

5 Writing Section

Read this chapter to learn

- The format of *TOEFL iBT*® test Writing tasks
- How your written responses are evaluated
- Tips for answering each Writing task type
- Strategies for preparing for the Writing section

The Writing Section

There are two tasks in the Writing section of the *TOEFL iBT*® test: an Integrated Writing task and an Independent Writing task.

The Integrated Writing task comes first because it requires some listening, and when you are taking the real *TOEFL iBT* test, you will be wearing headphones. When you finish the Integrated Writing task, which takes about 20 minutes, you may take the headphones off to work on the Independent Writing task. You will then have 30 minutes to complete the Independent Writing task.

This chapter discusses each of the writing tasks in detail and the scoring criteria that raters will use to evaluate your writing. It includes samples of each task, sample responses to each task, and specific advice on how to approach writing your own response.

For both writing tasks, the raters evaluating your writing recognize that your response is a first draft. You are not expected to produce a well-researched, comprehensive essay about a highly specific, specialized topic. You can receive a high score with an essay that contains some errors.

Be sure to use your own words rather than memorized sentences and examples in your essay. Essays that include memorized text will receive a lower score.

The Integrated Writing Task

You will read a passage about an academic topic for three minutes, and then you will hear a short lecture related to the topic. Then you will be asked to summarize the points in the lecture and explain how they relate to specific points in the reading passage.

This task gives you the opportunity to show that you can communicate in writing about academic information you have read and listened to.

Example

A reading passage like the following will appear on your computer screen. You will have three minutes to read the passage.

In many organizations, perhaps the best way to approach certain new projects is to assemble a group of people into a team. Having a team of people attack a project offers several advantages. First of all, a group of people has a wider range of knowledge, expertise, and skills than any single individual is likely to possess. Also, because of the number of people involved and the greater resources they possess, a group can work more quickly in response to the task assigned to it and can come up with highly creative solutions to problems and issues. Sometimes these creative solutions come about because a group is more likely to make risky decisions that an individual might not undertake. This is because the group spreads responsibility for a decision to all the members and thus no single individual can be held accountable if the decision turns out to be wrong.

Taking part in a group process can be very rewarding for members of the team. Team members who have a voice in making a decision will no doubt feel better about carrying out the work that is entailed by that decision than they might doing work that is imposed on them by others. Also, the individual team member has a much better chance to “shine,” to get his or her contributions and ideas not only recognized but recognized as highly significant, because a team’s overall results can be more far-reaching and have greater impact than what might have otherwise been possible for the person to accomplish or contribute working alone.

Then you will hear:

Narrator

Now listen to part of a lecture on the topic you just read about.



Professor

Now I want to tell you about what one company found when it decided that it would turn over some of its new projects to teams of people and make the team responsible for planning the projects and getting the work done. After about six months, the company took a look at how well the teams performed.

On virtually every team, some members got almost a “free ride” . . . they didn’t contribute much at all, but if their team did a good job, they nevertheless benefited from the recognition the team got. And what about group members who worked especially well and who provided a lot of insight on problems and issues? Well . . . the recognition for a job well done went to the group as a whole; no names were named. So it won’t surprise you to learn that when the real contributors were asked how they felt about the group process, their attitude was just the opposite of what the reading predicts.

Another finding was that some projects just didn’t move very quickly. Why? Because it took so long to reach consensus; it took many, many meetings to build the agreement among group members about how they would move the project along. On the other hand, there were other instances where one or two people managed to become very influential over what their group did. Sometimes when those influencers said, “That will never work” about an idea the group was developing, the idea was quickly dropped instead of being further discussed. And then there was another occasion when a couple influencers convinced the group that a plan of theirs was “highly creative.” And even though some members tried to warn the rest of the group that the project was moving in directions that might not work, they were basically ignored by other group members. Can you guess the ending to this story? When the project failed, the blame was placed on all the members of the group.

The reading passage will then reappear on your computer screen, along with the following directions and writing task:

You have **20 minutes** to plan and write your response. Your response will be judged on the basis of the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the points in the lecture and their relationship to the reading passage. Typically, an effective response will be 150 to 225 words.

Summarize the points made in the lecture you just heard, explaining how they cast doubt on the points made in the reading passage.

The writing clock will then start a countdown for 20 minutes of writing time.

How the Task Is Phrased

If the lecture challenges the information in the reading passage, the writing task will usually be phrased in one of the following ways:

- Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they cast doubt on specific points made in the reading passage.
- Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they challenge specific claims/arguments made in the reading passage.
- Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to specifically explain how they answer the problems raised in the reading passage.

If the lecture supports or strengthens the information in the reading passage, the writing task will usually be phrased in one of the following ways:

- Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to specifically explain how they support the explanations in the reading passage.
- Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to specifically explain how they strengthen specific points made in the reading passage.

