

9. (A) The first essay was better than the second.
 (B) The first and second drafts couldn't be better.
 (C) The second draft of the essay was much better than the first.
 (D) Both versions were poorly written.
10. (A) Roger has been bothered.
 (B) Roger wasn't the least bit disturbed.
 (C) The problems have had little effect on Roger.
 (D) Roger hasn't been disturbed.

SKILL 9: LISTEN FOR "ALMOST NEGATIVE" EXPRESSIONS

Certain expressions in English have "almost negative" meanings. These expressions are common in the short dialogues.

Example from the Paper and Computer TOEFL® Tests  

On the recording, you hear:

(woman) *Were you able to pay the electric bill?*

(man) *I had barely enough money.*

(narrator) *What does the man imply?*

In your test book or on the computer screen, you read:

- (A) He had plenty of money for the bill.
 (B) He did not have enough money for the bill.
 (C) He paid the bill but has no money left.
 (D) He was unable to pay the bill.

In the man's statement, the word *enough* indicates that there was *enough*, so he *paid the bill*. However, it was *barely* enough, so he almost did not have enough and certainly *has no money left*. The correct answer is therefore answer (C).

The following chart outlines common "almost negative" expressions:

COMMON ALMOST NEGATIVE EXPRESSIONS		
Meaning	Expression	Example
almost none	<i>hardly, barely, scarcely, only</i>	There is <i>hardly</i> any food in the refrigerator.
almost never	<i>rarely, seldom</i>	He <i>rarely</i> drives to work.

EXERCISE 9: In this exercise, underline the "almost negative" expression in the last line of each short dialogue. Then read the question and choose the best answer. Remember that the best answer is one that means that it *is true* but it is *almost not* true.

1. (man) *I hear that Mona's been offered the manager's job.* (A) Mona hasn't worked hard.
 (woman) *But she has hardly any work experience!* (B) Mona's experience has been hard.
 (narrator) *What does the woman say about Mona?* (C) Mona's job as manager is hard.
 (D) Mona hasn't worked for very long.

2. (woman) *How much time did Sam spend on his paper for economics class?*
 (man) *Sam has seldom taken so much time on a research paper.*
 (narrator) *What does the man mean?*
3. (woman) *Does Steve usually park his car there?*
 (man) *Only once has he parked his car in that lot.*
 (narrator) *What does the man mean?*
- (A) Sam usually spends this much time on his schoolwork.
 (B) Sam has rarely worked so hard.
 (C) Sam took too much time on this paper.
 (D) Sam should've worked harder on this paper.
- (A) He parks his car there once in a while.
 (B) He's parked his car there a lot.
 (C) He only leaves his car there for short periods of time.
 (D) He left his car there on just one occasion.

TOEFL EXERCISE 9: In this exercise, listen carefully to each short dialogue and question on the recording, and then choose the best answer to the question. You should be particularly careful of "almost negative" expressions.



NOW BEGIN THE RECORDING AT TOEFL EXERCISE 9.

1. (A) There's little rain in July.
 (B) In July it never rains.
 (C) It rains hard in July.
 (D) When it rains in July, it rains hard.
2. (A) The university accepted three students.
 (B) None of the students is going to the university.
 (C) John was not accepted.
 (D) Two were not admitted.
3. (A) Although he did pass, Mark's exam grade wasn't too good.
 (B) Mark failed his history exam.
 (C) The highest grade on the history exam went to Mark.
 (D) Professor Franks didn't pass Mark on the history exam.
4. (A) He often has long waits in Dr. Roberts's office.
 (B) He must wait patiently for Robert.
 (C) Dr. Roberts is generally punctual.
 (D) He doesn't mind waiting for Dr. Roberts.
5. (A) Betty often takes vacations in winter.
 (B) Betty prefers to take vacations in winter.
 (C) Occasionally Betty works one week during vacation.
 (D) A winter vacation is unusual for Betty.
6. (A) He rarely spends time on his courses.
 (B) He's an excellent student.
 (C) He never studies.
 (D) His books are always open.
7. (A) He finished the exam in plenty of time.
 (B) He was scared he wouldn't finish.
 (C) He used every possible minute to finish.
 (D) He was unable to complete the exam.
8. (A) This was a very long staff meeting.
 (B) This was the only staff meeting in a long time.
 (C) The meeting lasted only until one o'clock.
 (D) The one staff meeting should've lasted longer.

9. (A) Meat tastes delicious to him when it's cooked rare.
 (B) He isn't sure if the meal is delicious.
 (C) This meat is the best he's tasted in a long time.
 (D) He'd like to eat some meat from this delicatessen.
10. (A) He broke his arm trying to move it.
 (B) He only hurt the broken arm.
 (C) He only tries to move the broken arm.
 (D) There's no pain if he rests quietly.

SKILL 10: LISTEN FOR NEGATIVES WITH COMPARATIVES

Negatives can be used with comparatives in the short dialogues of the TOEFL test. A sentence with a negative and a comparative has a superlative, or very strong, meaning.

Example from the Paper and Computer TOEFL® Tests



On the recording, you hear:

(woman) *What do you think of the new student in math class?*

(man) *No one is more intelligent than she is.*

(narrator) *What does the man say about the new student?*

In your test book or on the computer screen, you read:

- (A) She is not very smart.
 (B) He is smarter than she is.
 (C) Other students are smarter than she is.
 (D) She is the smartest student in the class.

The man responds to the woman's question with the negative *No* and the comparative *more intelligent*, and this combination has a superlative meaning, *the smartest*. The best answer is therefore answer (D).

The following chart outlines comparisons that you should be careful of when they are used with negatives:

COMPARATIVES WITH NEGATIVES		
Comparative	Example	Meaning
<i>more</i>	<i>No one is <u>more</u> beautiful than she is.</i>	<i>She is <u>the most</u> beautiful.</i>
<i>-er</i>	<i>He couldn't be <u>happier</u>.</i>	<i>He is <u>extremely</u> happy.</i>