valuable. You don't have time to plan, so the seconds you'd otherwise spend deciding how to begin are seconds you can't get back. With a small set of phrases ready to go, you can start talking immediately and focus your mental energy on what to say, not how to say it.

### What templates can do

- **Get you started fast.** No staring at the screen wondering how to begin. The first phrase is already in your head.
- **Make you sound natural.** Phrases like "In my opinion..." or "To add to that..." are how fluent English speakers actually talk. They read as conversational, not memorized.
- **Build in variety.** With multiple phrase options per slot, you have many choices at your disposal to avoid repetition and sound fresh.
- **Smooth out your pace.** Templates reduce hesitation between ideas. That keeps your delivery steady and helps you avoid the long pauses and filler words that hurt your pacing.

### What templates cannot do

- **Supply your ideas.** The reasons, examples, and details that make your answer convincing have to come from you.
- **Replace practice.** You can know every phrase in this guide and still freeze on test day if you haven't practiced answering real questions out loud.
- **Give you clear pronunciation or natural intonation.** The other big component of your Speaking score is how clearly and easily you're understood. Templates help you organize your ideas, but improving your speech quality requires specific kinds of practice, like shadowing.

The goal is to use these menus as a launch pad, not a permanent crutch. As you practice, you'll naturally swap in your own phrasing. That's when the templates have done their job.

# The Universal Response Skeleton

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Every Interview answer can be built from the same four slots. The slots are simple enough to remember as **C-D-E-F**.

## Slot 1: Commit (~8 seconds)

State your position clearly. Don't hedge, don't list options, don't repeat the question: just commit to your opinion. This is the most important slot because it sets up everything that follows. If your listener doesn't know your stance on the issue to begin with, the rest of your answer feels harder to follow.

## Slot 2: Detail (~15 seconds)

Give your main reason or first supporting detail. Why do you feel that way? What's the reason behind your answer? This is where you start elaborating, and elaboration is the rubric's top criterion for content.

## Slot 3: Elaborate (~15 seconds)

Add a second detail, an example, or extend the first reason with more depth. A specific example here is usually stronger than an abstract reason.

## Slot 4: Finish (~7 seconds, optional)

Wrap up with a brief closing line, or keep elaborating until the timer runs out. There's no rubric requirement to "conclude" your answer. If you still have something interesting to finish saying with 6 or 7 seconds left on the clock, keep talking. If not, use this slot when you're running low on ideas or want a clean way to close.

**Pro tip:** Don't get attached to the time allocations. They're rough guides, not stopwatches. If your Commit takes three seconds and your example deserves twenty-five, run with it. What matters is that you keep moving from slot to slot instead of getting stuck on one.

## MENU 1 Committing to Your Answer

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Your first sentence should make your position clear right away. When your stance is clear and understood from the beginning, it's then much easier to support it with appropriate details. So, pick a phrase, commit to your answer, and move on to elaborating on why that is your opinion.

### Core

| PHRASE                           | BEST FOR                              |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Honestly, I'd say...             | Universal — direct and natural        |
| For me, it'd be...               | Quick personal answer for preferences |
| In my opinion, I believe that... | Universal — neutral and clean         |
| I'd go with...                   | Preferences and choices               |

### Variety

| PHRASE                          | BEST FOR                                     |
|---------------------------------|--|
| If I had to choose, I'd pick... | Either-or preferences                        |
| Well, the way I see it...       | Opinions and debates                         |
| I tend to think that...         | Hedged opinion — sounds thoughtful           |
| I'd probably lean toward...     | When you're not 100% sure but need to commit |

**Pro tip:** For either-or questions (“Do you prefer X or Y?”) and debate questions (“Some people say X, while others say Y”), **commit to one side**. The rubric rewards clarity and elaboration, not balance. A focused answer for one side will score higher than a “well, both have their points” response that runs out of time or doesn't clearly explain a more nuanced position. You can briefly acknowledge the other side (“I can see why people like Y, but...”), but the safer route is to pick a side and stick with it.

