

TOEFL iBT® Writing Practice Questions

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Writing Practice Set 1 (Integrated): Passage, Lecture, and Question

Directions: Give yourself 3 minutes to read the passage.

Reading Time: 3 minutes

In an effort to encourage ecologically sustainable forestry practices, an international organization started issuing certifications to wood companies that meet high ecological standards by conserving resources and recycling materials. Companies that receive this certification can attract customers by advertising their products as “ecocertified.” Around the world, many wood companies have adopted new, ecologically friendly practices in order to receive ecocertification. However, it is unlikely that wood companies in the United States will do the same, for several reasons.

First, American consumers are exposed to so much advertising that they would not value or even pay attention to the ecocertification label. Because so many mediocre products are labeled “new” or “improved,” American consumers do not place much trust in advertising claims in general.

Second, ecocertified wood will be more expensive than uncertified wood because in order to earn ecocertification, a wood company must pay to have its business examined by a certification agency. This additional cost gets passed on to consumers. American consumers tend to be strongly motivated by price, and therefore they are likely to choose cheaper uncertified wood products. Accordingly, American wood companies will prefer to keep their prices low rather than obtain ecocertification.

Third, although some people claim that it always makes good business sense for American companies to keep up with the developments in the rest of the world, this argument is not convincing. Pursuing certification would make sense for American wood companies only if they marketed most of their products abroad. But that is not the case—American wood businesses sell most of their products in the United States, catering to a very large customer base that is satisfied with the merchandise.



Directions: Read the transcript

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

Professor Well, despite what many people say, there's good reason to think that many American wood companies will eventually seek ecocertification for their wood products. First off, consumers in the United States don't treat all advertising the same. They distinguish between advertising claims that companies make about their own products and claims made by independent certification agencies. Americans have a lot of confidence in independent consumer agencies. Thus, ecologically minded Americans are likely to react very favorably to wood products ecologically certified by an independent organization with an international reputation for trustworthiness.

Second point—of course it's true that American consumers care a lot about price—who doesn't? But studies of how consumers make decisions show that price alone determines consumers' decisions only when the price of one competing product is much higher or lower than another. When the price difference between two products is small—say, less than five percent, as is the case with certified wood—Americans often do choose on factors other than price. And Americans are becoming increasingly convinced of the value of preserving and protecting the environment.

And third, U.S. wood companies should definitely pay attention to what's going on in the wood business internationally, not because of foreign consumers, but because of foreign competition. As I just told you, there's a good chance that many American consumers will be interested in ecocertified products. And guess what, if American companies are slow capturing those customers, you can be sure that foreign companies will soon start crowding into the American market, offering ecocertified wood that domestic companies don't.

Directions: Give yourself 20 minutes to plan and write your response. Your response is judged on the quality of the writing and on how well it presents the points in the lecture and their relationship to the reading passage. Typically, an effective response will be 150 to 225 words. You may view the reading passage while you respond.

Response time: 20 minutes

Question: Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they cast doubt on specific points made in the reading passage.

Writing Practice Set 1 (Integrated): Response Tips

What is important to understand from the lecture is that the professor disagrees with the points made in the reading, namely that American consumers mistrust advertising, that they are unwilling to pay extra for ecocertified products, and that American companies do not need to compete in parts of the world where ecocertification is valued.

In your response, you should convey the reasons presented by the professor for why ecocertification of wood should be adopted by U.S. companies. A high-scoring response will include the following points made by the professor that cast doubt on the points made in the reading:

Point made in the reading	Counterpoint made in the lecture
Because American consumers have come to distrust frequently used advertising claims such as ‘new’ or ‘improved,’ they won’t pay attention to or trust the ecocertified label.	American consumers do pay attention to claims about products when those claims are made by independent consumer agencies.
Since ecocertification adds to the cost of a product, Americans would be unlikely to buy ecocertified products and would choose cheaper, uncertified products.	This is true only if there is a big price difference between two similar products; if an ecocertified product costs only about five percent more, American consumers would accept this in order to buy the product that is better for the environment.
Because American companies sell their products mainly in the U.S., they do not need to compete in the rest of the world where ecocertification is desired by consumers.	American companies must be ready to compete with foreign companies that will soon be selling ecocertified products in the U.S. market.

