

State OHILL Writing Success

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In the Name of God Almighty

TOEFL WRITING SUCCESS 5th Edition

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How to Use the Book

About the Book

The book you are going to read is intended for upper-intermediate and advanced students who want to take part in the TOEFL iBT Test and get a score from 25 to 30 in the writing task. It helps you to build necessary skills to address the writing task in an excellent fashion. It also familiarizes you with the format of TOEFL iBT writing tasks and teaches essential test-taking strategies to help you guarantee a great score. For the independent writing task, all the five types of writing tasks, that is, Stating a Preference, Agree or Disagree, Argument, Explanation, and Compare and Contrast the Advantages and Disadvantages of Something, are separately elaborated upon, and for each of which quite a few samples, 153 independent and integrated samples, including my own samples, are presented for more familiarity with each task. To find a specific sample, you can search the topic in a word file named Topics Written in the Book, which is available in Avaye Shahir Site: www.avayeshahir.com. In many of these samples, the track of the mistakes is left so that you became aware of the common mistakes of the Iranian test takers. It also contains punctuation and grammar section that are of great help to those who want to take part in IELTS, GMAT, and GRE tests in general and to TOEFL test takers in particular. Furthermore, the section allocated to the integrated task is one of a kind, thorough, and varied, in which some good sample responses of my students are included.

The book is accompanied by a CD, which contains: the audio files for the integrated task, a version of Babylon dictionary with all the learner's glossaries, and a word file that contains a syllabus for the most important TOEFL iBT sources. Since the vocabularies used in the example answers seem to be difficult to follow, a **glossary** was prepared for these words, which is available on **Avaye Shahir Site:** www.avayeshahir.com. These words or phrases are either underlined or boldfaced all through the book.

Apart from what you learn from this book for the writing tasks, this book is an <u>invaluable</u> source of practical vocabularies that are good for your general English and is full of great ideas that will help you in your speaking task as well.

It is worth mentioning that the writing samples in this book may look too complicated and advanced to have been written within the given time, thirty minutes. My students have spent a great deal of time to write these samples, and their writing samples have been edited by the author of the book. Therefore, I hope these advanced samples do not discourage you because a sample writing which is much lower than these samples, concerning quality and quantity, can still earn a high score. The writing samples are categorized into three groups and are identified with stars: one star (*) for almost easy samples, two stars (**) for difficult ones, and three stars (***) for advanced samples.

Amir Khadem

Preface

There are two writing tasks on the TOEFL test: one independent and one integrated. Independent writing refers to essays that express and support the student's point of view on a particular topic. Integrated writing refers to essays that combine what students have learned from assigned reading as well as class lectures. Integrated writing assignments require students to be able to organize and synthesize information from different sources, including their own notes; summarize and paraphrase information from these sources; and make comparisons or draw conclusions about the information from these sources¹.

The independent task measures your ability to compose an essay. You will have 30 minutes to write an essay of at least 300 words in response to an assigned question. However, if you want to get a score higher than 25, you should write between a range of 400 and 600 words. To answer the question, you must either state, explain, and support an opinion or state, explain, and support a preference.

There is no right or wrong answer to the question. Your response is scored on your organization, development of ideas, and accuracy of language in <u>addressing</u> all parts of the question.

In order for a TOEFL test taker to be successful in the writing task, he or she should meticulously (carefully) follow three stages, namely planning, writing, and finally revising. Each test taker is given only 30 minutes to fulfill the independent writing task and 20 minutes for the integrated task; therefore, it stands to reason that the test taker, in order to successfully carry out the task in the short time provided, undergo intensive, constant training. In order to make a good impression on the examiner, one should write his or her essay in a precise, unambiguous, and coherent fashion. The very book you are going to study will assist you to do so.

Before elaborating on the necessary stages to be followed on the part of the test taker, let's take a brief look at the elements that guarantee the score 30 in TOEFL iBT writing task. These elements are as follows: first, effectively <u>addressing</u> the writing task; second, organization and the development of ideas; third, fluency in applying language, by this I mean the ease with which the test taker can get his or her points across; and finally, demonstrating grammatical variety and proper choice of words. A writing sample which <u>enjoys</u> all these qualities is guaranteed to get <u>the very</u> much desired score of 30.

¹Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test (4th Edition).

Independent Task

Strategies to Use for Building Writing Fluency¹

Practice writing in English on a computer keyboard. You will be required to use a computer to type your essays on the TOEFL test. Practice typing on a keyboard using English characters. Do as many of the writing exercises in the Writing section of different books as you can directly on a computer.

