

TIC-TAC-TOEFL

Purpose: Students' grasp of grammar is tested directly in the Writing and Speaking sections of the TOEFL® iBT, even if it is no longer tested in a separate section of the test. Tic-Tac-TOEFL is an effective way to get students excited about grammar. (You'd think it was their favorite subject!) It's a highly adaptable game that can also be used for reviewing student writing, vocabulary and idioms, and practicing reading comprehension.

Organization: Whole class divided into two teams (Team X and Team O)

Materials: Grammar points to be reviewed, slips of paper with student names, and two hats. Prizes (optional).

Time: 30-40 minutes

Procedure:

Variation 1 - Grammar Review

1. Prepare nine grammatical prompts based on structures that you would like to review. They may be based on one grammar point or from a mixture of grammar points. For example, each box may contain a cue, such as: *Write a sentence with two clauses, using the word because.* OR *Write a sentence using the past perfect verb tense.*
2. Draw a tic-tac-toe grid on the board, and copy one grammatical prompt into each square. (See Worksheet 1.)
3. Divide the class into two teams. Have each team sit in a circle. It's best if the teams can't hear each other.
4. Give the teams twenty minutes to write a sentence for each square.

Important: Each member of the team is responsible for knowing every answer and keeping his/her own notes, as they won't know which student will be called on to answer.

5. Prepare name slips for Team X and Team O to be pulled from hats during play.
6. Begin to play. Pull a name slip from the Team X hat. That student chooses a square and writes his or her group's sentence on the board outside of the Tic-Tac-TOEFL square. The student has up to one minute to confer with his/her teammates before answering. Put an X

or an O in the square if the answer is **correct**, nothing if it's incorrect. Then play goes to the other team.

7. Go back and forth between the teams. Continue picking names from the hats to determine which student will answer. Play until either one team gets tic-tac-toe or the game ends in a tie.

Note: Usually there will be one or two items that the students get stuck on. After going back and forth between the teams several times, it's helpful for the teacher to give the teams some coaching. Possible problems could be incorrect grammar, punctuation or spelling, or unclear meaning. Give teams another five minutes to discuss these items and then roll a die to see who goes first. Resume playing.

Variation 2 - Reviewing Student Writing

1. Follow the instructions for Variation 1, using sentences from student writing samples that need revising.
2. Tell students precisely what types of errors to look for (verb tense, punctuation, etc.) Write in each square the actual number of errors so they know how many errors to look for. Students have to identify and correct **all** the errors to get an X or an O.
3. Another possibility is to include some correct sentences. Students' job is to identify the correct ones and correct the incorrect ones.

Additional Variations - This really is a versatile game.

- Use target vocabulary or idioms in sentences with multiple-choice answers. Students get an X or an O if they choose the correct answer.
- Give students a reading. The tic-tac-toe grid contains nine comprehension questions.
- Put a vocabulary word in each square and have students write sentences that illustrate the meaning of each word. Each student on the team should write down the sentences and be ready to write them on the board.

Tic-Tac-TOEFL Worksheet 1
For Variation 1: Grammar Review

<p>(1)</p> <p>Write a sentence with two clauses, using the word <i>because</i>.</p>	<p>(2)</p> <p>Combine the 2 sentences below, using an adjective clause: <i>The professor teaches Astronomy 101.</i> <i>The professor offers two sections.</i></p>	<p>(3)</p> <p>Complete the following sentence: <i>If I were ...</i></p>
<p>(4)</p> <p>Write a sentence using the past perfect verb tense.</p>	<p>(5)</p> <p>Write a sentence in the present perfect using the word <i>since</i>.</p>	<p>(6)</p> <p>Combine the 2 sentences below, using the word <i>while</i>: <i>The earthquake hit.</i> <i>Drivers were crossing the bridge.</i></p>
<p>(7)</p> <p>Write two sentences that are connected in meaning. The second sentence must begin with <i>however</i>.</p>	<p>(8)</p> <p>Write a sentence using a noncount noun as the subject.</p>	<p>(9)</p> <p>Write a sentence, using a gerund as a subject.</p>