

*The TOEIC<sup>®</sup> Speaking and Writing Tests:  
Relations to Test-Taker Perceptions  
of Proficiency in English*

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### **Abstract**

To facilitate the interpretation of test scores from the new TOEIC<sup>®</sup> speaking and writing tests as measures of English-language proficiency, we administered a self-assessment inventory to TOEIC examinees in Japan and Korea, to gather their perceptions of their ability to perform a variety of everyday English-language tasks. TOEIC scores related relatively strongly to test taker self-reports for both speaking and writing tasks. The results were extraordinarily consistent, with examinees at each higher TOEIC score level being more likely to report that they could successfully accomplish each of the everyday language tasks in English. The pattern of correlations also suggested modest discriminant validity of the new TOEIC speaking and writing measures, suggesting that both measures contribute uniquely to the assessment of English-language proficiency.

Key words: English-language proficiency, English-language testing, speaking, writing, can-do, TOEIC<sup>®</sup>, test validity, self-assessment

The Test of English for International Communications™ (TOEIC®) was developed to measure the ability to listen and read in English, using a variety of contexts from real-world settings. Recently, ETS added TOEIC speaking and writing tests to the TOEIC product line in order to directly assess the ability to speak and write in English in a workplace setting. This addition was in response to multinational corporations' need for employees with high-level speaking and writing skills. In contrast to the paper-and-pencil TOEIC listening and reading tests, multiple-choice tests requiring test takers to *select* correct answers, the computer-delivered TOEIC speaking and writing measures require test takers to *produce* responses that are then scored subjectively by highly trained human raters. The new measures thus complement the TOEIC listening and reading tests. Together, the four components of the TOEIC test battery now provide measurement of all four English-language communication skills.

The new tests were developed to align as closely as possible with theories of communicative competence (see, for example, Butler, Eignor, Jones, McNamara, & Suomi, 2000; Cumming, Kantor, Powers, Santos, & Taylor, 2000). To accomplish this, an evidence-centered design (ECD) approach was used (see, for example, Mislevy & Haertel, 2006; Mislevy, Steinberg, Almond, & Lukas, 2006). In short, ECD methodology entails

- Looking at the population for which the test is intended and the uses to which the test will be put
- Articulating the desired claims to be made about test takers based on their performance on the assessment;
- Identifying test-taker behaviors that would allow these claims to be made
- Creating (and evaluating) tasks to elicit these behaviors, thus providing evidence to support the claims

For the speaking measure, three *hierarchical* claims were specified—that test takers can:

1. Create connected, sustained discourse appropriate to the typical workplace
2. Carry out routine social and occupational interactions such as giving and receiving directions, asking for information, and asking for clarification
3. Produce some language that is intelligible to native and proficient non-native English-speakers

For the writing measure, the three hierarchical claims are that test takers can:

1. Produce multiparagraph-length text to express complex ideas, using, as appropriate, reasons, evidence, and extended explanations
2. Produce multisentence-length text to convey straightforward information, questions, instructions, narratives, and so on
3. Produce well-formed sentences (including ones with subordination)

Speaking is assessed by six different kinds of tasks requiring various types of responses, which are evaluated according to the following criteria: pronunciation, intonation and stress, grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and the content's relevance and completeness. Writing is assessed by three different task types, with responses evaluated according to the following criteria: grammar, relevance of the response to the stimulus, quality and variety of sentences, vocabulary, organization, and the extent to which the examinee's opinion is supported by reasons and examples.

For both tests, scores are reported on a scale of 0 to 200. For speaking, eight proficiency levels are reported. At the highest speaking level (Level 8, TOEIC speaking score of 180–200), for instance, examinee performance is characterized as follows:

Typically, test takers at Level 8 can create connected, sustained discourse appropriate to the typical workplace. When they express opinions or respond to complicated requests, their speech is highly intelligible. Their use of basic and complex grammar is good, and their use of vocabulary is accurate and precise. Test takers at Level 8 can also use spoken language to answer questions and give basic information. Their pronunciation, intonation and stress are at all times highly intelligible. (ETS, 2008, p.1)

In contrast, at the next to *lowest* level (Level 2, TOEIC speaking score of 40–50), performance is characterized as follows:

Typically, test takers at Level 2 cannot state an opinion or support it. They either do not respond to complicated requests or the response is not at all relevant. In routine social and occupational interactions, such as answering questions and giving basic information, test takers at Level 2 are difficult to understand. When reading aloud, speakers at Level 2 may be difficult to understand. (ETS, 2008, p. 2)

For writing, nine proficiency levels are reported. Examinee performance at the highest level (Level 9, TOEIC writing score of 200) is described as follows:

Typically, test takers at Level 9 can communicate straightforward information effectively and use reasons, examples or explanations to support an opinion. When giving straightforward information, asking questions, giving instructions or making requests, their writing is clear, coherent and effective. When using reasons, examples or explanations to support an opinion, their writing is well-organized and well-developed. The use of English is natural, with a variety of sentence structures and appropriate word choices, and is grammatically accurate. (ETS, 2008, p. 4)

At the next to *lowest* level (Level 2, TOEIC writing score of 40), examinee performance is described as follows:

Typically, test takers at Level 2 have only very limited ability to express an opinion and give straightforward information. At Level 2, test takers cannot give straightforward information. Typical weaknesses at this level include:

- not including any of the important information
- missing or obscure connections between ideas
- frequent grammatical mistakes or incorrect word choices

When attempting to explain an opinion, test takers at this level show one or more of the following serious flaws:

- serious disorganization or underdevelopment of ideas
- little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics
- serious and frequent grammatical mistakes or incorrect word choices

At Level 2, test takers are unable to produce grammatically correct sentences. (ETS, 2008, p. 5)

The research described in this paper provides evidence of the validity of the new TOEIC speaking and writing tests as measures of English-language proficiency. It establishes a positive

relationship between scores on the new measures and test takers' reports of their ability to perform selected English speaking and writing tasks in the workplace.

### **Method**

In fall 2008, after assembling a self-report can-do inventory of speaking and writing tasks, we administered the inventory to individuals who took the TOEIC speaking and writing tests in Japan and Korea. Several steps were followed in the development of this inventory. First, a preliminary list of tasks was assembled for review by major clients in Japan and Korea. This list drew heavily from one developed by Ito, Kawaguchi, and Ohta (2005) as well as from previous research (e.g., Duke, Kao, & Vale, 2004; Tannenbaum, Rosenfeld, Breyer, & Wilson, 2007). From these sources, can-do task statements were selected and translated from English into Japanese and Korean. An ETS staff member who is a native speaker of Japanese checked the Japanese translation, and an ETS staff member who is a native speaker of Korean checked the Korean translation.

Next we invited TOEIC clients in Japan and Korea to review the preliminary list. These clients were relatively large companies that have significant language-training programs and are therefore well versed in communication problems encountered in the workplace. For each task listed in the inventory, clients rated the importance of being able to perform the task with regard to the kind of job (or family of jobs) for which they were reporting. The specific question was "How important is it that a worker be able to perform this task competently in order to perform his/her job satisfactorily?" Responses were on a 6-point scale (0 = *Does not have to perform this task as part of the job*, 1 = *Slightly important*, 2 = *Somewhat important*, 3 = *Important*, 4 = *Very important*, 5 = *Extremely important*).

After they indicated their ratings, respondents were asked to think about the job or family of jobs for which they were reporting and to list any important job tasks that were not included on the preliminary list. In addition, they were encouraged to indicate changes or alternative wording for any of the tasks that seemed unclear. In total, 23 company representatives from Korea and 24 from Japan returned responses. Between the two countries, the agreement on task importance was reasonably good, with average ratings of tasks correlating .67 for speaking and .70 for writing.