Practice writing essays. Set aside regularly scheduled times to practice writing essays. Use the topics in this book or topics of your own to develop your writing fluency. Start writing down your ideas as soon as you have read the topic. Use the strategies suggested later on in this book, both for writing practice essays and for the actual test.

Practice organizing information in written form. Use passages from the Reading and the Listening sections of TOEFL books to practice taking notes on main ideas and organizing those ideas in your writing.

Practice paraphrasing and summarizing information in written form. Use your notes to paraphrase key statements and to summarize passages you have read or heard. These two skills are <u>elaborated upon</u> in the 5th chapter and the last section of this book.

Read and listen to the kinds of material you will encounter on the test. Select material on topics in the fields of science, technology, the social sciences, and the humanities to practice taking notes on main ideas. Organize those main ideas in your writing.

Increase your skills in using a variety of sentence structures and vocabulary. A good written response includes a variety of structures and vocabulary.

Pay attention to time. Check the amount of time it takes you to respond to the essay-writing tasks. At first, don't worry if the amount of time it takes you is longer than the time allotted on the test. With more practice, you can decrease your time. In this way, you can build up your writing fluency so that you can complete the writing tasks within the time allotted on the TOEFL test.

¹ ibid

Strategies to Use for the Independent Writing Task

Be familiar with the organization of an effective essay. An effective essay begins with an introductory paragraph that includes a thesis statement. The thesis statement tells the reader what the essay is about. The body of the essay is made up of paragraphs that support the introduction. A concluding paragraph completes the essay.

Study the question carefully. Be sure you understand what the task requires. Consider a few ways to <u>address</u> the question. Quickly organize your thoughts and write down your ideas.

Organize your ideas. Organize your ideas into a logical progression by using a table or a traditional outline. Check your ideas to make sure they cover the requirements of the task. Then start typing your essay.

Write cohesively and concisely. While you are organizing your ideas, keep in mind the techniques for making your essay cohesive¹. While you are writing the essay, keep in mind the techniques for making your sentences cohesive and concise.

Budget your time so that you will be able to complete and correct your essay. You have only 30 minutes to write your essay. Use your time efficiently while you read and think about the question, organize your ideas in a simple form, write the essay, and make minor revisions.

Use sentence structures and vocabulary you know to be correct. Use sentence structures and vocabulary that you know how to use well. A well-written essay includes a variety of structures and vocabulary.

Check your grammar. When you are writing, look out for the kinds of grammar errors that you know you commonly make. Check your grammar when you review your essay.

Don't lose time worrying about whether the evaluator will agree with your opinions and the support you have used. Your essay is evaluated on how well you present your opinion, not on whether the evaluator agrees with you. Be sure you have supported your opinion well and have responded to all parts.

¹Something that is cohesive consists of parts that fit together well and form a united whole.

Evaluation Criteria¹

Almost all essays are evaluated according to three main criteria: Content, Organization, and Language. Although different teachers interpret these categories varyingly, I have specified below what I believe each involves.

1. Content	2. Organization	3. Language
a. logic	a. focus	a. grammar
b. evidence	b. structure	b. clarity
c. development	c. unity	c. style

1. a LOGIC:

Logic refers to clear thinking, ordered thoughts, and precise arguments. You should have an arguable claim backed up by good reasons that support it. Hasty generalizations¹, poor causal reasoning, and other fallacies should be avoided as you make your argument.

→ → Example: People go to university to have fun!!

This is not a logical reason at all. There are many other reasons we can mention which are much more logical than this one.

→ Example: I conclude from the several pleasant, hard-working AUC students I met this morning that all AUC students are pleasant, hard-working students.

Actually, you may have just met the only three nice students on campus.

1. b EVIDENCE:

Evidence refers to the support you give your argument. This support could be in the form of facts, statistics, authoritative quotations, surveys, studies, or other types of evidence. Good evidence involves more than just finding quotations to agree with your position. It expounds the reasoning behind these authoritative statements and offers factual data for your position.

1. c DEVELOPMENT:

Development refers to the degree of depth you give a topic. If your thesis takes a specific, narrow claim and expands at length that idea with insights, evidence, and commentary, then you are said to be "developing" the idea. On the other hand, if you merely state a position and give superficial reasons for it, and then move on to another idea, your ideas will not be developed.

¹ Hasty Generalization: Generalizing from a sample that is too small.

¹ http://www1.aucegypt.edu/academic/writers

2. a FOCUS:

Your overall essay should have a clear, specific focus as stated in the thesis. Additionally, each paragraph should be focused on supporting that thesis. Overall, your focus on the topic should be sufficiently narrow <u>such that</u> it allows you to explore in depth a specific idea. Your essay should not cover so much <u>ground</u> that your treatment ends up broad and shallow.