Strategies for Taking the Integrated Writing Task

As you read:

- Take notes on your scratch paper.
- Look for the main idea of the reading passage. The main idea often has to do with some policy or practice or some position on an issue. Or it may have to do with proposing some overall hypothesis about the way some process or procedure works or should work or how some natural phenomenon is believed to work.
- See how this main idea is evaluated or developed. Usually it will be developed in one of the following ways:
 1. Arguments or explanations are presented that support the main position; for example, why there are good reasons to believe that some policy or practice will be beneficial or prove useful or advisable or perhaps why it has been a good thing in the past.
 2. Arguments, explanations, or problems are brought up concerning why some policy, practice, position, or hypothesis does not work or will not be useful/advisable.
- You do not need to memorize the reading passage. It will reappear on your computer screen when it is time to write.
- Note points in the passage that either support the main idea or provide reasons to doubt the main idea. Typically, the main idea will be developed with three points.

As you listen:

- Take notes on your scratch paper.
- Listen for information, examples, or explanations that make points in the reading passage seem wrong or less convincing or even untrue. For instance, in the example just given, the reading passage says that working in teams is a good thing because it gives individuals a chance to stand out. But the lecture says that often everyone gets equal credit for the work of a team, even if some people do not do any work at all. The reading says that work proceeds quickly on a team because there are more people involved, and each person brings his or her expertise. But the lecture completely contradicts this claim by stating that it may take a long time for the group to reach consensus. The lecture brings up the idea that the whole team can be blamed for a failure when the fault lies with only a few team members. This casts doubt on the claim in the reading passage that teams can take risks and be creative because no one individual is held accountable.

As you write your response:

- You may take off your headset if you wish. You will not need your headset for the remainder of the test.
- Before you start writing, briefly reread the passage, consult your notes, and make a very brief outline of the points you wish to make. You can write this outline on your scratch paper or draw lines between the notes you took on the reading passage and the notes you took on the lecture. You can even type your outline and notes right into the answer area and then replace these with sentences and paragraphs as you compose your response.
- Remember that you are *not* being asked for your opinion. You *are* being asked to explain how the points in the lecture relate to points in the reading passage.
- Write in full English sentences. You can write either one long paragraph or a series of short paragraphs listing the points of opposition between the reading passage and the lecture. Occasional language errors will not count against you as long as they do not cause you to misrepresent the meaning of points from the reading passage and the lecture.
- Remember that your job is to select the important information from the lecture and coherently and accurately present this information in relation to the relevant information from the reading passage. Your response should contain the following:
 1. The specific ideas, explanations, and arguments in the lecture that oppose or challenge points in the reading passage.
 2. Coherent and accurate presentation of each point that you make; that is, the language you use should make sense and should accurately reflect the ideas presented in the lecture and the reading passage.
 3. A clear, coherent structure that enables the reader to understand what points in the lecture relate to what points in the reading passage.
- Suggested length is between 150 and 225 words. You will not be penalized if you write more, so long as what you write answers the question.
- CAUTION: You will receive a score of 0 if all you do is copy words from the reading passage. You will receive a score of 1 if you write *only* about the reading passage. *To respond successfully, you must do your best to write about the ways the points in the lecture are related to specific points in the reading passage.*

Integrated Writing Scoring Rubric

Here is the official scoring guide used by raters when they read Integrated Writing Task responses.

Score	Task Description
5	A response at this level successfully selects the important information from the lecture and coherently and accurately presents this information in relation to the relevant information presented in the reading. The response is well organized, and occasional language errors that are present do not result in inaccurate or imprecise presentation of content or connections.
4	A response at this level is generally good in selecting the important information from the lecture and in coherently and accurately presenting this information in relation to the relevant information in the reading, but it may have minor omission, inaccuracy, vagueness, or imprecision of some content from the lecture or in connection to points made in the reading. A response is also scored at this level if it has more frequent or noticeable minor language errors, as long as such usage and grammatical structures do not result in anything more than an occasional lapse of clarity or in the connection of ideas.
3	<p>A response at this level contains some important information from the lecture and conveys some relevant connection to the reading, but it is marked by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the overall response is definitely oriented to the task, it conveys only vague, global, unclear, or somewhat imprecise connection of the points made in the lecture to points made in the reading. • The response may omit one major key point made in the lecture. • Some key points made in the lecture or the reading, or connections between the two, may be incomplete, inaccurate, or imprecise. • Errors of usage and/or grammar may be more frequent or may result in noticeably vague expressions or obscured meanings in conveying ideas and connections.

Score	Task Description
2	<p>A response at this level contains some relevant information from the lecture, but is marked by significant language difficulties or by significant omission or inaccuracy of important ideas from the lecture or in the connections between the lecture and the reading; a response at this level is marked by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response significantly misrepresents or completely omits the overall connection between the lecture and the reading. • The response significantly omits or significantly misrepresents important points made in the lecture. • The response contains language errors or expressions that largely obscure connections or meaning at key junctures, or that would likely obscure understanding of key ideas for a reader not already familiar with the reading and the lecture.
1	<p>A response at this level is marked by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response provides little or no meaningful or relevant coherent content from the lecture. • The language level of the response is so low that it is difficult to derive meaning.
0	<p>A response at this level merely copies sentences from the reading, rejects the topic or is otherwise not connected to the topic, is written in a foreign language, consists of keystroke characters, or is blank.</p>

Sample Scored Responses for the Integrated Writing Task

The following were written in response to the task “Working in Teams” on pages 188 to 189

Score 5 Response

The lecturer talks about research conducted by a firm that used the group system to handle their work. He says that the theory stated in the passage was very different and somewhat inaccurate when compared to what happened for real.