Respondents suggested a number of additional tasks, several of which we added to the inventory. However, some suggested tasks that were unique to particular industries or jobs.

Because these tasks had limited applicability to the market in general, we did not add them to the inventory. Also, we deleted the listed tasks that respondents had rated lowest in importance. The final version of the inventory comprised 40 common language tasks (can-do statements) for speaking and 29 for writing. In the fall of 2008, this final inventory was administered in Japan and Korea to test takers who were taking the TOEIC speaking and writing tests.

In completing the inventory, test takers used a 5-point scale to rate how easily they could perform each task: 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *with great difficulty*, 3 = *with some difficulty*, 4 = *with little difficulty*, and 5 = *easily*. Respondents were encouraged to respond to each statement, but they were allowed to omit a task statement if they thought it did not apply to them or they were unable to make a judgment.

## Results

We obtained data from 2,947 test takers in Korea and 867 in Japan. TOEIC speaking scores were available for 3,518 participants; TOEIC writing scores were available for 1,472 participants. Approximately 46% of the participants were female. More than three fourths (78%) of participants had either completed or were currently pursuing a bachelor's degree, another 14% had completed or were pursuing a graduate degree, and about 5% had completed or were pursuing an associate's degree at a 2-year college. The study sample was nearly equally divided between full-time students (43%) and full-time employees (42%). About 10% of all respondents reported being unemployed; 5% of respondents reported that they either worked or studied part-time. Employed participants reported holding a wide variety of jobs: clerical/administrative (27%), scientific/technical professional (18%), technician (15%), marketing/sales (13%), service (11%), teaching/training (7%), professional specialist (6%), and management (4%). Most worked in either service (45%) or manufacturing (35%) industries.

Table 1 shows the correlations between TOEIC speaking and writing scores and test takers' assessments of their ability to perform the can-do tasks, as defined by the sum of responses to (a) all 40 speaking tasks and (b) all 29 writing tasks. (Observed correlations appear below the diagonal; disattenuated correlations appear above the diagonal.) As Table 1 shows, the correlation between TOEIC speaking and TOEIC writing scores is high (.71), as is the correlation between the speaking and writing can-do reports (.87). More importantly, speaking can-do reports and TOEIC speaking scores correlate relatively strongly (.54). The correlation between writing can-do reports and TOEIC writing scores is comparable (.52). (Individually, the

correlations of speaking statements with TOEIC speaking scores range from .32 to .49, with a median of .43. For writing statements, the individual correlations range from .39 to .50, with a median of .45. See Tables 2 and 3 for these correlations.) TOEIC speaking scores correlate slightly less with writing can-do reports (.49) than with speaking can-do reports, and TOEIC writing scores correlate slightly less with speaking can-do reports (.51) than with writing can-do reports. This pattern suggests very modest discriminant validity of the two TOEIC scores, even though they correlate highly with one another, as do the speaking and writing can-do reports. This result is confirmed when correlations are corrected for attenuation: The correlation between TOEIC speaking and TOEIC writing scores is estimated to be very high (.87) but not perfect. The same is true for the speaking and writing can-do reports, whose disattenuated correlation is .89. Corrections for attenuation were made using reliability estimates for both the can-do inventories and test scores. For both the speaking can-do inventory and the writing inventory, the Cronbach alpha reliability estimate was .98. For the TOEIC scores, the test-retest reliability estimate was .82 for both speaking scores and writing scores (C. Liao, personal communication, January 14, 2009).

**Table 1**  
*Correlations Among Can-Do Self-Assessments and TOEIC Scores*

Measure	M (SD)	TOEIC speaking score	TOEIC writing score	Can-do speaking task	Can-do writing task
TOEIC score					
Speaking ( $n = 3,518$ )	122.8 (30.9)		(.87)	(.60)	(.55)
Writing ( $n = 1,472$ )	148.5 (31.8)	.71		(.56)	(.57)
Can-do task					
Speaking ( $n = 3,366$ )	132.4 (31.0)	.54	.51		(.89)
Writing ( $n = 2,084$ )	93.9 (25.4)	.49	.52	.87	

*Note.* For correlations,  $n$ 's range from 1,364 to 3,134. Numbers in parentheses above the diagonal have been corrected for attenuation. All correlations are significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

**Table 2****Percentages of TOEIC Test Takers, by Speaking-Score Level, Who Indicated They Could Perform Various English-Speaking Tasks Easily or With Little Difficulty**

I can:	Proficiency level							M	SD	Corr. with TOEIC speaking
	1-2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
	Score level									
	0-50	60-70	80-100	110-120	130-150	160-180	190-200			
using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant	21	38	52	71	81	93	98	4.02	0.96	.43
make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person	19	32	43	65	78	91	100	3.88	0.96	.47
discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations	17	35	45	68	78	91	98	3.89	0.96	.46
show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)	17	39	51	67	78	87	96	3.90	0.92	.41
leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back	19	33	44	66	76	88	98	3.84	0.97	.45
give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge	21	37	44	63	75	87	98	3.81	0.98	.43
request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations	22	38	48	68	79	89	96	3.91	0.96	.43
give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station	15	38	47	67	79	87	94	3.86	0.88	.43
telephone the airline to change my flight plans	19	27	39	58	71	83	96	3.72	1.00	.45
telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item	16	22	34	56	67	83	96	3.64	1.01	.44
use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations	15	28	36	56	70	82	96	3.66	0.98	.41
have "small talk" with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business	10	24	35	57	69	83	94	3.65	0.97	.44
give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad	7	22	30	53	64	81	94	3.57	1.01	.45
tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task	2	17	22	39	52	77	90	3.33	0.97	.46
briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)	5	16	19	34	47	68	92	3.24	0.97	.44
talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)	3	22	29	51	66	80	86	3.56	0.94	.45
explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem	9	18	22	44	58	74	88	3.41	0.99	.46
describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings	7	20	27	42	56	70	82	3.35	0.99	.41
express my opinion to others who may have a different view	7	14	19	42	56	68	86	3.35	0.96	.45
explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with	11	25	29	43	51	68	86	3.41	0.89	.36
translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting	3	8	13	29	45	68	88	3.07	1.12	.49
explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees	3	7	11	22	35	55	88	3.02	0.91	.44
describe a familiar work-related process	3	11	18	33	42	66	81	3.16	0.99	.43

*(Table continues)*

Table 2 (continued)

I can:	Proficiency level							M	SD	Corr. with TOEIC speaking
	1–2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
	Score level									
	0–50	60–70	80–100	110–120	130–150	160–180	190–200			
ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations	7	5	14	31	40	64	80	3.14	1.00	.44
discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers	0	5	14	24	33	51	78	2.99	0.97	.40
explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker	0	7	11	25	33	50	78	2.94	0.99	.42
state and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting	2	6	13	6	36	51	73	2.96	1.02	.41
comment on or react to someone's opinion during a discussion	0	6	11	25	36	52	71	3.01	0.98	.44
give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)	2	9	10	26	34	50	71	2.87	1.10	.39
ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech	2	6	9	21	30	47	76	2.90	0.98	.41
adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency	8	8	11	26	38	58	67	2.95	1.06	.43
using prepared materials, discuss my company's products/services, comparing them with other companies' products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices	0	9	12	25	33	47	69	2.94	1.00	.39
discuss (in English) world events with a guest	2	6	9	19	30	44	69	2.86	0.96	.43
without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party	5	7	14	21	29	45	60	2.88	1.01	.36
translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting	2	4	6	10	18	31	53	2.50	1.00	.38
serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls	2	3	6	11	18	28	47	2.42	1.06	.32
<i>Sample size</i> for score interval	65	176	658	819	1,333	417	50			

Note. Table entries (percentages) are the proportions of test takers who said they could perform a task either *easily* or *with little difficulty*. Percentages have been shaded to indicate their magnitude as shown in the key below.