This task is scored using the Integrated Writing Rubrics. A response that receives a score of 5 clearly conveys all three of the main points in the table using accurate sentence structure and vocabulary.

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Writing Practice Set 2 (Independent): Question

Directions: Read the question below. Give yourself 30 minutes to plan, write, and revise your essay. Typically, an effective response will contain a minimum of 300 words.

Reading Time: 30 minutes

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

**Television advertising directed toward young children
(aged two to five) should not be allowed.**

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Writing Practice Set 2 (Independent): Response Tips

To earn a top score, you should develop a multi-paragraph essay that responds to the issue of whether TV advertising directed at young children should be permitted. Typically an effective response will contain a minimum of 300 words.

Among the kinds of support that might be developed in favor of banning such advertising might be that young children do not have the ability to tell what is good for them and what is not. So this may lead to children who will be excessively influenced by television advertising and form bad eating habits or demand to have every toy that they have seen advertised.

Those who disagree with the statement often develop one of their supports along the lines that it is the responsibility of the parents to decide what their children should watch on television and that parents should monitor their children’s reactions to shows or advertisements. Thus, it is not necessary for government or the television stations to ban advertisements directed at young children.

Keep in mind that there is no “correct” answer to this question. Either side of the issue can be supported with examples and reasons. The important part of this task is to make sure that you state your opinion and develop your response. Try to cover the topic as well as you can within your abilities. Development of your essay is judged by the amount and kinds of support (reasons, examples, details) that you present, and a well-developed essay will contain clearly appropriate reasons, examples, and details—ones that do a good job supporting or illustrating the points you are making. Development is not simply the number of words you write.

Your response should be well organized. If your essay is well organized, a reader will be able to read from beginning to end without becoming confused. You should be sure not to just repeat the same information in different ways.

The quality and accuracy of the sentence structure and vocabulary you use to express your ideas is also very important.

This task is scored using the Independent Writing Rubric.

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Writing Practice Set 3 (Integrated): Passage, Lecture, and Question

Directions: Give yourself 3 minutes to read the passage.

Reading Time: 3 minutes

Critics say that current voting systems used in the United States are inefficient and often lead to the inaccurate counting of votes. Miscounts can be especially damaging if an election is closely contested. Those critics would like the traditional systems to be replaced with far more efficient and trustworthy computerized voting systems.

In traditional voting, one major source of inaccuracy is that people accidentally vote for the wrong candidate. Voters usually have to find the name of their candidate on a large sheet of paper containing many names—the ballot—and make a small mark next to that name. People with poor eyesight can easily mark the wrong name. The computerized voting machines have an easy-to-use touch-screen technology: to cast a vote, a voter needs only to touch the candidate's name on the screen to record a vote for that candidate; voters can even have the computer magnify the name for easier viewing.

Another major problem with old voting systems is that they rely heavily on people to count the votes. Officials must often count up the votes one by one, going through every ballot and recording the vote. Since they have to deal with thousands of ballots, it is almost inevitable that they will make mistakes. If an error is detected, a long and expensive recount has to take place. In contrast, computerized systems remove the possibility of human error, since all the vote counting is done quickly and automatically by the computers.

Finally some people say it is too risky to implement complicated voting technology nationwide. But without giving it a thought, governments and individuals alike trust other complex computer technology every day to be perfectly accurate in banking transactions as well as in the communication of highly sensitive information.

Directions: Here is the transcript.

