

BENCHMARK WRITING RESPONSES

To better understand each of the performance levels on the TOEFL iBT® Writing section, please refer to the Integrated Writing Rubric as you read the Benchmark Writing Responses, provided below. (These are in response to Writing Task #1 on page 6.) The annotations following each benchmark describe each response and explain the rating it was assigned by official ETS raters. Before reading these benchmarks, refer to page 6 to become familiar with this integrated writing task.

Level 5 Benchmark

Test Taker 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 in reality.

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 were not given recognition they should have gotten. 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 place where experience contradicted theory.

Third, influential people might emerge and lead the group towards glory or failure. If the influent 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 become less flexible in its thinking. They might become one-sided, and thus fail to succeed.

Rating Annotation: Once you can read past what seem to be the results of poor typing, this Benchmark 5 does an excellent job of presenting the points about the contribution and recognition of group members as well as about speed of group decisions. The final paragraph contains one noticeable error ("influent"), which is then used correctly two sentences later ("influential"). Overall, this is a successful response and scored within (though perhaps not at the top of) the 5 level.

Level 4 Benchmark

Test Taker 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 a 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.

Rating Annotation: This Benchmark 4 does well at attempting to interweave the points from the passage and lecture and does a good job of discussing the reaching of consensus and the issue of the “free ride.” But the second body paragraph does not communicate as clearly the issue of the negative effect of people who dominate the group. 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 think 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”) represents enough of a lapse in clarity that this response is scored as a 4.

Level 3 Benchmark

Test Taker 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 pratique, his or her work delinquency 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.

Rating Annotation: This Benchmark 3 response frames the issue well. The writer discusses the points about contributing ideas and 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 typical features that can cause a response to receive a score of 3.

Level 2 Benchmark

Test Taker Response: In a company's experiment, some new projects were planned and accomplished by different teams. Some teams got very good results while some teams didn't. That is to say it's not necessary 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 decision 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.

Rating Annotation: Although it has the appearance of a stronger response, on close reading, this Benchmark 2 suffers from significant problems with connecting ideas and misrepresenting points. For instance, the third sentence of the first paragraph seems to be getting at a point from the lecture ("some team members may contribute only a little..."). However, it is couched in such a way that make 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 the second paragraph 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. And in the final paragraph, it is clear that the writer has misunderstood what the lecture said; the phrase "caught the unexpected result" very much obscures the real information presented in the lecture.

Level 1 Benchmark

Test Taker 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 sometiing 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!

Rating Annotation: The level of language used in this Benchmark 1 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 is therefore scored as a 1.

ADDITIONAL WRITING RESPONSES

As with speaking, a score level in the Writing section also represents a range of ability. Performances within a level can vary slightly from one test taker to the next and from one response to the next. Additional Sample Writing Responses are provided below to help better understand this performance range. As you read several test takers' responses to the integrated writing task on the Writing section of the TOEFL iBT test, please refer to the:

- Additional Writing task and annotations (below)
- Integrated Writing Rubric

Additional TOEFL iBT® Writing Task

Used for rating annotations starting on page 8

TASK 1 Integrated Writing — The Reading-Listening-Writing Task: Groups

First, test takers see on their computer screen the following reading passage for 3 minutes:

Reading 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 numbers 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 be 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.

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.

Directions:

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.

Question:

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

Level 5 — Test Taker A

TASK 1 Rating Annotation

This response is well organized, and the writer clearly and accurately discusses the contrasting points of the lecture and the reading passage. The only identifiable faults are easily-corrected mechanical errors, such as the capitalization of the first word in a sentence, some spelling errors, and some sporadic, minor grammatical errors (“those worked harder” instead of “those who worked harder” and “contradicts with” instead of “contradicts”). The overall grammatical and lexical competence shown here is quite high.

Test Taker Response: In the lecture, doubt was expressed concerning the advantages of the recent trend of forming teams to tackle projects, which was mentioned in the reading.

to begin with, the lecturer argues that although a group tends to have a greater resource of skills and expertises, these resources may not necessarily be effectively used. according to a recent company project, it was found that one or two members dominated over the whole group, when the dominant members asserted or banned an idea, most of the other group members would follow their ideas and “suppress” the other ideas that were suggested, even if the other ideas were more creative and innovative.

secondly, it was proved that, on the contrary of the reading, progress in the project was very slow. this was the result of long debates over reaching a compromise as ideas were diverted \ and consensus took a lengthy period of time.

thirdly, as a group would be credited collectively, quite a number of unfair situations appeared. in the group. it was found that some members did not work hard at all and got a “free ride”. however, those worked harder were not rewarded for their extra efforts as their individual efforts would not be recognized.

concluding, via the results of a recent company that adopted the “group method” of tackling projects, the lecturer projected doubts that contradicted with the central standpoint of the reading. the lecturer believes that skills and expertise cannot be maximized in a group, progress is slow and the overall results of the team is not a fair assessment of the individual members of the group-which contradicts with the central standpoint of the reading.

Level 4 — Test Taker B

TASK 1 Rating Annotation

This response thoroughly covers the key points and connections between the lecture and the reading passage. The language used to convey this information, however, is not at 5 level. Sentences are not as fluently connected, and occasional noticeable grammatical errors and word usage errors are present (“those who do not lively participate in the projects could enjoy free time...”). On the other hand, meaning is never obscured and the sentences could be easily edited into standard English.