[0–29]

[30–49]

[50–69]

[70–79]

[80–89]

[90–100]

**Table 3**

*Percentages of TOEIC Test Takers, by Writing-Score Level, Who Indicated They Could Perform Various English-Writing Tasks Easily or With Little Difficulty*

I can:	Proficiency level						M	SD	Corr. with TOEIC writing
	1-4	5	6	7	8	9			
	Score level								
	0-80	90-100	110-130	140-160	170-190	200			
write an email requesting information about hotel accommodations	12	37	48	70	81	91	3.82	0.99	.48
write a short thank-you note to a business acquaintance for a gift or dinner	14	34	44	63	73	92	3.70	1.00	.45
write a brief note to a co-worker (or instructor) explaining why I was not able to attend a meeting (or class)	12	32	43	64	77	90	3.70	1.02	.47
convey information in an email about a welcome or farewell party	9	32	40	62	77	88	3.64	1.00	.47
write a memorandum or send an email confirming some information related to my job or class	14	28	35	56	73	87	3.53	1.01	.47
write an email to my supervisor (or instructor) explaining what I have accomplished during the past week	9	25	33	54	71	84	3.47	1.02	.49
write clear directions on how to get to my office	14	23	37	58	69	86	3.57	1.03	.42
write a letter or send an email to a company to complain about a product or service	5	21	28	51	63	86	3.37	1.09	.48
write a letter or send an email to a company to request information about a certain product or service	5	17	28	51	67	84	3.39	1.06	.50
send an email or write a letter to a public organization requesting necessary information	5	19	29	49	65	88	3.35	1.07	.50
write a reply to a business letter	7	20	24	46	62	83	3.33	1.08	.46
write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications for a job	11	16	24	43	58	81	3.27	1.04	.45
describe (in writing) information presented in a table/chart of a report that I have written	9	16	22	40	56	81	3.23	1.02	.46
write a brief report (or memo) summarizing the main points discussed in a group meeting related to my field or specialty	7	21	24	38	54	81	3.17	1.03	.45
translate documents (e.g., business letters, manuals) into English	11	18	24	39	54	81	3.19	1.08	.43
write a short note (to a co-worker) describing how to operate an office machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC) that I am familiar with	9	30	34	49	67	79	3.45	1.03	.43
write discussion notes during a meeting or class and summarize them	11	17	19	37	53	79	3.13	1.03	.46
write a memorandum to my supervisor or instructor describing progress on a current project or task	5	15	15	38	53	77	3.09	1.03	.47
write a letter to a potential client describing the services or products of my company	7	16	17	34	53	75	3.09	1.04	.46
write a 1-2 page summary of a technical book that I am familiar with	9	16	16	33	45	74	2.99	1.09	.41
write a formal letter of thanks to a client	11	20	24	38	50	71	3.18	1.14	.40
write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise	7	22	19	33	43	71	2.98	1.11	.39
write a plan or proposal related to my work	5	12	13	28	43	73	2.89	1.08	.40
prepare text and slides (in English) for a presentation at a professional conference	7	11	17	28	44	69	2.90	1.13	.40
write a research report assigned by a supervisor or instructor	7	11	13	27	42	69	2.89	1.07	.41

(Table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

I can:	Proficiency level						M	SD	Corr. with TOEIC writing
	1-4	5	6	7	8	9			
	Score level								
	0-80	90-100	110-130	140-160	170-190	200			
write a manual (for sales purposes) for a product or service	7	12	14	27	38	68	2.91	1.01	.41
write a proposal to suggest a new business process, a new product, or a new service	7	9	13	25	40	65	2.86	1.06	.41
write a brief, several-page (formal) report explaining the progress being made on a current project	5	11	12	25	37	65	2.82	1.10	.40
create a press release to introduce a new product or service	7	11	15	27	41	60	2.94	1.04	.40
<i>Sample size for score interval</i>	44	85	313	590	363	77			

Note. Table entries (percentages) are the proportions of test takers who said they could perform a task either *easily* or *with little difficulty*. Percentages have been shaded to indicate their magnitude as shown in the key below.



To better indicate how test performance relates to each can-do activity, we have also presented (in Table 2 for speaking and Table 3 for writing) item-by-item results, ordered by the degree of difficulty of each can-do task (mean response on the 5-point scale). The numbers shown in the tables are the proportions of test takers at each of several score intervals who said that they could perform the task either easily or with little difficulty. For TOEIC speaking, score ranges were chosen so as to correspond with the eight speaking proficiency levels that are reported to test takers. The only exception is that the two lowest score levels (Levels 1 and 2) were combined (to form a 50-point interval) because there were very few test takers at these levels. The same convention was followed in Table 3 for writing scores, this time collapsing the four lowest writing-score levels into an 80-point interval because few test takers were at these levels. The mean shown for each item is the average response to the item on the 1-to-5 response scale, with higher numbers indicating easier tasks.

To illustrate how to read Tables 2 and 3, consider the first can-do statement in Table 2 (“using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant”). For this very easy task (at a TOEIC speaking score level of 0–50), 21% of all study participants responded that they could perform the task either *easily* or *with little difficulty*. In contrast, at the highest TOEIC speaking score level (190–200), nearly all participants (98%) felt that they could perform this task *easily* or *with little difficulty*. At intermediate score levels, the percentages (38%, 52%, 71%, 81%, and 93%) also rise with each higher score level. The percentages are much lower, however, for the last, very difficult task listed in Table 2 (“serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls”), a task that only 2% of the lowest scoring participants indicated they could perform, in comparison to 47% of the highest scoring participants. (In Tables 2 and 3, higher percentages appear in darker shades, as indicated in the key at the bottom of the tables. The number of examinees at each score level is indicated by the sample sizes at the bottom of each score-level column.)

Tables 2 and 3 can also be used with TOEIC score level as the reference point, by reading down a given column. For example, to see the performance of test takers with a speaking score of 130–150, a reader would view the Table 2 column for that score level. This column shows, for instance, that 81% of these test takers indicated they could “using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant.” However, for the last, most difficult task listed (“serve as an interpreter for top

management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls”), only 18% of these test takers indicated that they could perform this task *easily* or *with little difficulty*.

As Tables 2 and 3 show, for virtually all of the tasks, higher test performance is associated with a greater likelihood of reporting successful task performance. For the speaking statements in Table 2, percentages increase for all but one item with each increase in score interval. The exception occurs between the two lowest score levels for the task “ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations.” For writing tasks (Table 3), the one exception occurs between two of the lowest score intervals for “write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise.”

In some previous can-do studies, a less conservative coding was used to produce tables that compare with Tables 2 and 3. In those earlier studies, a test taker was regarded as being able to perform a task if she or he responded *can do easily*, *can do with little difficulty*, or *can do with some difficulty*. For Tables 2 and 3, we coded only *can do easily* and *can do with little difficulty* as evidence that a person could perform a task. This is consistent with the coding used in a previous study for the TOEIC (listening and reading) tests (Powers, Kim, & Weng, 2008). The percentages would have been considerably higher (i.e., tasks would have been seen as easier) if we had used a less conservative standard and had included *can do with some difficulty* in the calculations. Therefore, we have also provided Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix A, which reflect this less conservative coding for the benefit of test users who may prefer a less stringent standard for determining when a test taker can perform a task.