First, some members got free rides. That is, some didn't work hard but got recognition for the success nonetheless. This also indicates that people who worked hard was not given recognition they should have got. In other words, they weren't given the opportunity to “shine.” This directly contradicts what the passage indicates.

Second, groups were slow in progress. The passage says that groups are more responsive than individuals because of the number of people involved and their aggregated resources. However, the speaker talks about how the firm found out that groups were slower than individuals in decision making. Groups needed more time for meetings, which are necessary procedures in decision making. This was another part where experience contradicted theory.

Third, influential people might emerge, and lead the group towards glory or failure. If the influential people are going in the right direction there would be no problem. But in cases where they go in the wrong direction, there is nobody that has enough influence to counter the decision made. In other words, the group might turn into a dictatorship, with the influential party as the leader, and might be less flexible in thinking. They might become one-sided, and thus fail to succeed.

Rater Comments

There are several errors of spelling, word formation, and subject-verb agreement in this response; however, most of these errors seem to be the result of typing errors common to first drafts. This writer does an excellent job of presenting the lecturer's points that contradict the arguments made in the reading passage. The writer is very specific and has organized his or her points so that they are parallel with one another: in each of the supporting paragraphs, the lecturer's observation of what really happened is given first, then explicitly connected to a theoretical point from the reading. The final paragraph contains one noticeable error (“influent”), which is then used correctly two sentences later (“influential”). Overall, this is a successful response and earns a score of 5.

Score 4 Response

The lecture that followed the paragraph on the team work in organizations, gave some negative views of the team work itself. Firstly, though it was said in the paragraph that the whole team idea would probably be faster than the individual work, it was said in the lecture just the opposite: it could actually be a lot slower. That is because team members would sometimes take more time than needed just to reach the same conclusions, or just even to simply decide where to go from certain point to the next on.

Secondly, paragraph suggests that by doing work as a team might give you an “edge,” the lecture suggests that that might also be a negative thing as well. The people who made themselves leaders in the group may just be wrong in certain decisions, or just simple thing something is so creative, when in reality it is not and it would not work, but the rest of the people would nevertheless still follow them, and end up not doing well at all.

And lastly, paragraph says that everyone feels responsible for their own part, and all together they are all more effective as a team. The lecture suggests quite the opposite in this case as well. It suggests that some team members are there only for the “free ride,” and they don’t do much of anything to contribute, but still get the credit as a whole.

Rater Comments

The writer of this response is clearly attempting to interweave the points from the passage and lecture and does a good job of discussing what the lecturer says about group decision making and the issue of some group members failing to contribute. The writer’s second point, however, is not as clearly stated as the first and third points. The key sentence in this paragraph (“The people who made themselves leaders in the group may just be wrong in certain decisions, or just simple thing something is so creative, when in reality it is not and it would not work, but the rest of the people would nevertheless still follow them, and end up not doing well at all.”) is difficult to follow. This is what the Scoring Guide calls “an occasional lapse of clarity” in a response that earns a score of 4. Overall, this is still a very strong response that directly addresses the task and generally presents the relevant information from the lecture.

Score 3 Response

The lecturer provide the opposite opinion concerning what the article offered. The team work often bring negative effet. As we all know superficially, team work and team spirits are quite popular in today's business world and also the fashionable terms.

However, the lecturer find deeper and hiding results.

Firstly, the working results of team members can't be fully valued. For example, if a team member does nothing in the process of team discussion, decision making and final pratice, his or her work deliquency will not be recognized because we only emphasize team work. Also, the real excellent and creative member's work might be obliterated for the same reason.

Secondly, the team work might lose its value when team members are leading by several influential people in the group. One of the essential merits of team is to avoid the individule wrong. But one or two influential or persuasive people will make the team useless.

Thirdly, team work oftem become the excuse of taking responsibillity. All in charge, nobody care.

All in all, what we should do is the fully distinguish the advantages and disadvantages of a concept or widely used method. That is to keep the common sense.

Rater Comments

This response frames the issue well. The first point is clearly stated and accurately conveys the lecturer's comments about team members who contribute very little and team members who contribute a great deal. However, the writer discusses the second point about influencers in somewhat error-prone or vague and non-idiomatic language ("hiding results," "working results," and "when team members are leading by . . . influential people"). The point about influencers drops off at making the team "useless" and does not fully explain the reason these influencers create problems. The final point, beginning with the word "Thirdly," is not fully related to the passage and lecture, and the meaning of it is unclear. This response illustrates many of the typical features that can cause a response to receive a score of 3.