Test Taker Response: According to the lecture, the group work was found to have several disadvantage.

First, in a team, those who do not lively participate in the projects could enjoy free time yet gain the benefit from the team’s success as the real contributors do. Even though the success is much obliged to the real contributors, they are not be praised but it is the group as a whole that enjoy the success. It is not rewarding as the reading predicts.

Second, in contrast to the reading’s claim that a group can work quickly, the study showed that it’s the opposite. That is because it takes extra times to reach consensus and build agreement among members.

In addition, the influencer in the group can ruin the projects. The ideas rejected by the influencer are simply dropped even though other people think it is quite good. The opposite is the same story. If the influencer thinks certain idea is good, then even though other people warn that it might not work, the idea will be the winner.

The results are even worse. It the projects led by the influencer fails, it’s all the members who are blamed.

Level 4 — Test Taker C

TASK 1 Rating Annotation

This response seems to cover the points of contrast (though the final two sentences are a slight over-interpretation of the relationship between the two parts, as is the comment about “ego clashes”). The language and organization are a bit below the 5 level; occasionally meaning is not always clear (e.g., “have their thoughts forwarded” and “progressed a lot”). In addition, the writer sometimes fails to take into account that the reader is not familiar with the information presented in the source material.

Test Taker Response: The idea of the lecture and the contents of the given passage contradicted very much. The reading said that wider range of knowledge, expertise and skills of team members may improve team’s performance. But it seemed to generate lot of ego clashes between them. Also, the reading said that a group can work more quickly in response to the task, but here, no consensus was reached for a long time and it took several meetings to come to an agreement. It was also thought that all team members can have their thoughts forwarded, but it was more for the people who were influential that decided the fate of the decision. Also there was no credit given to members of the group when they progressed a lot in a team, as againstr the reading, rather it was considered team effort. There were lot of differences from the reading to the speech. The only thing that seemed to be in correlation between the two were the project’s failure. The whole team was blamed and none of the individuals were pointed out.

Level 3 — Test Taker D

TASK 1 Rating Annotation

Although this response frames the contrasting points well, the discussion about contributing ideas and influencers is presented in somewhat vague, error-prone, and nonidiomatic language (“The lecturer find deeper and hiding results” and “the real excellent...member’s work might be obliterated”). The meaning of the final point beginning with “thirdly” is very unclear.

Test Taker 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 practice, 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 responsibility. 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.

Level 2 — Test Taker E

TASK 1 Rating Annotation

The writer does a reasonable job of summarizing most of the points in the reading, but really only discusses one counterpoint from the lecture (“In the other hand, the lecture shows that the group workers may not be able to work better and faster than individual because making a decision by many people take longer time than individual”). The intended meaning of the remainder of that paragraph, (beginning with “The instructure shows one example...”) is not at all clear because of the language used. In places it is not easy to discern whether the writer is trying to convey something related to the lecture or not.

Test Taker Response: In the organization, there are many advantage for group teams to work together and make some advantages to the group. They are some problem that individual can be better than group; however, many problem can be done better by groups. There are many different points of views in the article and lecture about group teams work.

In the article, ther are many advantage about working in group. First of all, the group member can share the ability, knowledge, and skill better than individual ;moreover, the greater number than individual make the job goes quicklier that individual.

In the way group workers make a decision, it can be faster than individual because the work can be seperate and all member can help each other to make a faster decision.

In the other hand, the lecture shows that the group workers may not be able to work better and faster than in dividual because making a decision by many people take longer time than individual. The instructure shows one example about group worker problems. It is about a competition between many group workers, and it seems to be more problem during the race. Finally, some of group worker fail the work because they cannot compleate the work together.

Level 2 — Test Taker F

TASK 1 Rating Annotation

In the first paragraph the writer attempts a summary of the lecture but does not express meaning well. The language used reveals a lot of influence of the writer's native language and oral patterns. The writer deviates from the task, trying to give solutions to a perceived problem. While one can somewhat discern the writer's intent, again, the grammatical structures used to express meaning are fairly far from the conventions of academic standard English usage ("be patience, heard everybodys comments, responsibility, and so on but this is part of the companys procedures").

Test Taker Response: In the listening expose a the problemas that a person in a team will find, such as not and equal work, envolving from the members. But at the end you will be evaluated as a hole, so what ever you do in your team, even though that your part, was well developed, but the end work not, your effort wont be recognize it will be criticies and also you capable of working as a member of a team

On the other side the reading presentes the benefits of working in a group, such as having more creative solutions to problems or the team will take more risk, by dividing the risk into all the members.

So in order to succed as a team, the company must put all the right elements together, to make the group work, for example all the members should have same characteristics, for example the posibility to interact with diferent people, be patience, heard everybodys comments, responsibility, and so on but this is part of the companys procidures, the must stablish a patern to create the right team for the right problem. In this case the firm will be more productive and the members will get there recognition

Level 1 — Test Taker G

TASK 1 Rating Annotation

The language here does not follow basic patterns of English sentence structure. It is difficult to derive any coherent meaning from the little that is expressed.

Test Taker Response: the lecture and passage talk their relationship in the team and who the comfort. the decision that people with knowledge take in the team and solution risky decisions. the members that form part of team help the others members for