## MENU 2 Giving Your First Detail

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Once you've committed, your next sentences explain why you hold your position. This is where your elaboration starts, and it is what the rubric rewards most for content. You want to provide details and examples that support your opinion.

### Core

| PHRASE                        | BEST FOR                              |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| The biggest reason is that... | Universal — direct and clear          |
| Part of it is that...         | Lower-stakes phrasing — sounds modest |
| What I like about it is...    | For preferences and positive opinions |
| It mostly comes down to...    | When narrowing to one key factor      |

### Variety

| PHRASE                               | BEST FOR                         |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A lot of it has to do with...        | Slightly more thoughtful framing |
| One thing that stands out is...      | Highlighting a specific factor   |
| I think it's mainly because...       | Cause-and-effect framing         |
| What makes a difference for me is... | Personal-stakes framing          |

**Pro tip:** Resist the urge to give **two** reasons in this slot. Save the second one for Slot 3. Trying to pack two reasons into one sentence usually makes both of them shallow. One reason, fully explained, beats two half-explained reasons every time.

## MENU 3 Elaborating with a Second Detail

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This is a continuation of supporting your stance, just with another reason, detail, or example. Any of those work, but in particular, specific examples almost always feel more natural and give you more to work with. Furthermore, if you can invent a quick, realistic detail (a friend, a recent moment, something you noticed), use it.

### Core

| PHRASE                         | BEST FOR                             |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| To add to that...              | Adds a second reason — universal     |
| On top of that...              | Adds a second reason — universal     |
| Another thing is...            | Universal — natural transition       |
| For example...                 | Introduces a concrete example        |
| Just to give you an example... | Conversational lead-in to an example |

### Variety

| PHRASE                      | BEST FOR                              |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| I've noticed that...        | Personal observation — sounds natural |
| Beyond that...              | Adds depth to the same reason         |
| Just last week, actually... | Recent personal example               |
| A good example would be...  | Clean lead-in to a concrete case      |

**Pro tip:** For personal-experience questions, this slot is where invented examples shine. You're not lying; you're filling in plausible details to make your answer specific. "Just last week, I..." or "This one time, I remember that my friend..." instantly makes your answer feel more realistic and gives you an opportunity to paint a detailed scene.

## MENU 4 Finishing (Optional)

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Slot 4 is a tool, not a requirement. Use it if you're running out of material with 6 or 7 seconds left on the clock, or if you want a clean exit before the timer cuts you off. If you still have something interesting to say that supports your opinion, be sure to finish that instead. The rubric doesn't reward "conclusions" directly; it rewards elaboration. A wrap-up only helps when it's a graceful close, not a filler line.

### Core

| PHRASE                               | BEST FOR                            |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| So that's my take.                   | Universal — quick and simple        |
| That's basically my view.            | Universal — natural                 |
| I think that pretty much sums it up. | Casual close                        |
| So overall, that's how I feel.       | Universal — slightly stronger close |

### Variety

| PHRASE                                | BEST FOR                            |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Anyway, those are the main reasons.   | Caps the elaboration cleanly        |
| I guess that's the short version.     | Light and conversational            |
| At least, that's how it works for me. | Personal-experience close           |
| In the end, that's what I like best.  | Resolves a comparison or preference |

**Pro tip:** You can also restate your main position: "And that's why I believe X is best." Again, if you can finish up your 2nd detail or finalize your elaboration, that's what you want to do. But this is a natural way to close your response if you just have a few seconds remaining.

## MENU 5 Transitions and Flow

Transitions are the small connectors that smooth the flow within and between your slots. They don't do the structural work the slot phrases handle, but they keep the small moves between sentences sounding connected and natural. You don't need every category below in every response. Pick a few that fit and weave them in lightly.