Score 2 Response

In a company's experement, some new projects were planed and acomplished by different teams. Some teams got very good results while some teams didn't. That is to say it's not nessesary for teams to achieve more than individuals do because some team members may only contribute a little in a team for they may relying on the others to do the majority.

Another thing is the recognition for the achievement by the team is for the whole team, for everyone in the team. It's not only the dicision makers in the team feel good after successfully finishing the project, but also every member in the team.

It is also showed in the lecture that in a team with one or two leaders, sometimes good ideas from some team member are dropped and ignored while sometimes they may be highly creative. In some teams decisions were made without collecting ideas from all team members. Then it would be hard to achieve creative solutions.

For those failed projects, blames are always given to the whole team even though it's the leader or someone in the team who caught the unexpected result.

Rater Comments

Although it has the appearance of a stronger response, on close reading, this example suffers from significant problems with connecting ideas and misrepresenting points. For instance, the third sentence of paragraph 1 seems to be getting at a point from the lecture ("some team members may only contribute a little . . ."). However, it is couched in a way that makes it very unclear how it relates to the point of the task ("That is to say it's not necessary for teams to achieve more than individuals do because some team members may only contribute . . ."). In addition, it is not clear where the information in paragraph 2 is coming from and what point the writer is trying to make. In paragraph 3 the writer tries to make a point about influencers, but again, it is not clear what information relates to what. For all these reasons, this response earns a score of 2.

Score 1 Response

In this lecture, the example shows only one of the group succeed the project. Why the group will succeed on this project it is because of few factor.

First of all,a group of people has a wider range of knowledge,expertise,and skills than any single individual is like to prossess, and easier to gather the information and resources to make the work effectively and the group will willingly to trey sometihing is risky decision to make the project for interesting and suceessful it is because all the member of the group carries the differnt responsibility for a decision, so once the decision turn wrong, no a any individual one will be blame for the whole responsibility.

On the other way, the groups which are fail the project is because they are lay on some more influence people in the group,so even the idea is come out. Once the inflenced people say that is no good, then the process of the idea will be drop down immediately instead taking more further discussion! So the idea will not be easy to settle down for a group.

The form of the group is very important, and each of the member should be respect another and try out all the idea others had suggested, then it will develop a huge idea and the cooperate work environment for each other for effectively work!

Rater Comments

The level of language used in this response is fairly low, and it is lowest in the second paragraph, which is the only reference to the lecture. Because the reader has difficulty gleaning meaning from that paragraph, the response contributes little coherent information and therefore earns a score of 1.

The Independent Writing Task

The second task in the Writing section is the Independent Writing task. You are presented with a question, and you have 30 minutes to write an essay in response. The question asks you to give your opinion on an issue. Here is how the question is typically phrased:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

[A sentence or sentences presenting an issue will appear here.]

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words. Do **not** use memorized examples.

An effective response is typically about 300 words long. If you write fewer than 300 words, you may still receive a top score, but experience has shown that shorter responses typically do not demonstrate the development of ideas needed to earn a score of 5. There is no maximum word limit. You may write as much as you wish in the time allotted. But do not write just to be writing; write to respond

to the topic. The number of ideas you express is important, but it is the quality of your ideas and the effectiveness with which you express them that will be most valued by the raters.

Example

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Always telling the truth is the most important consideration in any relationship.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words. Do **not** use memorized examples.

Essay-Writing Tips

- Think before you write. Make a brief outline or some notes on scratch paper to help you organize your thoughts. You can even type your outline and notes right in the answer area on the computer and then replace your outline with sentences and paragraphs.
- Keep track of your time. Try to finish writing your essay by the time the clock counts down to 4 or 5 minutes. Use the remaining time to check your work and make final changes. At the end of 30 minutes your essay will be automatically saved.
- When you develop your response, do not use examples or reasons that you memorized word-for-word previously (at school, for example). Raters will not consider examples or reasons expressed in a completely memorized language to represent your own writing and your response will receive a lower score.

How Essays Are Scored

Raters will judge the quality of your writing. They will consider how well you develop your ideas, how well you organize your essay, and how well you use language to express your ideas.

Development is the amount and kinds of support (examples, details, reasons) for your ideas that you present in your essay. To get a top score, your essay should be, according to the rater guidelines, “well developed, using clearly appropriate explanations, exemplifications, and/or details.” The raters will judge whether you have addressed the topic and how well your details, examples, and reasons support your ideas.

Do not “memorize” long introductory and concluding paragraphs just to add words to your essay. Raters will not look favorably on wordy introductory and concluding paragraphs such as the following:

The importance of the issue raised by the posed statement, namely creating a new holiday for people, cannot be underestimated, as it concerns the very fabric of society. As it stands, the issue of creating a new holiday raises profound implications for the future. However, although the subject matter in general cannot be dismissed lightheartedly, the perspective of the issue as presented by the statement raises certain qualms regarding practical application.

In conclusion, although I have to accept that it is imperative that something be done about creating a new holiday for people and find the underlying thrust of the implied proposal utterly convincing, I cannot help but feel wary of taking such irrevocable steps and personally feel that a more measured approach would be more rewarding.

