

TOEFL iBT Reading Comprehension Practice Test 001

Test Instructions

Directions: You will read different passages, each followed by questions about it. Answer all questions following a passage on the basis of what is stated or implied in that passage.

- Before attempting, carefully read the question text.
- Then choose the correct answer.

The Solar System

The Solar System is the **gravitationally bound** system of the Sun and the objects that orbit it. It formed 4.6 billion years ago from the gravitational collapse of a giant interstellar molecular cloud. The vast majority (99.86%) of the system's mass is in the Sun, with most of the remaining mass contained in the planet Jupiter. The four inner system planets—Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars—are terrestrial planets, being composed primarily of rock and metal. The four giant planets of the outer system are substantially larger and more massive than the terrestrials. The two largest, Jupiter and Saturn, are gas giants, being composed mainly of hydrogen and helium; the next two, Uranus and Neptune, are ice giants, being composed mostly of volatile substances with relatively high melting points compared with hydrogen and helium, such as water, ammonia, and methane. **All eight planets have nearly circular orbits that lie near the plane of Earth's orbit, called the ecliptic.**

There are an unknown number of smaller dwarf planets and innumerable small Solar System bodies orbiting the Sun. Six of the major planets, the six largest possible dwarf planets, and many of the smaller bodies are orbited by natural satellites, commonly called "moons" after Earth's Moon. Two natural satellites, Jupiter's moon Ganymede and Saturn's moon Titan, are larger than Mercury, the smallest terrestrial planet, though less massive, and Jupiter's moon Callisto is nearly as large. Each of the giant planets and some smaller bodies are encircled by planetary rings of ice, dust and moonlets. The asteroid belt, which lies between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter, contains objects composed of rock, metal and ice. Beyond Neptune's orbit lie the Kuiper belt and scattered disc, which are populations of objects composed mostly of ice and rock.

In the outer reaches of the Solar System lies a class of minor planets called detached objects. (A) There is considerable debate as to how many such objects there will prove to be. (B) Some of these objects are large enough to have rounded under their own gravity and thus to be categorized as dwarf planets. (C) Astronomers generally accept about nine objects as dwarf planets: the asteroid Ceres, the Kuiper-belt objects Pluto, Orcus, Haumea, Quaoar, and Makemake, and the scattered-disc objects Gonggong, Eris, and Sedna. (D) Various small-body populations, including comets, centaurs and interplanetary dust clouds, freely travel between the regions of the Solar System.

The solar wind, a stream of charged particles flowing outwards from the Sun, creates a bubble-like region of interplanetary medium in the **interstellar** medium known as the heliosphere. The heliopause is the point at which pressure from the solar wind is equal to the opposing pressure of the interstellar medium; it extends out to the edge of the scattered disc. The Oort cloud, which is thought to be the source for long-period comets, may also exist at a distance roughly a thousand times further than the heliosphere. The Solar System is located 26,000 light-years from the center of the Milky Way galaxy in the Orion Arm, which contains most of the visible stars in the night sky. The nearest stars are within the so-called Local Bubble, with the closest, Proxima Centauri, at 4.2441 light-years.

Question 1: According to the passage, which of the following is a fact about the Solar System?

- A) The vast majority of the system's mass is in Jupiter.
- B) The Solar System contains mostly gas giants.

- C) The majority of the Solar System's mass is in the Sun.
- D) The four inner system planets are substantially larger than the terrestrials.

Question 2: According to the passage, which of the following is NOT true about the Solar System?

- A) The two largest planets, Jupiter and Saturn, are gas giants.
- B) The four giant planets of the outer system are substantially larger than the terrestrials.
- C) The eight planets have nearly circular orbits.
- D) The Solar System is located 20,000 light-years from the center of the Milky Way galaxy.

Question 3: Which of the following can be inferred from the passage about the objects in the Solar System?

- A) The objects in the Solar System are mainly composed of rock and metal.
- B) The Solar System contains a variety of objects composed of different materials.
- C) The Solar System contains only one type of planet.
- D) Most of the objects in the Solar System are composed of volatile substances.

Question 4: The author of the passage implies which of the following is true about the minor planets in the outer reaches of the Solar System?

- A) Some of these objects are not large enough to be categorized as dwarf planets.
- B) There is a known number of detached objects.
- C) There is a consensus among astronomers on the number of dwarf planets.
- D) These objects are all composed of ice and rock.

Question 5: Why does the author mention the solar wind in the passage?

- A) To describe the composition of the major planets.
- B) To explain the creation of the heliosphere.
- C) To describe the different types of objects in the Solar System.
- D) To explain the location of the Solar System in the Milky Way galaxy.

Question 6: The word "interstellar" in the passage is closest in meaning to:

- A) internal
- B) outer space
- C) between stars
- D) extraterrestrial

Question 7: The phrase "gravitationally bound" in the passage is closest in meaning to:

- A) Pulling apart
- B) Repulsed by gravity
- C) Stopped by gravity
- D) Moving together

Question 8: Which of the following sentences best expresses the essential information in the following sentence?

"All eight planets have nearly circular orbits that lie near the plane of Earth's orbit, called the ecliptic."

- A) All planets orbit the Earth.
- B) The orbits of all eight planets are near the ecliptic.
- C) The ecliptic is the orbit of eight planets.
- D) The eight planets orbit in nearly circular orbits near the ecliptic.

Question 9: Look at the four letters – (A), (B), (C), and (D), – that indicate where the following sentence can be added to the passage.

"Astronomers have identified nine objects as dwarf planets in the Solar System."

Where would the sentence best fit?

- A) (A)
- B) (B)
- C) (C)
- D) (D)

Question 10: Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage.

"The Solar System is a complex and vast system of the Sun and the objects that orbit it."

- A) The Oort cloud may be the source for long-period comets.
- B) The majority of the Solar System's mass is in the Sun.
- C) The four inner system planets are terrestrial and the four giant planets are gas giants or ice giants.
- D) The heliosphere is a region of interplanetary medium created by the solar wind.
- E) The Solar System is located 25,000 light-years from the center of the Milky Way galaxy.
- F) The majority of the objects in the asteroid belt are composed of rock, metal, and ice.

Vocabulary

Solar System - the gravitationally bound system of the Sun and the objects that orbit it.

Interstellar molecular cloud - a cloud of molecular gas and dust that gave rise to the formation of the Solar System.

Terrestrial planets - inner system planets that are composed of rock and metal (e.g. Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars).

Gas giants - outer system planets that are composed mainly of hydrogen and helium (e.g. Jupiter and Saturn).

Ice giants - outer system planets that are composed mostly of volatile substances (e.g. Uranus and Neptune).

Ecliptic - plane of Earth's orbit where all eight planets have nearly circular orbits.

Dwarf planets - minor planets in the outer reaches of the Solar System that are large enough to be rounded under their own gravity.

Heliosphere - bubble-like region of interplanetary medium created by the solar wind.

Heliopause - point where the pressure of the solar wind is equal to the opposing pressure of the interstellar medium.

Oort cloud - potential source of long-period comets, located beyond the heliosphere.

Answer Keys

Question	Answer
1	C
2	D
3	B
4	A
5	B

Question	Answer
6	C
7	D
8	D
9	C
10	B C F