### Giving your opinion

Signals that what follows is your view. These often pair with or strengthen Slot 1 (Commit).

| PHRASE                            | EXAMPLE  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>If you ask me, ...</b>         | <i>If you ask me</i> , the relaxing vacation wins out every time.                      |
| <b>From my point of view, ...</b> | <i>From my point of view</i> , sharing meals with family is what brings people closer. |
| <b>Personally, ...</b>            | <i>Personally</i> , I'd rather spend time outdoors than at a museum.                   |

### Listing

Useful when you want to enumerate reasons or details inside a slot.

| PHRASE                            | EXAMPLE   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>First of all, ...</b>          | <i>First of all</i> , the cost is lower than people think.          |
| <b>For one thing, ...</b>         | <i>For one thing</i> , I get more done when I work somewhere quiet. |
| <b>Second, ... / Another, ...</b> | <i>Second</i> , the hours are more flexible than at a typical job.  |

### Adding a point (continuation)

Stacks another reason or detail onto the last one without numbering it. It's smoother than Listing when you're piling up support inside Detail or Elaborate.

| PHRASE                  | EXAMPLE  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Furthermore, ...</b> | <i>Furthermore</i> , working somewhere quiet saves me from constant interruptions. |
| <b>Plus, ...</b>        | <i>Plus</i> , I save the time and money I'd spend commuting.                       |
| <b>What's more, ...</b> | <i>What's more</i> , I get to set my own schedule.                                 |

### Explaining causes and effects

Links a result to its reason, often between sentences inside Detail or Elaborate.

| PHRASE                      | EXAMPLE   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>That's because ...</b>   | <i>That's because</i> I grew up in a small town where everyone knew each other. |
| <b>As a result, ...</b>     | <i>As a result</i> , I tend to prefer routines that don't change too much.      |
| <b>Because of that, ...</b> | <i>Because of that</i> , I learned to plan ahead for travel.                    |

## Contrasting

Sets up a difference, often when you're acknowledging the other side.

| PHRASE                 | EXAMPLE   |
|------------------------|---|
| Unlike ...,            | <i>Unlike</i> my friends, I prefer reading paper books over digital ones. |
| On the other hand, ... | <i>On the other hand</i> , eating out is more relaxing than cooking.      |
| In contrast, ...       | <i>In contrast</i> , my older sister was always more outgoing than I was. |

## Showing similarity

Draws a parallel by pointing out that something else works the same way.

| PHRASE               | EXAMPLE  |
|----------------------|--|
| Likewise, ...        | <i>Likewise</i> , my brother would pick a quiet night in over a big party.               |
| Similarly, ...       | <i>Similarly</i> , I'd choose a small class over a huge lecture any day.                 |
| In the same way, ... | <i>In the same way</i> , I trust advice from people who've actually tried it themselves. |

## Conceding and dismissing

Conceding briefly acknowledges the other side; dismissing brushes a counterpoint aside.

| PHRASE          | EXAMPLE  |
|-----------------|--|
| Granted, ...    | <i>Granted</i> , traveling alone has its downsides.                  |
| That said, ...  | <i>That said</i> , working from home isn't for everyone.             |
| Regardless, ... | <i>Regardless</i> , I'd still rather drive than fly for short trips. |

## Giving examples

Introduces specific evidence and pairs naturally with Slot 3 (Elaborate).

| PHRASE                  | EXAMPLE   |
|-------------------------|---|
| For instance, ...       | <i>For instance</i> , last summer I spent two weeks hiking in the mountains.                              |
| Take ... , for example. | <i>Take</i> my grandmother, <i>for example</i> . She lives in a tiny apartment but seems perfectly happy. |
| A case in point is ...  | <i>A case in point is</i> the time I tried learning a new language using just an app.                     |

## Clarifying and emphasizing

Clarifying restates a point in different words; emphasizing makes a point feel stronger.

| PHRASE              | EXAMPLE  |
|---------------------|--|
| What I mean is ...  | <i>What I mean is</i> that I don't really enjoy crowds.        |
| In other words, ... | <i>In other words</i> , time alone is what helps me reset.     |
| In fact, ...        | <i>In fact</i> , the quiet morning is the best part of my day. |

## Summarizing and wrapping up

Closes out a thought or the whole response, often paired with Slot 4 (Finish).

| PHRASE          | EXAMPLE  |
|-----------------|--|
| Overall, ...    | <i>Overall</i> , the simpler choice usually works better for me.                       |
| In short, ...   | <i>In short</i> , I'd rather have one good friend than a large group of acquaintances. |
| All in all, ... | <i>All in all</i> , that's the kind of weekend I look forward to.                      |

**Pro tip:** Don't try to cram a transition into every sentence. Two or three across a 45-second response is usually plenty. The most useful spots are between sentences inside Detail and Elaborate, where the slot phrases have already done their job and you need to keep the next sentence sounding connected to the last one.