Similarly, do not use memorized sentences and examples in the body of your essay. Extended stretches of memorized text do not represent the writer's true academic writing skills. Responses that include memorized examples, arguments, or formulaic references to sources will receive considerably lower scores than essays containing the writer's own words. Here is an example of an extensive use of memorized text:

Question: *Is honesty an important quality for a leader?*

By taking in mind the honesty, we can learn proper social behavior. in addition to my personal experience, there is a research that confirms my opinion. A poll, conducted by the New York times, stated an overwhelming 72% who did not think the honesty lack the code of conduct in society. however, people who did regularly comtemplate the importance of not lying were better regulating themselves in the societies. the major characteristic were that they do not lie in their daily life and seve honesty is the most important value in the societies because there is a order for people's lives. therefore it helps one abiltiy to be successful either in business or in academia. it helps people to strive and achieve their goal and making them successful in life.

All the writing in this example has been memorized from a prepared text and repeated in the essay. This includes a formulaic reference to a poll in *The New York Times*. This is not genuine development and will not be credited by raters. Essays with this type of writing often receive a low score. The essay from which the paragraph above is taken received a score of 1.

Likewise, raters will not look favorably on paragraphs like the following one, which uses a lot of words but fails to develop any real ideas:

At the heart of any discussion regarding an issue pertaining to creating a new holiday, it has to be borne in mind that a delicate line has to be trod when dealing with such matters. The human resources involved in such matters cannot be guaranteed regardless of all the good intentions that may be lavished. While it is true that creating a new holiday might be a viable and laudable remedy, it is transparently clear that applied wrongly such a course of action could be calamitous and compound the problem rather than provide a solution.

In your writing, make sure you develop some solid ideas about the given topic. Do not just use a lot of words saying that a certain issue exists. Your essay may be 300 or even 400 words long, but if it consists largely of the sorts of empty or content-free paragraphs shown above, you will probably earn a score of just 1 or 2.

Organization is something that raters notice—when you fail to organize. If an essay is organized, a reader will be able to read it from the beginning to the end without becoming confused. Writing in paragraphs and marking transitions from one idea to another in various ways usually helps the reader to follow your

ideas. But be aware that just using transition words such as *first* or *second* does not guarantee that your essay is organized. The points you make must all relate to the topic of the essay and to the main idea you are presenting in response. In other words, your essay should be unified. The scoring guide mentions “unity” as well as “progression” and “coherence”—these are terms that all have to do with how well your essay is organized and how easy it is for the reader to follow your ideas. To earn a top score, you need to avoid redundancy (repetition of ideas), digression (points that are not related to your main point, that take away from the “unity” of your ideas), and unclear connections (places where it is hard for the reader to understand how two ideas or parts of your writing are related).

Language use is the third criterion on which your essay will be judged. To get a top score, an essay must display “consistent facility in the use of language.” There should be a variety of sentence structures, and word choice should be appropriate. If your essay includes a few minor lexical or grammatical errors, you can still get a high score. However, if you make a lot of grammatical errors and if those errors make it hard to understand your meaning, you will get a lower score. Raters will also judge your essay based on the complexity of sentence structures and on the quality and complexity of your vocabulary. If you use very simple sentences and very basic vocabulary, you will probably not be able to express very complex ideas. If your language is hard to follow, your sentences are overly simple, and your vocabulary is limited, you may score no higher than a 3 no matter how impressive your ideas may be.

Independent Writing Scoring Rubric

Here is the official scoring guide used by raters when they read Independent Writing Task responses.

Score	Task Description
5	<p>An essay at this level largely accomplishes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively addresses the topic and task • Is well organized and well developed, using clearly appropriate explanations, exemplifications, and/or details • Displays unity, progression, and coherence • Displays consistent facility in the use of language, demonstrating syntactic variety, appropriate word choice, and idiomaticity, though it may have minor lexical or grammatical errors
4	<p>An essay at this level largely accomplishes all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses the topic and task well, though some points may not be fully elaborated • Is generally well organized and well developed, using appropriate and sufficient explanations, exemplifications, and/or details • Displays unity, progression, and coherence, though it may contain occasional redundancy, digression, or unclear connections • Displays facility in the use of language, demonstrating syntactic variety and range of vocabulary, though it will probably have occasional noticeable minor errors in structure, word form, or use of idiomatic language that do not interfere with meaning
3	<p>An essay at this level is marked by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses the topic and task using somewhat developed explanations, exemplifications, and/or details • Displays unity, progression, and coherence, though connection of ideas may be occasionally obscured • May demonstrate inconsistent facility in sentence formation and word choice that may result in lack of clarity and occasionally obscure meaning • May display accurate but limited range of syntactic structures and vocabulary

Score	Task Description
2	<p>An essay at this level may reveal one or more of the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited development in response to the topic and task • Inadequate organization or connection of ideas • Inappropriate or insufficient exemplifications, explanations, or details to support or illustrate generalizations in response to the task • A noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms • An accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage
1	<p>An essay at this level is seriously flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious disorganization or underdevelopment • Little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics, or questionable responsiveness to the task • Serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage
0	<p>An essay at this level merely copies words from the topic, rejects the topic or is otherwise not connected to the topic, is written in a foreign language, consists of keystroke characters, or is blank.</p>

Sample Scored Responses for the Independent Writing Task

The following essays are responses to this Independent Writing task:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Always telling the truth is the most important consideration in any relationship.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Be sure to use your own words. Do **not** use memorized examples.