For test-score users who prefer a more narrative presentation of the study results, we have also included Appendix B (for speaking tasks) and Appendix C (for writing tasks), which display the tasks that test takers at various test-score levels (a) are likely to be able to perform, (b) are likely to be able to perform with difficulty, and (c) are unlikely to be able to perform at all. We used the following convention to classify tasks into these three levels. Test takers at a given score level were considered likely to be able to perform a particular task (*probably can do*) if at least 50% of them reported that they could perform the task either *easily* or *with little difficulty*. If at least 50% of test takers at a score level said they could not perform a task at all or could perform it only with great difficulty, then they were considered as being unlikely to be able to perform the task (*probably cannot do*). If a task could not be classified as either *probably can do* or *probably cannot do* by these criteria, it was classified as *probably can do with difficulty* if at

least 50% of test takers said they could perform the task with *little difficulty*, *some difficulty*, or *great difficulty*. Using these criteria, all speaking and all writing tasks could be placed into one (and only one) of the three categories.

A word may be in order here about the use of a 50% level to classify tasks into can-do levels. Admittedly, this standard is an arbitrary one, and at first blush, it might seem relatively lenient. However, for the relatively few tasks that barely met our 50% can-do criterion (can do easily or with little difficulty), a large additional proportion of test takers (always more than 30%) said they could perform the task *with some difficulty*. Therefore, for each task classified as *probably can do*, at least 80% of test takers indicated that they could perform the task with no more than *some difficulty*.

For independent verification that our can-do classifications were appropriate, we asked two TOEIC staff members—an assessment developer and a product manager, both of whom are very familiar with the TOEIC speaking and writing measures—to peruse the classifications and identify any tasks they thought had been misclassified. Independently, both reviewers felt that virtually all of the writing tasks had been appropriately classified. Both reviewers, however, identified a small minority of speaking tasks as misclassified. There was, however, virtually no agreement between the two reviewers as to which tasks had been misclassified. One reviewer thought that our statistical rules had placed slightly too many tasks in the category *probably can do with difficulty* when, in fact, the tasks were ones that examinees probably could not perform. This kind of misclassification was perceived by the reviewer to occur at only the lowest score levels. The other reviewer thought that we had erred mainly in classifying some tasks as *probably cannot do* instead of *probably can do with difficulty*. Given the small proportion of tasks that were identified as possibly misclassified, and the lack of agreement regarding the possible misclassification, we did not modify the tables shown in Appendixes B and C.

### **Discussion/Implications**

One kind of evidence that has proven useful in elucidating the meaning, or validity, of language-test scores has come from examinees themselves, in the form of self-assessments of their own language skills. Although self-assessments may sometimes be susceptible to distortion (either unintentional or deliberate), they have been shown to be valid in a variety of contexts (see, e.g., Falchikov & Boud, 1989; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Mabe & West, 1982), especially in the assessment of language skills (LeBlanc & Painchaud, 1985; Upshur, 1975;

Shrauger & Osberg, 1981). It has even been asserted (e.g., Upshur, 1975; Shrauger & Osberg, 1981) that, in some respects, language learners often have more complete knowledge of their linguistic successes and failures than do third-party assessors.

For this study, a large-scale data collection effort was undertaken to establish links between (a) test-takers' performance on the TOEIC speaking and writing tests and (b) self-assessments of their ability to perform a variety of common, everyday language tasks in English. Results revealed that, for both speaking and writing, TOEIC scores were relatively strongly related to test takers' self-assessments, both overall and for each individual task. For instance, the magnitude of the correlations observed in the study reported here are considered by conventional standards to fall into the large range (.50 and above) with respect to effect size (Cohen, 1988). Moreover, the correlations that were observed here compare very favorably with those typically observed in validity studies that use other kinds of validation criteria, such as course grades, faculty ratings, and degree completion. For example, in a recent very large-scale meta-analysis of graduate-level academic admissions tests, Kuncel and Hezlett (2007) reported that, over all the different tests that they considered, first-year grade average—the *most predictable* of several criteria available—correlated, on average, about .45 with test scores. The correlations observed here also compared favorably with those (in the .30s and .40s) found between overall student self-assessments and performance on the TOEFL® iBT exam (Powers, Roever, Huff, & Trapani, 2003).

In addition, the pattern of correlations among the measures also indicated modest discriminant validity of the TOEIC speaking and writing measures, suggesting that each contributes uniquely to the measurement of English language skills. This result is consistent with a recent factor-analytic study of a similar test (the TOEFL iBT) by Sawaki, Stricker, and Oranje (2008), in which the correlation ( $r = .71$ ) suggested relatively highly related, but distinct, speaking and writing factors.

In the present study, we were not able to evaluate the soundness of test-taker self-reports as a validity criterion. However, in comparable studies that we have conducted recently in similar contexts, can-do self-reports have exhibited several characteristics that suggest that they are reasonably trustworthy validity criteria, especially for low-stakes research, in which examinees have no incentive to intentionally distort their reports. For example, we have found that examinees rank-order the difficulty of tasks in accordance with our expectations (Powers,

Bravo, & Locke, 2007; Powers et al., 2008) and that they exhibit reasonably stable agreement about task difficulty when self-reports are collected again on later occasions (Powers et al., 2008). In addition, the current study's results are consistent with previous meta-analytic summaries (e.g., Ross, 1998) that have documented substantial correlations between various criterion measures and the self-ratings of learners of English as a second language.

In conclusion, the current study provides evidence of the validity of TOEIC speaking and writing scores by linking them to test takers' assessments of their ability to perform a variety of everyday (often job-related) English-language activities. The practical implication of these linkages lies in their ability to facilitate the interpretation and use of TOEIC scores. The results strongly suggest that TOEIC speaking and writing scores can distinguish between test takers who are likely to be able to perform these tasks and those who are not. According to most conventional standards, the relationships that we detected are practically meaningful. To the degree that the language tasks studied here are important for success in a global business environment, using the TOEIC to recruit, hire, or train prospective employees should be a beneficial business strategy.

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## Appendix A

### Can-Do Tables, Using a Less Stringent Standard, for TOEIC Speaking and Writing Scores

**Table A1**

*Percentages of TOEIC Test Takers, by Speaking-Score Level, Who Indicated They Could Perform Various English-Speaking Tasks Easily, With Little Difficulty, or With Some Difficulty*

I can:	Proficiency level							M	SD	Corr. with TOEIC speaking
	1-2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
	Score level									
	0-50	60-70	80-100	110-120	130-150	160-180	190-200			
give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station	63	81	89	95	97	98	100	3.86	0.88	.43
show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)	60	79	85	93	97	99	100	3.90	0.92	.41
using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant	66	80	87	93	97	99	100	4.02	0.96	.43
request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations	51	72	85	94	97	99	100	3.91	0.96	.43
discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations	50	72	84	94	96	99	100	3.89	0.96	.46
leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back	50	71	83	92	96	98	100	3.84	0.97	.45
make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person	52	68	84	94	96	99	100	3.88	0.96	.47
give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge	41	70	82	91	95	99	100	3.81	0.98	.43
telephone the airline to change my flight plans	39	62	77	90	95	98	100	3.72	1.00	.45
have “small talk” with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business	38	67	78	89	95	98	100	3.65	0.97	.44
explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with	38	69	78	89	93	97	100	3.41	0.89	.36
telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item	40	64	76	87	93	98	100	3.64	1.01	.44
give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad	33	62	74	86	93	97	100	3.57	1.01	.45
use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations	46	70	79	89	94	96	100	3.66	0.98	.41
talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)	33	68	78	87	94	98	98	3.56	0.94	.45
tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task	23	52	67	81	90	97	100	3.33	0.97	.46
express my opinion to others who may have a different view	27	53	67	80	91	96	100	3.35	0.96	.45
explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem	28	54	68	84	91	96	100	3.41	0.99	.46
describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings	35	57	67	81	88	94	98	3.35	0.99	.41
briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)	29	53	65	78	87	95	100	3.24	0.97	.44