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

Professor While traditional voting systems have some problems, it's doubtful that computerized voting will make the situation any better. Computerized voting may seem easy for people who are used to computers. But what about people who aren't? People who can't afford computers, people who don't use them on a regular basis—these people will have trouble using computerized voting machines. These voters can easily cast the wrong vote or be discouraged from voting altogether because of fear of technology. Furthermore, it's true that humans make mistakes when they count up ballots by hand. But are we sure that computers will do a better job? After all, computers are programmed by humans, so "human error" can show up in mistakes in their programs. And the errors caused by these defective programs may be far more serious. The worst a human official can do is miss a few ballots. But an error in a computer program can result in thousands of votes being miscounted or even permanently removed from the record. And in many voting systems, there is no physical record of the votes, so a computer recount in the case of a suspected error is impossible! As for our trust of computer technology for banking and communications, remember one thing: these systems are used daily and they are used heavily. They didn't work flawlessly when they were first introduced. They had to be improved on and improved on until they got as reliable as they are today. But voting happens only once every two years nationally in the United States and not much more than twice a year in many local areas. This is hardly sufficient for us to develop confidence that computerized voting can be fully trusted.

Directions: Give yourself 20 minutes to plan and write your response. Your response is judged on the quality of the writing and on how well it presents the points in the lecture and their relationship to the reading passage. Typically, an effective response will be 150 to 225 words. You may view the reading passage while you respond.

Response time: 20 minutes

Question: Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they cast doubt on specific points made in the reading passage.

Writing Practice Set 3 (Integrated): Sample Responses

Response A, Score of 5

The lecture explained why the computerized voting system can not replace the traditional voting system. There are the following three reasons.

First of all, not everyone can use computers correctly. Some people do not have access to computers, some people are not used of computers, and some people are even scared of this new technology. If the voters do not know how to use a computer, how do you expect them to finish the voting process through computers? This directly refutes the reading passage which states that computerized voting is easier by just touching the screen.

Secondly, computers may make mistakes as the people do. As computers are programmed by the human beings, thus errors are inevitable in the computer system. Problems caused by computer voting systems may be more serious than those caused by people. A larger number of votes might be miss counted or even removed from the system. Furthermore, it would take more energy to recount the votes. Again this contradicts what is stated in the reading which stated that only people will make mistakes in counting.

Thirdly, computerized voting system is not reliable because it has not reached a stable status. People trust computers to conduct banking transactions because the computerized banking system is being used daily and frequently and has been stable. However, the voting does not happen as often as banking thus the computerized voting system has not been proved to be totally reliable.

All in all, not everyone can use a computer properly, computer cause mistakes and computerized voting system is not reliable are the main reasons why computerized voting system can not replace the traditional voting system.

Score explanation

This response is well organized, selects the important information from all three points made in the lecture, and explains its relationship to the claims made in the reading passage about the advantages of computerized voting over traditional voting methods.

First, it counters the argument that computerized voting is more user-friendly and prevents distortion of the vote by saying that many voters find computers unfamiliar and some voters may end up not voting at all.

Second, it challenges the argument that computerized voting will result in fewer miscounts by pointing out that programming errors may result in large-scale miscounts and that some errors may result in the loss of voting records.

Third, it rejects the comparison of computerized voting with computerized banking by pointing out that the reliability of computerized banking (“reached a stable status”) has been achieved though frequent use, which does not apply to voting.

There are occasional minor language errors: for example, “people not used of computers”; “miss counted”; “computer cause mistakes”; and the poor syntax of the last sentence (“All in all . . .”). Some spelling errors are obviously typos: “everyoen.” The errors, however, are not at all frequent and do not result in unclear or inaccurate representation of the content.

The response meets all the criteria for the score of 5.

Response B, Score of 4

The lecture disagreed with the article's opinions. It's not a better solution to use the computerized voting systems.