## Putting It All Together: A Worked Example

Let's see all five menus working together in a single response. Imagine you've been in an interview asking about your experiences with taking photographs. The first two questions have been about your preferences for taking photos. Here's the third question:

*Some people say it is better to take photos quickly and naturally, while others say it is better to plan each photo carefully. Which view do you agree with more? And why?*

Here's what a 45-second response might sound like:

*Honestly, I'd say* I lean more toward taking photos quickly and naturally.

Menu 1: Commit

*The biggest reason is that* some of the best moments only happen for a few seconds, so if you spend too long planning, that moment is already gone. *For instance*, my nephew won't smile if he knows you're taking a picture, but you can randomly catch him grinning.

Menu 2: Detail and a Menu 5 transition

*On top of that*, the photos I love most are never the ones I set up carefully. They're the ones I took without thinking, like my friends suddenly goofing around in the car. Planned photos, *on the other hand*, feel a bit stiff and fake.

Menu 3: Elaborate and a Menu 5 transition

*So that's my take*: quick and natural usually wins.

Menu 4: Finish

A few things to notice:

- Every *italic phrase* came from the menus in this guide. The specific details and examples—such as the nephew not smiling and the friends in the car—are all invented. That's the content part, and it's what makes the answer feel real and specific.
- **Each slot has a clear job.** Commit makes the stance obvious. Detail explains the main reason. Elaborate adds a concrete contrast (loved photos are unplanned). Finish closes with a brief restate.
- **The total length is about 110 words.** This is a good target to aim for as it should roughly take the full 45 seconds, at a conversational pace.
- **The tone is conversational throughout.** “Kind of stiff,” “quick and natural usually wins”: these are spoken-English phrasings, not formal essay language. That matches what the Interview task is asking for.

This is what it looks like when templates and content work together. The phrases handle the structural heavy lifting so your brain can focus on the actual ideas.

**Try it yourself:** Magoosh's [free TOEFL practice test](#) includes the Speaking section with AI-powered feedback, so you can practice with a real prompt and see how your response scores.

## How to Practice with These Templates

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Reading phrase menus is one thing. Using them under time pressure is another. The workflow below moves you from “looking up phrases” to “speaking naturally with those phrases” through practice.

**Step 1: Pick three favorites per slot.** Don’t try to memorize all 30+ phrases in this guide. That’s a recipe for hesitation on test day. Read through each menu and circle the three phrases per slot that feel most natural in your voice. Twelve total. That’s your starter kit.

**Step 2: Practice with the menu open.** For your first few attempts, keep this guide visible. Pull up a practice Interview question, hit record, and answer with the menu beside you. Don’t grab the first phrase you see; scan your three favorites for each slot and pick the one that fits this specific question and answer.

**Step 3: Choose variety across a full set.** Pull up a full four-question set and answer all four questions in a row. Use a different Slot 1 opener for each. Same for Slot 2 and Slot 4. This is the muscle you actually need on test day: not knowing one good opener, but cycling through several so that you’re comfortable with choosing what works best in a given situation.

**Step 4: Practice without looking.** Close the guide. Answer the same Interview set again. You’ll find that the phrases you used in Step 3 come back automatically, and some of your own variations will show up too. That’s exactly what should happen.

**Pro tip:** Record yourself every time. Listening back is uncomfortable, but it’s the single fastest way to catch the habits that hurt your score: long pauses, repeated phrases, rushed pace, unclear pronunciation. Most students who plateau are stuck because they’re not hearing what their listener hears.