*(Table continues)*

Table A1 (continued)

	Proficiency level							M	SD	Corr. with TOEIC speaking
	1–2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
	Score level									
I can:	0–50	60–70	80–100	110–120	130–150	160–180	190–200			
communicate in an understandable way about topics related to my field or specialty	33	49	67	76	86	93	100	3.21	0.95	.40
ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations	19	47	59	75	84	92	100	3.14	1.00	.44
describe a familiar work-related process	24	47	63	72	85	95	98	3.16	0.99	.43
report on the outcomes of my research or investigation	19	48	55	73	84	94	96	3.11	0.99	.44
explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees	20	41	55	71	81	92	96	3.02	0.91	.44
deal with complaints about a defective product or inadequate service	22	41	60	74	82	91	92	3.16	1.05	.40
translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting	22	39	48	67	81	94	100	3.07	1.12	.49
comment on or react to someone's opinion during a discussion	22	44	51	69	81	91	94	3.01	0.98	.44
discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers	27	44	53	70	79	87	96	2.99	0.97	.40
adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency	20	36	46	64	76	87	98	2.95	1.06	.43
discuss (in English) world events with a guest	22	34	43	63	76	89	94	2.86	0.96	.43
ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech	22	39	49	65	76	87	94	2.90	0.98	.41
using prepared materials, discuss my company's products/services, comparing them with other companies' products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices	19	43	50	66	75	86	94	2.94	1.00	.39
ask questions to understand unclear or problematic points made in a lecture or presentation	24	40	49	65	78	89	92	2.98	1.04	.42
explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker	19	38	47	66	78	88	92	2.94	0.99	.42
give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)	16	39	43	57	72	83	92	2.87	1.10	.39
state and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting	22	44	47	67	78	84	90	2.96	1.02	.41
without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party	22	33	50	61	74	83	90	2.88	1.01	.36
translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting	13	19	31	42	56	73	86	2.50	1.00	.38
serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls	7	28	31	40	52	66	80	2.42	1.06	.32
<i>Sample size for score interval</i>	65	176	658	819	1,333	417	50			

Note. Table entries (percentages) are the proportions of test takers who said they could perform a task either *easily* or *with little difficulty*. Percentages have been shaded to indicate their magnitude as shown in the key below.

[0–29]

[30–49]

[50–69]

[70–79]

[80–89]

[90–100]

**Table A2**

*Percentages of TOEIC Test Takers, by Writing-Score Level, Who Indicated They Could Perform Various English-Writing Tasks Easily, With Little Difficulty, or With Some Difficulty*

I can:	Proficiency level						M	SD	Corr. with TOEIC writing
	1-4	5	6	7	8	9			
	Score level								
	0-80	90-100	110-130	140-160	170-190	200			
write an email requesting information about hotel accommodations	49	69	85	94	99	100	3.82	0.99	.48
write a short thank-you note to a business acquaintance for a gift or dinner	41	70	82	92	97	100	3.70	1.00	.45
convey information in an email about a welcome or farewell party	45	68	81	92	96	100	3.64	1.00	.47
write a brief note to a co-worker (or instructor) explaining why I was not able to attend a meeting (or class)	35	65	80	92	98	99	3.70	1.02	.47
write a memorandum or send an email confirming some information related to my job or class	35	62	79	92	96	100	3.53	1.01	.47
write clear directions on how to get to my office	45	68	79	91	95	97	3.57	1.03	.42
write a short note (to a co-worker) describing how to operate an office machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC) that I am familiar with	36	62	72	88	93	99	3.45	1.03	.43
write an email to my supervisor (or instructor) explaining what I have accomplished during the past week	26	60	73	89	96	100	3.47	1.02	.49
write a reply to a business letter	32	57	62	83	91	99	3.33	1.08	.46
send an email or write a letter to a public organization requesting necessary information	21	51	66	83	92	99	3.35	1.07	.50
describe (in writing) information presented in a table/chart of a report that I have written	30	54	62	80	91	99	3.23	1.02	.46
write a letter or send an email to a company to request information about a certain product or service	25	52	67	86	93	97	3.39	1.06	.50
write a letter or send an email to a company to complain about a product or service	30	46	65	83	90	96	3.37	1.09	.48
write discussion notes during a meeting or class and summarize them	23	44	59	78	90	100	3.13	1.03	.46
write a memorandum to my supervisor or instructor describing progress on a current project or task	23	45	60	78	89	99	3.09	1.03	.47
write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications for a job	23	50	63	80	89	97	3.27	1.04	.45
write a letter to a potential client describing the services or products of my company	23	43	54	72	88	97	3.09	1.04	.46
write a brief report (or memo) summarizing the main points discussed in a group meeting related to my field or specialty	25	50	60	76	88	96	3.17	1.03	.45
translate documents (e.g., business letters, manuals) into English	20	50	60	74	88	96	3.19	1.08	.43
write a formal letter of thanks to a client	16	46	53	69	82	96	3.18	1.14	.40
write a 1-2 page summary of a technical book that I am familiar with	18	41	55	69	82	95	2.99	1.09	.41
write a manual (for sales purposes) for a product or service	23	41	50	64	81	94	2.91	1.01	.41
write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise	25	44	51	66	80	92	2.98	1.11	.39
write a research report assigned by a supervisor or instructor	23	38	50	63	81	96	2.89	1.07	.41
write a plan or proposal related to my work	23	41	50	62	77	92	2.89	1.08	.40

*(Table continues)*

Table A1 (continued)

I can:	Proficiency level						M	SD	Corr. with TOEIC writing
	1-4	5	6	7	8	9			
	Score level								
	0-80	90-100	110-130	140-160	170-190	200			
write a proposal to suggest a new business process, a new product, or a new service	20	38	46	62	76	92	2.86	1.06	.41
create a press release to introduce a new product or service	25	36	49	65	79	91	2.94	1.04	.40
write a brief, several-page (formal) report explaining the progress being made on a current project	14	35	41	58	72	91	2.82	1.10	.40
prepare text and slides (in English) for a presentation at a professional conference	23	32	49	62	76	90	2.90	1.13	.40
<i>Sample size</i> for score interval	44	85	313	590	363	77			

Note. Table entries (percentages) are the proportions of test takers who said they could perform a task either *easily* or *with little difficulty*. Percentages have been shaded to indicate their magnitude as shown in the key below.