This topic supports a variety of approaches. Some writers disagree with the statement and describe instances where to them it is appropriate to lie; typically these include white lies, lies to avoid hurting others, and lies in a business context (which often have more to do with not disclosing proprietary information than with outright lying). Others take the position that lies beget more lies and undermine trust. These writers present examples that support the statement. Still others look at both sides of the issue, often delineating or classifying situations where they consider lying appropriate and others where they consider lying inappropriate or more consequential. The telling of stories—real and hypothetical—is not inappropriate; it is reasonable to illustrate one’s ideas on this topic with examples.

Score 5 Essay

DISHONESTY KILLS RELIABILITY

There are certain considerations or factors that everyone takes into account in a relationship. People may look for honesty, altruism, understanding, loyalty, being thoughtful etc! Everyone would more or less wish that the person s/he is dealing with, has some of these virtues above. Putting them in an order according to their importance, however can be very subjective and relative.

When someone asks him/herself the question “What do I consider to be the most important thing in my relationship?” the answer depends on a lot of factors such as how his/her earlier relationships were.

After stating that everyone’s opinion can be different about this, for me honesty, in other words, always telling the truth is the most important consideration in a relationship. Opposite of this is inarguably lying and if someone needs to lie, either s/he is hiding something or is afraid of telling me something.

In any relationship of mine, I would wish that first of all, the person I’m dealing with is honest. Even though s/he thinks that s/he did something wrong that I wouldn’t like, s/he’d better tell me the truth and not lie about it. Later on if I find out about a lie or hear the truth from someone else, that’d be much more unpleasant. In that case how can I ever believe or trust that person again? How can I ever believe that this person has enough confidence in me to forgive him/her and carry on with the relationship from there. So if I cannot trust a person anymore, if the person doesn’t think I can handle the truth, there’s no point to continuing that relationship.

Although I would like to see altruistic, understanding, thoughtful and loyal behavior from people, an instance of the opposite of these behaviors would not upset me as much as dishonesty would. Among all the possible behaviors, dishonesty is the only one for me that terminates how I feel about a person's reliability. Therefore honesty would be my first concern and the most important consideration in a relationship.

Rater Comments

In this response the writer first approaches the topic by underscoring that a number of character traits are important to a relationship. The writer then effectively develops an argument that, unlike other negative behaviors, dishonesty or unwillingness to fully disclose some bad action cannot be forgiven and can be the most important factor in destroying a relationship. The writer's language is fluent, accurate, and varied enough to effectively support the progression and connection of ideas. There is a variety of sentence structures, including rhetorical questions. The essay is not mechanically perfect, but as long as such errors are occasional, are minor, and do not interfere with the reader's understanding, an essay like this one can still earn a top score.

Score 4 Essay

Always telling the truth in any relationship is really the most important consideration for many reasons. I could say that when you lie to someone, this person will not trust you anymore and what is a relationship based on? Trust, confidence, so the sense of relationship is being lost. Another point is that if the true is omitted once, it will surely appear sometime, somewhere and probably in the most unexpected way, causing lots of problems for the ones involved. So, the truth is the basis for everything.

First, confidence is the most important aspect of a friendship or a marriage, or anything like that, so, once it is lost, the whole thing goes down in a way that no one can bear it. To avoid losing confidence, there is only one way, telling the truth, lying will just help throwing it away. For example, a couple decided to go out on the weekend, but the man has a party to go with his friends to where he can not take his girlfriend and then he lies to her saying that he is sick and can not go to the date. She understands him and they do not see each other in that weekend, but he goes to the party and has much fun. Suppose on monday, the girl talks to a friend that saw him at the party and asked why did not she go with him. She found out the true and all confidence was lost, the basis for their relation is now gone and what happens next is that they break up or if they do not, he will persist on lies and someday it will end.

What happened to this couple is very common around here and many relationships, even friends and marriages end because of something like that. Some may argue that lying once or another will not interfere anything and it is part of a relation, but I strongly disagree, the most important thing is the true, even if it is to determine the end of a relation, it must be told. There are more chances to end something lying than saying what really happened

Rater Comments

This essay earned a score of 4. It clearly develops reasons why lying is a bad thing, with a first paragraph that introduces the writer's position ("truth is the basis for everything"), a hypothetical story in paragraph 2, and a final paragraph that entertains and quickly dismisses a possible counterargument. All this amounts to solid development of the idea. The response displays facility in language use through a variety of sentence structures and the use of clear transitions between sentences. However, sometimes the writer's sentences include noticeable errors in word form ("if the true is ommited," "lying will just help throwing it away," "persist on lyes," "lying once or another"), and in some places the writer extends, or "runs on," a sentence to include many steps in the argument when using two or more sentences would make the relationships between ideas clearer. For example, "Some may argue that lying once or another will not interfere anything and it is part of a relation, but I strongly disagree, the most important thing is the true, even if it is to determine the end of a relation, it must be told."