## What Templates Cannot Do (And What to Do Instead)

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### Templates can't supply your ideas

A phrase like “Just last week, I...” is a great launch pad, but what comes next has to be plausible, specific, and on topic. That’s the skill of inventing realistic examples, and it’s covered in the [Giving Examples](#) lesson. Phrases without ideas behind them sound canned. Phrases plus specific, plausible details sound natural.

### Templates can't fix your pace or pronunciation

Even if every phrase in this guide is in your head, you still need to deliver them at a conversational pace, with clear pronunciation and natural intonation. The rubric weights delivery as much as content. The [Organization & Timing](#) and [Conversational Tone](#) lessons cover this.

### Over-reliance can make your answers sound too rehearsed

If you use “Honestly, I’d say...” every single time, for all your responses, you run the risk of sounding robotic and too rehearsed. Use this guide to learn the patterns of how openers, transitions, and closers work in English, then push yourself to vary your phrasing. By the time you’re test-ready, you’ll have a personal repertoire that’s larger than what’s in this guide, and you’ll likely sound much more natural.

### A preset phrase might not match the question

These menus are calibrated for the kinds of questions the Interview task actually asks. But every question is slightly different, and a phrase that works perfectly for one question might feel forced in another. Listen to the question carefully and decide on a phrase that fits, not just the first one on your list.

### What to do instead of memorizing

- **Practice with real questions.** Phrase menus only help if you’ve used them in actual responses. Aim for at least twenty timed practice answers before test day.
- **Build your own phrase list.** As you practice, jot down any phrasing you used that felt natural. Over time, that personal list replaces this guide, which is the ultimate goal.
- **Focus on ideas first.** On test day, your mental energy is better spent on what to say than on which phrase to use. If you’ve practiced enough, the structural language takes care of itself.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### Should I memorize all of these phrases?

No. Pick three favorites per slot and practice with those. Twelve phrases total. A small, flexible toolkit you can actually use beats a long list you can't remember under time pressure.

### Do I have to use a different phrase for each question?

You don't have to, but you should aim for variety across the four-question set. Rotate phrases the same way you'd rotate vocabulary in any conversation.

### What if I get a question that doesn't match my prepared phrases?

The slot structure (Commit → Detail → Elaborate → Finish) works for any Interview question. Worst case, fall back on the most universal phrases: "Honestly, I'd say..." / "The biggest reason is that..." / "For example..." / "So that's my take." Those four cover almost any question.

### What if I genuinely see both sides of a question?

Pick whichever side is easier for you to explain in English. The rubric rewards clear, elaborated answers, not balanced or nuanced ones. Trying to argue both sides in 45 seconds usually produces two underdeveloped halves and a confused listener. You can briefly acknowledge the other side ("I can see why people like Y, but..."), but then it's best to commit to a single position.

### Is the Finish slot really optional?

Yes. If you've got 6 or 7 seconds left on the clock with more to say, keep elaborating. The rubric rewards on-topic, well-elaborated answers, not "conclusions." Use Finish when you're running low on material or want a clean exit. Don't burn time on a wrap-up phrase when you could be finishing or adding on another detail.

### Will using templates get me a 5?

They can move you in the right direction. A Score 5 needs on-topic, well-elaborated content delivered at conversational pace with natural pauses, intelligible pronunciation, and a range of accurate grammar and vocabulary. Templates address the language structure and help with pace. The elaboration, pronunciation, and grammar accuracy come from sustained practice.

Ready to practice? Start with a [free TOEFL practice test](#) that includes the full Speaking section.

## Ready to Put These Templates into Practice?

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*"The detailed insight into my potential areas of improvement based on my performance in the practice tests boosted my confidence on the day of the test. It was a cakewalk, thanks to Magoosh." — Adithi K.*

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*"The questions are very realistic and the solutions clear every possible doubt. The graded essays were insightful and helped me to improve. The amount of practice is more than enough to exercise." — Martin C.*

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