**Appendix B**  
**Can-Do Table for TOEIC Speaking**

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 50 and below (Proficiency Levels 1 and 2)	
Probably can do	None
Probably can do with difficulty	<p>Show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)</p> <p>Request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations</p> <p>Make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person</p> <p>Using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant</p> <p>Give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station</p>
Probably cannot do	<p>Use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations</p> <p>Discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations</p> <p>Give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge</p> <p>Leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back</p> <p>Explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with</p> <p>Have “small talk” with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business</p> <p>Telephone the airline to change my flight plans</p> <p>Telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item</p> <p>Talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)</p> <p>Communicate in an understandable way about topics related to my field or specialty</p> <p>Translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting</p> <p>Express my opinion to others who may have a different view</p>

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 50 and below (Proficiency Levels 1 and 2)	
Probably cannot do	Discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers
	Without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party
	Tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task
	Describe a familiar work-related process
	Explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees
	Explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem
	Briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)
	Using prepared materials, discuss my company's products/services, comparing them with other companies' products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices
	Give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)
	Ask questions to understand unclear or problematic points made in a lecture or presentation
	Ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech
	State and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting
	Comment on or react to someone's opinion during a discussion
	Explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker
	Give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad
	Report on the outcomes of my research or investigation
	Deal with complaints about a defective product or inadequate service
	Ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 50 and below (Proficiency Levels 1 and 2)	
Probably cannot do	Serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls
	Translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting
	Discuss (in English) world events with a guest
	Adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency
	Describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings
Speaking Scaled Score 60–70 (Proficiency Level 3)	
Probably can do	None
Probably can do with difficulty	Explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with
	Use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations
	Express my opinion to others who may have a different view
	Show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)
	Have “small talk” with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business
	Request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations
	Tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task
	Discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations
	Telephone the airline to change my flight plans
	Give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge
	Leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back
Make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 60–70 (Proficiency Level 3)	
Probably can do with difficulty	Telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item
	Explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem
	Briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)
	Talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)
	Using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant
	Give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad
	Give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station
	Describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings
Probably cannot do	Discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers
	Describe a familiar work-related process
	Explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees
	Using prepared materials, discuss my company's products/services, comparing them with other companies' products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices
	Ask questions to understand unclear or problematic points made in a lecture or presentation
	State and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting
	Comment on or react to someone's opinion during a discussion
	Report on the outcomes of my research or investigation
	Deal with complaints about a defective product or inadequate service
	Ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations
Communicate in an understandable way about topics related to my field or specialty	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 60–70 (Proficiency Level 3)	
Probably cannot do	Translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting
	Without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party
	Give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)
	Ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech
	Explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker
	Discuss (in English) world events with a guest
	Adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency
Probably can do	Serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls
	Translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting
	Speaking Scaled Score 80–100 (Proficiency Level 4)
Probably can do	Show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)
	Using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant
Probably can do with difficulty	Explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with
	Use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations
	Express my opinion to others who may have a different view
	Discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers
	Have “small talk” with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business
	Request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations
	Tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

	Tasks
	Speaking Scaled Score 80–100 (Proficiency Level 4)
Probably can do with difficulty	Describe a familiar work-related process
	Explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees
	Discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations
	Telephone the airline to change my flight plans
	Give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge
	Leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back
	Make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person
	Telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item
	Explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem
	Briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)
	Talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)
	Comment on or react to someone's opinion during a discussion
	Give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad
	Report on the outcomes of my research or investigation
	Deal with complaints about a defective product or inadequate service
	Ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations
	Give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station
	Communicate in an understandable way about topics related to my field or specialty
	Describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings
	Translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 80–100 (Proficiency Level 4)	
Probably cannot do	Without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party
	Using prepared materials, discuss my company’s products/services, comparing them with other companies’ products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices
	Give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)
	Ask questions to understand unclear or problematic points made in a lecture or presentation
	Ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech
	State and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting
	Explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker
	Discuss (in English) world events with a guest
	Adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency
	Serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls
Translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting	
Speaking Scaled Score 110–120 (Proficiency Level 5)	
Probably can do	Request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations
	Discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations
	Using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant
	Give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station
	Show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)
Give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 110–120 (Proficiency Level 5)	
Probably can do	Leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back
	Make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person
	Use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations
	Have “small talk” with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business
	Telephone the airline to change my flight plans
	Telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item
	Talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)
Give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad	
Probably can do with difficulty	Explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with
	Translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting
	Express my opinion to others who may have a different view
	Discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers
	Without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party
	Tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task
	Describe a familiar work-related process
	Explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees
	Explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem
	Briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)
Using prepared materials, discuss my company’s products/services, comparing them with other companies’ products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 110–120 (Proficiency Level 5)	
Probably can do with difficulty	Give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)
	Ask questions to understand unclear or problematic points made in a lecture or presentation
	Ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech
	State and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting
	Comment on or react to someone’s opinion during a discussion
	Explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker
	Report on the outcomes of my research or investigation
	Deal with complaints about a defective product or inadequate service
	Ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations
	Communicate in an understandable way about topics related to my field or specialty
	Discuss (in English) world events with a guest
	Describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings
	Adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency
Probably cannot do	Serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls
	Translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting
Speaking Scaled Score 130–150 (Proficiency Level 6)	
Probably can do	Use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations
	Show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)
	Have “small talk” with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business
	Request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 130–150 (Proficiency Level 6)	
Probably can do	Discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations
	Telephone the airline to change my flight plans
	Give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge
	Leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back
	Make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person
	Telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item
	Using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant
	Give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station
	Talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)
	Give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad
	Explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with
	Express my opinion to others who may have a different view
	Tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task
	Explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem
Describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings	
Probably can do with difficulty	Translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting
	Discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers
	Without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party
	Describe a familiar work-related process

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 130–150 (Proficiency Level 6)	
Probably can do with difficulty	Explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees
	Briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)
	Using prepared materials, discuss my company's products/services, comparing them with other companies' products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices
	Give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)
	Ask questions to understand unclear or problematic points made in a lecture or presentation
	Ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech
	State and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting
	Comment on or react to someone's opinion during a discussion
	Explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker
	Report on the outcomes of my research or investigation
	Deal with complaints about a defective product or inadequate service
	Ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations
	Serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls
	Translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting
	Communicate in an understandable way about topics related to my field or specialty
	Discuss (in English) world events with a guest
	Adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency
Probably cannot do	None

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 160–180 (Proficiency Level 7)	
Probably can do	Explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with
	Translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting
	Use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations
	Express my opinion to others who may have a different view
	Show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)
	Have “small talk” with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business
	Request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations
	Tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task
	Discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations
	Telephone the airline to change my flight plans
	Give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge
	Leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back
	Make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person
	Telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item
	Explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem
	Briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)
	Talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)
	Using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant
	Give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad
	Give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station
Describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 160–180 (Proficiency Level 7)	
Probably can do	Describe a familiar work-related process
	Report on the outcomes of my research or investigation
	Deal with complaints about a defective product or inadequate service
	Ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations
	Communicate in an understandable way about topics related to my field or specialty
	Discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers
	Explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees
	Give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)
	Ask questions to understand unclear or problematic points made in a lecture or presentation
	State and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting
	Comment on or react to someone’s opinion during a discussion
	Explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker
	Adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency
Probably can do with difficulty	Without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party
	Using prepared materials, discuss my company’s products/services, comparing them with other companies’ products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices
	Ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech
	Serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls
	Translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting
	Discuss (in English) world events with a guest
Probably cannot do	None