Firstly, it might be hard for the voters who don't use the computer so often, or the users who is fear of the technology, even some of voters can not afford a computer. Touch screen may also be hard to use for people who is not familiar with computers. Secondly, computer is programmed by human beings, which means it can also have errors. Instead of human being's counting error, which only results one or two counting error in number, an error in the program code could cause tremendous error in number. In case of the computer crash or disaster, it may lost all the voting information. We can not even to make a re-count. Lastly, our daily banking or other highly sensitive information system, is actually improved as time goes by. They were also problematic at the beginning. As we use them so often, we have more chances to find problems, and furthermore, to fix and improve them. However, for the voting system, we only use them every 2 years nationally and some other rare events. We just don't use it often enough to find a bug or test it thoroughly.

Score explanation

The response selects most of the important information from the lecture and indicates that it challenges the main argument in the reading passage about the advantages of computerized voting systems (“it's not a better solution”).

First, the response explains that some people will not find computers to be user-friendly; however, it fails to relate this clearly to the point made in the passage that computerized voting will prevent distortion of the vote. That is clearly an omission, but it is minor.

Second, the response does a good job of pointing out how programming and errors can cause greater problems than miscounts cause in the traditional voting system.

Third, the response provides a nice explanation of how the frequent use of systems like the banking system has contributed to such systems' reliability, and then it contrasts that with the computerized voting system.

There are more frequent language errors throughout the response—for example, “users who is fear”; “some of voters can not afford”; “people who is not familiar”; “it may lost”; and “can not even to make.” Expressions chosen by the writer occasionally affect the clarity of the content that is being conveyed: “results one or two counting error in number . . . an error in the program code could cause tremendous error in number” and “use them every 2 years nationally and some

other rare events.” However, it should be noted that in these cases, a reader can derive the intended meaning from the context.

Due to the more frequent language errors that on occasion result in minor lapses of clarity and due to minor content omission, especially in the coverage of the first lecture point, the response cannot earn the score of 5. At the same time, since the language errors are generally minor and mostly do not interfere with the clarity of the content and since most of the important information from the lecture is covered by the writer, the response deserves a higher score than 3. It meets the criteria for the score of 4.

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Writing Practice Set 4 (Independent): Question

Directions: Read the question below. Give yourself 30 minutes to plan, write, and revise your essay. Typically, an effective response will contain a minimum of 300 words.

Reading Time: 30 minutes

Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

A teacher's ability to relate well with students is more important than excellent knowledge of the subject being taught.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Writing Practice Set 4 (Independent): Sample Response

Response A, Score of 5

I remember every teacher that has taught me since I was in Kindergarten. If a friend wants to know who our first grade teacher was in elementary school, all they have to do is ask me. The teachers all looked very kind and understanding in my eyes as a child. They had special relationships with nearly each and every one of the students and were very nice to everyone. That's the reason I remember all of them.

A teacher's primary goal is to teach students the best they can about the things that are in our textbooks and more important, how to show respect for one another. They teach us how to live a better life by getting along with everyone. In order to do that, the teachers themselves have to be able to relate well with students.

My parents are teachers too. One teaches Plant Biology and one teaches English, but that's not the reason I'm calling them "teachers." They are teachers because they teach me how to act in special situations and how to cooperate with others. I have a brother, and my parents use different approaches when teaching us. They might scold my brother for surfing the internet too long because he doesn't have much self-control and they need to restrain him. He almost never studies on his own and is always either drawing, playing computer games, or reading. On the other hand, they never tell me off for using the computer too long. I do my own work when I want and need to because that brings me the best results and my parents understand that. They know that I need leisure time of my own and that I'll only play until needed. My parents' ability to relate well with my brother and I allows them to teach, not just the subject they teach but also their excellent knowledge on life.

Knowledge of the subject being taught is something taken for granted, but at the same time, secondary. One must go through and pass a series of courses and tests in order to become a teacher. Any teacher is able to have excellent knowledge of their subject but not all teachers can have the ability to relate well with students.