Score 3 Essay

Some people believe that it is one of the most important value in many relationships to tell the truth all the time. However, it cannot be always the best choice to tell the truth in many situatioins. Sometimes white lies are indispensible to keep relationships more lively and dilightly. There are some examples to support this idea.

Firstly, in the relationships between lovers, it is often essential to compliment their lovers on their appearance and their behavior. Even though they do not think that their boyfriend or girlfriend looks good on their new shoes and new clothes, it will probably diss them by telling the truth. On the other hand, little compliments will make them confident and happy making their relationship more tight.

Secondly, parents need to encourage their children by telling lies. Even if they are doing bad work on studying or exercising, telling the truth will hurt their hearts. What they need is a little encouraging words instead of truthful words.

Thirdly, for some patients telling them their current state of their desease will probably desperate them. It is accepted publically not to let the patients know the truth. They may be able to have hope to overcome their desease without knowing the truth.

In conclusion, it is not always better to tell the truth than lies. Some lies are acceptable in terms of making people's life more profusely. Not everybody has to know the truth, and it will lead them more happier not knowing it. In these cases, white lies are worth to be regarded as a virtue of people's relationships

Rater Comments

This essay focuses on explaining why "white lies" are sometimes appropriate. The explanations here are somewhat developed. Each example does support the main point; however, at critical junctures in the writer's attempt to explain why the positive effect of the white lie outweighs any negative effect, inconsistent facility with language hinders the writer's effort. So, with errors in both structure and

vocabulary that obscure meaning (“keep relationships . . . diligently,” “will probably desperate them,” “making people’s life more profusely,” “it will lead them more happier not knowing it”), this essay earns a score of 3.

Score 2 Essay

Recently, there is a big debate on the issue that telling the truth or not is the most important consideration in the relationship between people. For my experience, I think telling a truth is the most important consideration in people’s relationship. In the following, I will illustrate my opinion by two reasons.

First of all, honest make the trust stronger between friends or colleagues. As we know, if people tell a lie to others he will not be trusted. When he tell a truth, others will believe that he tells a lie. For example, a person who is honest to others, can get real help and get trust of others.

Secondly, telling a lie always makes things worse not only in work but also in family life. When somebody do something wrong in his job he should annouce his mistake to his manager. If he don’t do that others may continue their jobs base on the mistake. Consequently, the work will be worse and worse.

On the contrary, sometimes it is better to tell a lie to others, such as telling a lie to a patient. As we know, the sick become worse when a cancer patient know his illness. A good way to protect their life is to tell a lie. So that many doctors will not tell the truth to a dying patient.

To sum up, people should tell the truth to maintain their relationship with other people, although sometimes people have to tell a lie. People can get trust when they are honest to others.

Rater Comments

This essay is quite long, but even though it uses several examples, each idea is only partly developed, and the connections among ideas are weak or contradictory. For instance, in paragraph 2 the first sentence says, “honest make the trust stronger.” The next two sentences present a contrast: “if people tell a lie to others he will not be trusted”; then “when he tell a truth, others will believe that he tells a lie.” Then the last sentence in the paragraph says, “For example, a person who is honest to others, can get real help and get trust of others.” But that is not an example of the previous sentence and only confuses the reader. This last sentence does not advance the progression of ideas much beyond the first sentence and certainly is not an example of the point made by the second and third sentences. Thus connections throughout this paragraph are tenuous. Paragraph 3 begins by saying that telling a lie makes things worse at work and at home, but it does not follow through at all on the latter. The “On the contrary” paragraph comes as a surprise to the reader, since paragraph 1 said that the writer was going to give two reasons why telling the truth was the most important consideration in human relationships. Because of all these weaknesses, this essay earns a score of 2.

Score 1 Essay

Nowadays, many people think that the people who always telling the true is the most important consideration in any relationship between human. but another think that is necessary to tell some lies. It is seldom to reach the same issue. I agree with the first thinking because of the following reasons.

First fo all, we all live in the realized world , people can respect you unless you want to use correct method to communicate with other people. It is very important, especially in business , if you want to recieve the good resulit ,you must tell the ture about your own so that gain the considement.

Secondly, if you are honest man/woman, many people may be want to make friend with you. You can have more chance to communate with other people . you may be gain more information from them.

However,sometimes we must speak some lie.for examlpe, when our relatives have heavy illness such as cancer,we couldn't telling them the ture. because that not good for their health,and may be affect their life.

In conclusion,tellingthe ture is the people good behavire .we must require most of people to tell the ture.thus,we can see the better world in our life unless we always tell the ture.