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 190–200 (Proficiency Level 8)	
Probably can do	Explain (to a co-worker or colleague) how to operate a machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC, audio player) that I am familiar with
	Translate (e.g., conversations) in an informal setting
	Use appropriate greeting expressions and introduce myself in social situations
	Express my opinion to others who may have a different view
	Discuss the improvement of customer service/product quality with my boss/co-workers
	Show a guest around (e.g., where the restroom is)
	Have “small talk” with a guest about topics of general interest (e.g., the weather) before discussing business
	Request information about business hours of a restaurant or make dinner reservations
	Tell a foreign colleague or newly employed person how to perform a routine task
	Describe a familiar work-related process
	Explain company history and rules (in English) to foreign employees
	Discuss my hobby, hometown, or interests when introducing myself in informal situations
	Telephone the airline to change my flight plans
	Give my name and the reason I called and ask to connect me to a person in charge
	Leave a message on an answering machine to ask a person to call me back
	Make/change/cancel an appointment to see a person
	Telephone a company to place (or follow-up) an order for an item
	Explain ongoing troubles (e.g., about flight or hotel accommodations) and make a request to settle the problem
	Briefly explain about my company (or university) while looking at some data (e.g., what the main business is or what courses it offers)

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 190–200 (Proficiency Level 8)	
Probably can do	Using prepared materials, discuss my company’s products/services, comparing them with other companies’ products in terms of quality, efficiency, and prices
	Give a prepared 20–30 minute presentation or formal talk (e.g., about a new project or product)
	Talk about my future professional goals (e.g., what I plan to be doing next year)
	Ask questions to understand unclear or problematic points made in a lecture or presentation
	Ask or answer questions about an issue being discussed in a presentation or speech
	State and emphasize my opinion during a discussion or meeting
	Using a menu, order food at a café or restaurant
	Comment on or react to someone’s opinion during a discussion
	Explain a business plan or policy to a new colleague or co-worker
	Give a brief sightseeing tour to a guest from abroad
	Report on the outcomes of my research or investigation
	Deal with complaints about a defective product or inadequate service
	Ask a question and talk by using memorized phrases and expressions correctly in appropriate situations
	Give directions on how to get to some destination (e.g., the office) from the nearest station
	Communicate in an understandable way about topics related to my field or specialty
	Discuss (in English) world events with a guest
	Describe my academic training or my present job responsibilities in formal settings
	Adjust my speaking for different listeners (e.g., instructors, co-workers, friends, colleagues) according to their backgrounds and English proficiency

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Speaking Scaled Score 190–200 (Proficiency Level 8)	
Probably can do	Without any preparation, give a short (a few minutes) greeting or speech at a small welcome/farewell party
	Translate (e.g., lectures or presentations) in a formal setting
Probably can do with difficulty	Serve as an interpreter for top management on various occasions such as business negotiations and courtesy calls
Probably cannot do	None

*Note.* Probably can do = at least 50% of respondents said they could perform the task easily or with little difficulty; probably cannot do = at least 50% of respondents said they could perform the task with great difficulty or not at all; probably can do with difficulty = at least 50% of respondents said they could perform the task with little difficulty, with some difficulty, or with great difficulty (provided that the task wasn't already classified as probably can do or probably cannot do).

**Appendix C**  
**Can-Do Table for TOEIC Writing**

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 80 and Below (Proficiency Levels 1–4)	
Probably can do	None
Probably can do with difficulty	None
Probably cannot do	<p>Write clear directions on how to get to my office</p> <p>Write an email requesting information about hotel accommodations</p> <p>Write a short thank-you note to a business acquaintance for a gift or dinner</p> <p>Convey information in an email about a welcome or farewell party</p> <p>Write a manual (for sales purposes) for a product or service</p> <p>Write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications for a job</p> <p>Write a memorandum to my supervisor or instructor describing progress on a current project or task</p> <p>Translate documents (e.g., business letters, manuals) into English</p> <p>Write discussion notes during a meeting or class and summarize them</p> <p>Write a formal letter of thanks to a client</p> <p>Write a brief, several-page (formal) report explaining the progress being made on a current project</p> <p>Write a plan or proposal related to my work</p> <p>Send an email or write a letter to a public organization requesting necessary information</p> <p>Write a letter or send an email to a company to request information about a certain product or service</p> <p>Write a letter or send an email to a company to complain about a product or service</p> <p>Write a brief report (or memo) summarizing the main points discussed in a group meeting related to my field or specialty</p> <p>Write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise</p> <p>Write a 1–2 page summary of a technical book that I am familiar with</p> <p>Write a research report assigned by a supervisor or instructor</p>

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 80 and Below (Proficiency Levels 1–4)	
Probably cannot do	Prepare text and slides (in English) for a presentation at a professional conference
	Write a reply to a business letter
	Write a proposal to suggest a new business process, a new product, or a new service
	Write an email to my supervisor (or instructor) explaining what I have accomplished during the past week
	Write a letter to a potential client describing the services or products of my company
	Describe (in writing) information presented in a table/chart of a report that I have written
	Create a press release to introduce a new product or service
	Write a memorandum or send an email confirming some information related to my job or class
	Write a brief note to a co-worker (or instructor) explaining why I was not able to attend a meeting (or class)
Write a short note (to a co-worker) describing how to operate an office machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC) that I am familiar with	
Writing Scaled Score 90–100 (Proficiency Level 5)	
Probably can do	None
Probably can do with difficulty	Write a short thank-you note to a business acquaintance for a gift or dinner
	Write a memorandum or send an email confirming some information related to my job or class
	Send an email or write a letter to a public organization requesting necessary information
	Write a brief note to a co-worker (or instructor) explaining why I was not able to attend a meeting (or class)
	Write a letter or send an email to a company to request information about a certain product or service
	Write a reply to a business letter
	Write clear directions on how to get to my office
Write an email requesting information about hotel accommodations	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 90–100 (Proficiency Level 5)	
Probably can do with difficulty	Write an email to my supervisor (or instructor) explaining what I have accomplished during the past week
	Describe (in writing) information presented in a table/chart of a report that I have written
	Convey information in an email about a welcome or farewell party
	Write a short note (to a co-worker) describing how to operate an office machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC) that I am familiar with
Probably cannot do	Write a manual (for sales purposes) for a product or service
	Write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications for a job
	Write a memorandum to my supervisor or instructor describing progress on a current project or task
	Translate documents (e.g., business letters, manuals) into English
	Write discussion notes during a meeting or class and summarize them
	Write a plan or proposal related to my work
	Write a brief report (or memo) summarizing the main points discussed in a group meeting related to my field or specialty
	Write a 1–2 page summary of a technical book that I am familiar with
	Write a letter to a potential client describing the services or products of my company
	Write a formal letter of thanks to a client
	Write a letter or send an email to a company to complain about a product or service
	Write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise
	Write a research report assigned by a supervisor or instructor
	Prepare text and slides (in English) for a presentation at a professional conference
	Write a brief, several-page (formal) report explaining the progress being made on a current project
	Write a proposal to suggest a new business process, a new product, or a new service
Create a press release to introduce a new product or service	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 110–130 (Proficiency Level 6)	
Probably can do	<p>None</p> <p>Write a manual (for sales purposes) for a product or service</p> <p>Write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications for a job</p> <p>Write a memorandum to my supervisor or instructor describing progress on a current project or task</p> <p>Translate documents (e.g., business letters, manuals) into English</p> <p>Write a short thank-you note to a business acquaintance for a gift or dinner</p> <p>Write a memorandum or send an email confirming some information related to my job or class</p> <p>Write discussion notes during a meeting or class and summarize them</p> <p>Write a formal letter of thanks to a client</p>
Probably can do with difficulty	<p>Send an email or write a letter to a public organization requesting necessary information</p> <p>Write a brief note to a co-worker (or instructor) explaining why I was not able to attend a meeting (or class)</p> <p>Write a letter or send an email to a company to request information about a certain product or service</p> <p>Write a letter or send an email to a company to complain about a product or service</p> <p>Write a brief report (or memo) summarizing the main points discussed in a group meeting related to my field or specialty</p> <p>Write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise</p> <p>Write a 1–2 page summary of a technical book that I am familiar with</p> <p>Write a reply to a business letter</p> <p>Write clear directions on how to get to my office</p> <p>Write an email requesting information about hotel accommodations</p>