2. b STRUCTURE:

Structure refers to the way you organize your thoughts about the topic you are writing about. A well-structured essay presents your ideas in clear, distinct paragraphs with topic sentences that guide the reader—the topic sentence is the summary of that specific paragraph. Your insights and explanations should be logically divided and presented in some progressive or sequential order that makes sense for the topic.

2. c UNITY:

Unity involves remaining focused in each paragraph on a single main idea. Additionally, unity implies that each paragraph supports the thesis in a relevant way. Paragraphs with multiple main ideas or essays with extraneous or irrelevant paragraphs break the principle of unity.

Your ideas in the two or three body paragraphs should not overlap, which means you should not mention the same reason with different wording.

→ → Example:

Paragraph 2: One of the advantages of co-ed classes is that students, boys and girls, can share their ideas.

Paragraph 3: Another advantage of co-educational schools <u>has to do with</u> learning things from the opposite sex.

These two reasons are similar to each other to a great extent. As a result, the candidate loses a big proportion of his or her score.

3. a GRAMMAR:

The grammar in your sentences should be correct. In particular, commas, semi-colons, capitalizations, possessives, and periods should be used correctly. Additionally, your sentences should be free of subject-verb agreement errors, tense shifts, misspellings, misplaced modifiers, fragments, run-ons, and all awkwardness. All these common errors are discussed in the section named "Common Errors."

3. b CLARITY:

Clarity in writing involves constructing sentences, paragraphs, and arguments in ways easily understood by those reading your essay. If a reader has to reread your sentence, guess at the intended meaning, or struggle to follow your basic argument, your writing is unclear and needs to be recast with more precision.

3. c STYLE:

Style refers to the way you say something <u>rather than</u> what you say. The style adopted for an academic essay should be formal but readable. The tone should be <u>objective</u> and scholarly, and the sentences should have varied structures and lengths. Your style is like the literary fingerprint of your writing—it is what identifies your "voice."

Time Schedule

For test takers to get a <u>decent</u> score in TOEFL iBT writing task, they <u>are supposed to</u> manage the time allocated to them. To do so, the following time schedule, which has proven to be <u>airtight</u> and practical, is offered.

Time		Activity
3-5 minutes	Plan	Read the topic, at least 2 times, and <u>iot down</u> your opinion. Brainstorm ideas followed by a map to ease the writing task.
20-24 minutes	Write	Write the introduction and the body paragraph using the map already prepared.
3-5 minutes	Revise	Read the essay again and revise it.

How TOEFL Essays are Rated

A writing which will potentially get 30 in TOEFL should enjoy the qualities itemized hereunder.

- 1. A well-written task should effectively address the topic.
- 2. It is supposed to be organized and well developed.
- 3. Such writing should <u>enjoy</u> facility in the use of language. (Facility <u>has to do with</u> a piece of writing which is smooth and easy to follow <u>thanks to</u> appropriate use of punctuation and conjunctions)
- 4. It should demonstrate a wide variety of grammatical structures as well as clear and good diction (the choice and use of words and phrases to express meaning).

Essay Writing in Nine Steps

1. Planning

- 1. Read the essay topic (at least two times).
- 2. Identify the writing task (one of the five major tasks that are frequently offered in TOEFL: Preference, Agree or Disagree, Argument, Explanation, and Discuss the Advantages and Disadvantages of something, each of which will be <u>elaborated upon</u> in the next chapters).
- 3. Write down your idea (thesis statement).
- 4. Start making notes about your general ideas. (Brainstorming)
- 5. Expand your notes to include specific details.

2. Writing

- 6. Write the introduction.
- 7. Write the body of the essay.
- 8. Write the conclusion.

3. Revising

9. Check the punctuation, spelling, as well as the clarity of the text.

1. Planning the Essay

As was already mentioned, for any task and activity to be successful, it <u>is supposed to</u> be <u>meticulously</u> (carefully) planned <u>in advance</u>, and the writing task of the TOEFL is no exception. Therefore, the five steps outlined previously should be thoroughly followed. What will follow is a detailed description of these five steps.

1.1 Steps 1 and 2: Read the Essay Topic and Identify the Task.

Many exam candidates lose marks <u>simply</u> because they do not read the essay topic properly. In order to fully <u>grasp</u> the essay topic, read it twice. After having a thorough comprehension of the topic and its direction, as well as identifying the task, you should take a stance. In the following chapters, three writing samples will be provided for each of the four different writing tasks—<u>that is</u>—**Preference**, **Agree** or **Disagree**, **Argument**, and **Explanation**.