Rater Comments

This essay contains serious and frequent errors in sentence structure and usage. Paragraph 2, beginning “First fo all,” is nearly incomprehensible and contains vocabulary that is either vague at best or nonstandard English (“realized world,” “considement”). Paragraph 3 is completely vague, and paragraph 4 (actually one sentence), though it mentions a familiar example, is poorly expressed and certainly underdeveloped. For all these reasons, this essay earns a score of 1.

Independent Writing Topics

The following is a list of Independent Writing topics that were used as actual test topics in former versions of the *TOEFL*® test or developed as practice topics for the current *TOEFL* test. You will see topics very similar to these on the *TOEFL iBT*® test. Whatever the topic, you will be asked to give your opinion and to support your opinion with specific reasons and examples.

It does not matter whether you agree or disagree with the topic; the raters are trained to accept all varieties of opinions. What matter are the skills discussed in the previous section: your ability to respond directly to the question, to take a clear position, and to write an essay characterized by good organization, proper use of supporting examples, sentence variety, correct sentence structures, and appropriate vocabulary. Remember that raters will not consider examples or reasons expressed in a completely memorized language to represent your own writing.

None of the topics requires specialized knowledge. Most topics are general and are based on the common experience of people in general and students in particular.

What should you do with this list of topics? To prepare for the test, choose topics from the list and practice writing essays in response. Make sure you time yourself, taking 30 minutes to read the question, plan your work, and write your essay. After completing the essay, read it over and compare it with the scoring guide. Or better yet, have a friend or teacher evaluate the essay against the scoring criteria and give you feedback.

Topic List

- The expression “Never, never give up” means to keep trying and never stop working for your goals. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Why do you think some people are attracted to dangerous sports or other dangerous activities? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- What are the important qualities of a good son or daughter? Have these qualities changed or remained the same over time in your culture? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- People work because they need money to live. What are some **other** reasons that people work? Discuss one or more of these reasons. Use specific examples and details to support your answer.
- Some people like to do only what they already do well. Other people prefer to try new things and take risks. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.
- If you could study a subject that you have never had the opportunity to study, what would you choose? Explain your choice, using specific reasons and details.

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Grades (marks) encourage students to learn. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.
- Some people say that computers have made life easier and more convenient. Other people say that computers have made life more complex and stressful. What is your opinion? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Your city has decided to build a statue or monument to honor a famous person in your country. Whom would you choose? Use reasons and specific examples to support your choice.
- Describe a custom from your country that you would like people from other countries to adopt. Explain your choice, using specific reasons and examples.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Technology has made the world a better place to live. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The content of advertisements in a particular country can tell you a lot about that country. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Modern technology is creating a single world culture. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.
- A foreign visitor has only one day to spend in your country. Where should this visitor go on that day? Why? Use specific reasons and details to support your choice.
- If you could go back to some time and place in the past, when and where would you go? Why? Use specific reasons and details to support your choice.
- What discovery in the last 100 years has been most beneficial for people in your country? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Dancing plays an important role in a culture. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- If you could meet a famous entertainer or athlete, who would that be, and why? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.
- If you could ask a famous person one question, what would you ask? Why? Use specific reasons and details to support your choice.
- Your teacher has given you a large assignment that must be completed in one month. You can complete the assignment gradually by working on it a little bit each day, or you can complete the work quickly by working on it intensively for three or four days. Which method do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.

- You have a choice of movies to see. What influences you the most in choosing which movie to see?
 - Whether your favorite actors are in it
 - What kind of movie it is (action, romance, comedy, etc.)
 - What other people are saying about it

Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.

- Many people believe that greed, or the desire to have more wealth than other people have, is a bad characteristic; people who are greedy are often considered selfish or unkind. However, some people argue that greed is actually a good characteristic for a person to have because greedy people will work harder than others to become successful. Do you believe that greed can be a good characteristic? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Which is more important for a leader: the ability to win an argument about an issue or the ability to help others come to an agreement about an issue? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Your city or province has received a large donation of money to improve the education of children. It must choose between spending the money on improvement of early childhood education (for children ages 4 to 7) and spending the money on the improvement of education for older children (ages 11 to 14). Which do you think is the better option? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? For students who are planning to work in business, learning about psychology is more important than learning about technology. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Practice and hard work are more important to an athlete's success than natural ability and talent. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Today's media (TV and online news sites, for example) offer a lot of information on many topics, but people do not use this information to really learn something thoroughly and in depth. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? People who have had difficulty learning a skill go on to become better teachers of that skill than people who learned it easily. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Children today would be happier if they had fewer possessions. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Traditional ways of celebrating holidays are much less important today than they were in the past. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Improving transportation is the best way for governments to promote economic growth. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? As long as they meet deadlines and attend meetings, company employees should be allowed to work any hours they choose. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Although technology has made communication easier, there are still as many misunderstandings among people as there were in the past. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? People today are much better informed about international news than they were in the past. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? For students, the ability to listen well is just as important as the ability to read well. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? For most jobs or areas of work, understanding the limits of your knowledge is more important than the knowledge you have. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Television does not give people an accurate view of human nature. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is more interesting to read a good book or see a good movie the second time than the first. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? All jobs should provide some opportunity for physical exercise. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