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 110–130 (Proficiency Level 6)	
Probably can do with difficulty	Write an email to my supervisor (or instructor) explaining what I have accomplished during the past week
	Convey information in an email about a welcome or farewell party
	Write a short note (to a co-worker) describing how to operate an office machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC) that I am familiar with
Probably cannot do	Write a brief, several-page (formal) report explaining the progress being made on a current project
	Write a plan or proposal related to my work
	Write a research report assigned by a supervisor or instructor
	Prepare text and slides (in English) for a presentation at a professional conference
	Write a proposal to suggest a new business process, a new product, or a new service
	Create a press release to introduce a new product or service
Writing Scaled Score 140–160 (Proficiency Level 7)	
Probably can do	Write an email requesting information about hotel accommodations
	Write a short thank-you note to a business acquaintance for a gift or dinner
	Write a brief note to a co-worker (or instructor) explaining why I was not able to attend a meeting (or class)
	Convey information in an email about a welcome or farewell party
	Write a memorandum or send an email confirming some information related to my job or class
	Write a letter or send an email to a company to request information about a certain product or service
	Write a letter or send an email to a company to complain about a product or service
	Write clear directions on how to get to my office
Write an email to my supervisor (or instructor) explaining what I have accomplished during the past week	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 140–160 (Proficiency Level 7)	
Probably can do with difficulty	<p>Write a manual (for sales purposes) for a product or service</p> <p>Write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications for a job</p> <p>Write a memorandum to my supervisor or instructor describing progress on a current project or task</p> <p>Translate documents (e.g., business letters, manuals) into English</p> <p>Write discussion notes during a meeting or class and summarize them</p> <p>Write a formal letter of thanks to a client</p> <p>Write a brief, several-page (formal) report explaining the progress being made on a current project</p> <p>Write a plan or proposal related to my work</p> <p>Send an email or write a letter to a public organization requesting necessary information</p> <p>Write a brief report (or memo) summarizing the main points discussed in a group meeting related to my field or specialty</p> <p>Write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise</p> <p>Write a 1–2 page summary of a technical book that I am familiar with</p> <p>Write a research report assigned by a supervisor or instructor</p> <p>Prepare text and slides (in English) for a presentation at a professional conference</p> <p>Write a reply to a business letter</p> <p>Write a proposal to suggest a new business process, a new product, or a new service</p> <p>Write a letter to a potential client describing the services or products of my company</p> <p>Describe (in writing) information presented in a table/chart of a report that I have written</p> <p>Create a press release to introduce a new product or service</p> <p>Write a short note (to a co-worker) describing how to operate an office machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC) that I am familiar with</p>
Probably cannot do	None

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 170–190 (Proficiency Level 8)	
Probably can do	<p>Write a short thank-you note to a business acquaintance for a gift or dinner</p> <p>Write a memorandum or send an email confirming some information related to my job or class</p> <p>Write a brief note to a co-worker (or instructor) explaining why I was not able to attend a meeting (or class)</p> <p>Write a letter or send an email to a company to request information about a certain product or service</p> <p>Write clear directions on how to get to my office</p> <p>Write an email requesting information about hotel accommodations</p> <p>Write an email to my supervisor (or instructor) explaining what I have accomplished during the past week</p> <p>Convey information in an email about a welcome or farewell party</p> <p>Write a short note (to a co-worker) describing how to operate an office machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC) that I am familiar with</p> <p>Send an email or write a letter to a public organization requesting necessary information</p> <p>Write a letter or send an email to a company to complain about a product or service</p> <p>Write a reply to a business letter</p> <p>Write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications for a job</p> <p>Write a memorandum to my supervisor or instructor describing progress on a current project or task</p> <p>Translate documents (e.g., business letters, manuals) into English</p> <p>Write discussion notes during a meeting or class and summarize them</p> <p>Write a brief report (or memo) summarizing the main points discussed in a group meeting related to my field or specialty</p> <p>Write a letter to a potential client describing the services or products of my company</p> <p>Describe (in writing) information presented in a table/chart of a report that I have written</p>

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 170–190 (Proficiency Level 8)	
Probably can do with difficulty	Write a manual (for sales purposes) for a product or service
	Write a formal letter of thanks to a client
	Write a brief, several-page (formal) report explaining the progress being made on a current project
	Write a plan or proposal related to my work
	Write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise
	Write a 1–2 page summary of a technical book that I am familiar with
	Write a research report assigned by a supervisor or instructor
	Prepare text and slides (in English) for a presentation at a professional conference
	Write a proposal to suggest a new business process, a new product, or a new service
Create a press release to introduce a new product or service	
Probably cannot do	None
Writing Scaled Score 200 (Proficiency Level 9)	
Probably can do	Write a manual (for sales purposes) for a product or service
	Write a letter introducing myself and describing my qualifications for a job
	Write a memorandum to my supervisor or instructor describing progress on a current project or task
	Translate documents (e.g., business letters, manuals) into English
	Write a short thank-you note to a business acquaintance for a gift or dinner
	Write a memorandum or send an email confirming some information related to my job or class
	Write discussion notes during a meeting or class and summarize them
	Write a formal letter of thanks to a client
	Write a plan or proposal related to my work
Send an email or write a letter to a public organization requesting necessary information	

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 200 (Proficiency Level 9)	
Probably can do	Write a brief note to a co-worker (or instructor) explaining why I was not able to attend a meeting (or class)
	Write a letter or send an email to a company to request information about a certain product or service
	Write a letter or send an email to a company to complain about a product or service
	Write a brief report (or memo) summarizing the main points discussed in a group meeting related to my field or specialty
	Write a technical report on a familiar topic within my area of expertise
	Write a 1–2 page summary of a technical book that I am familiar with
	Write a research report assigned by a supervisor or instructor
	Prepare text and slides (in English) for a presentation at a professional conference
	Write a reply to a business letter
	Write clear directions on how to get to my office
	Write an email requesting information about hotel accommodations
	Write an email to my supervisor (or instructor) explaining what I have accomplished during the past week
	Write a letter to a potential client describing the services or products of my company
	Describe (in writing) information presented in a table/chart of a report that I have written
	Convey information in an email about a welcome or farewell party
	Write a short note (to a co-worker) describing how to operate an office machine or device (e.g., photocopier, PC) that I am familiar with
	Write a brief, several-page (formal) report explaining the progress being made on a current project
	Write a proposal to suggest a new business process, a new product, or a new service
	Create a press release to introduce a new product or service

*(Table continues)*

Table (continued)

Tasks	
Writing Scaled Score 200 (Proficiency Level 9)	
Probably can do with difficulty	None
Probably cannot do	None

*Note.* Probably can do = at least 50% of respondents said they could perform the task easily or with little difficulty; probably cannot do = at least 50% of respondents said they could perform the task with great difficulty or not at all; probably can do with difficulty = at least 50% of respondents said they could perform the task with little difficulty, with some difficulty, or with great difficulty (provided that the task wasn't already classified as probably can do or probably cannot do).