A teacher's primary goal is to teach students the best they can about how to show respect for one another, so teachers use different approaches when teaching, and knowledge of the subject being taught is secondary. For these reasons, I claim with confidence that excellent knowledge of the subject being taught is secondary to the teacher's ability to relate well with their students.

Score explanation

This essay conveys the idea that as important as teaching knowledge is, it is as important if not more important for teachers to possess other qualities, all of which the writer classifies as necessary for being able to relate well with students. Those other qualities include having "special relationships" with students; the teaching of respect (in the first two paragraphs); and taking different approaches for different individuals. The writer develops the last idea primarily by using a clearly appropriate extended and complex example of the writer's own parents, who are teachers but whose special qualities in raising the writer and the writer's brother had to do more with taking varied approaches. The writer then goes on to convey that knowledge is a

given—“something taken for granted”—because all teachers take course work and pass tests to gain their jobs but not all have the qualities the writer considers more important.

This response very effectively addresses the topic and the task. It is true that this response is different from most essays: the overall idea is stated explicitly but only at the end of the essay. However, because of very good language structure and good conceptual transitions between ideas, the reader is able to follow the writer’s development of ideas without becoming confused. The response is thus seen to be well organized. Errors in language are almost nonexistent here. This response meets all of the 5-level criteria from the Scoring Guide.

Response B, Score of 4

I disagree with the idea that the possessing the ability to relate well with student is more important than excellent knowledge of the subject being taught for a teacher. There are several reasons why I disagree with that idea.

First, teachers’ job is to educate their student with their knowledge. The ability to relate well with their student is something a counselor should possess, not a teacher. That’s why the board of education gives an award to a teacher with an excellent knowledge of the subject they teach. Teachers who can get along with their students but have no knowledge can be popular and be liked by his or her students, however I don’t consider a teacher with no knowledge a good teacher.

Second, Students go to schools because they want to learn knowledge from their teachers not to get along with their teachers. I knew a math teacher who was well known among other mathematics teachers. Some students always complained how he never entertains his students which made many of his students to fall asleep. Nevertheless, all of his classes were all full even before the semester began because many students who were eager to learn already booked in. He won the Apples prize (it’s given to a noticed teacher annually) a couple of times and that enabled students to firmly believe in his way of teaching.

Thirdly, teachers are responsible for conceding their knowledge to their next generation. Teachers already had an experience of getting advantaged education from college. Teachers should not let that privilege become useless and workless. We all learn because we want to become the better person that this world needs. Students will also eventually grow up to be influencing other people and teachers should volunteerily be their students’ role models.

For conclusion, I think the most important quality a teacher must have is an excellent knowledge of the subject they teach, not an ability to relate well with their students.

Score explanation

This essay conveys the idea that as important as teaching knowledge is, it is as important if not more important for teachers to possess other qualities

This is a more traditional-looking essay that is organized with a point of view in the first paragraph stating the writer's disagreement with the writing prompt, followed by three pieces of supporting reasons and examples.

The second paragraph makes the point that counselors are the ones who are supposed to relate to students and that teachers with no knowledge are not worthwhile as teachers.

In the third paragraph the writer tries to describe the fact that knowledge is important by stating that students wanted to take courses from a teacher who was known to possess special knowledge even though they knew the teacher was not entertaining.

The fourth paragraph contains the very interesting idea that teachers have the obligation to pass on what they have had the privilege of learning, but this paragraph in particular has a few problems with somewhat unclear expression of concepts: (1) errors of word choice in the word "conceding" (not clear exactly what word is intended here) and in the term "'advantaged' education" (advanced education or advantages of education?) and (2) a problem with unclear connection of ideas (why is it said that "We all learn because we want to become the better person that this world needs?").

Overall, this essay is well organized, but the slightly unclear connection of ideas and the language chosen, especially in the final paragraph, prevent this response from rising above the 4 level.

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