1.2 Steps 3 and 4: Write Your Thesis Statement and Make Notes about Your General Ideas.

Unlike the Integrated Task, the Independent Task is personal. What I mean is, in the Integrated Task, other people's ideas are dealt with, while in the Independent Task, you present your own ideas and <u>are supposed to</u> explain your opinion on that issue. The thesis of your essay is your stance, your opinion, on the subject.

A good essay <u>enjoys</u> a thesis that is clearly stated. A thesis statement, whose focus is on the direction of the topic, tells the reader what you mean to say. In other words, it conveys to the reader what your essay is about. As a concluding remark on this issue, I want to remind you that thesis statement should be about the topic <u>rather than</u> off topic. For instance, take the following topic and the two thesis statements provided.

Example 1:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Sometimes a teacher will be listened to, where a parent might not. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Thesis statement 1: Since our society is <u>plaqued</u> with the <u>so-called</u> phenomenon of child-oriented families, <u>it stands to reason that</u> children listen to their teachers <u>rather than</u> their parents. (To the point)

Thesis statement 2: Since teachers are kind and <u>sympathetic</u> toward children, they <u>tend to</u> listen to them more than their parents do. (Off-topic)

As can be seen, the first thesis statement clearly states the standpoint of the writer, while the second one is absolutely off topic, showing that the test taker has not understood the topic properly. This is because the sentence is in passive case, which means the children listen to their teacher and not the other way around. Pay close attention while determining your stance on the topic provided.

Having decided about the thesis statement, the candidate <u>is supposed to embark on making</u> notes about general ideas, which depends on recognizing the writing task, one of which, Stating a Preference, will be dealt with first. These notes provide the candidate with a map all through the writing process, by means of which they will be able to avoid writing off topic or <u>impairing</u> the organization of the essay.

→ Take this example from Barron's writing for the TOEFL iBT to see how a thesis statement may be off topic, or state a preference for or against a topic.

Example 2:

"Some people think governments should spend as much money as possible exploring outer space (for example, traveling to the moon and to other planets). Other people disagree and think governments should spend this money for our basic needs on Earth. Which of these two opinions do you agree with? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer."

Thesis Statement A: "The moon is a better place to explore because it is nearer than the planets."

While the topic is about how to spend limited resources either on space exploration or on needs on the Earth, this thesis statement is <u>simply</u> about exploration possibilities, which is totally off topic.

Thesis Statement B: "While there are still hunger, poverty, and <u>illiteracy</u> on Earth, our resources should be focused here and not in outer space."

This statement shows that the writer will discuss the reasons why hunger, poverty, and illiteracy are of more importance than space exploration. Hence, to the point.

Thesis Statement C: "Gaining psychological and scientific knowledge through space exploration will benefit us more than trying to solve problems here on Earth."

This thesis statement will certainly <u>elaborate upon</u> the psychological and scientific benefits we may gain from space exploration. This thesis statement is to the point as well.

→ Now, let's take a look at a thesis statement from one of my students, Keyhan Khodjasteh, in my TOEFL class:

Example 3:

A gift (such as a soccer ball, a camera, or an animal) can contribute to a child's development. What gift would you give to help a child develop? Why? Use reasons and specific examples to support your choice.

"Were I to give a present to a child, I would give a chess set to him or her...playing chess will help a child to get familiar with logical thinking, science of <u>deduction</u>, and <u>rationality</u>. Moreover, playing chess can help children understand who they are and what their abilities and potentials are."

As can be seen here, the thesis statement directly and clearly mentions how playing chess <u>contributes</u> to the development of a child.

→→→ Note: Your thesis should have the following features:

1. Make it arguable¹

Your thesis must make an arguable assertion. To test whether your assertion is arguable, ask yourself whether it would be possible to argue the opposite. If not, then it is not a thesis – it is more of a fact. For example:

Not Arguable: "Computers are becoming an efficient mechanism for managing and transmitting information in large businesses." (Who is going to dispute this? It is not an arguable assertion - it is a fact.)

Arguable: "Heavy use of computers may disrupt family cohesion and increase divorce in society." (This is arguable because many people may not believe it. It would make a good thesis!) Be specific!

2. The thesis must also be specific

Avoid broad, vague generalizations. Your thesis should include detail and specificity, offering the reader the *why* behind your reasoning.

Poor Specificity: "We should not pass the microchip bill." (Not specific enough! It is just a value statement and does not provide enough reasoning for the reader.)

Good Specificity: "Because the microchip insert causes serious health hazards such as cancer and brain tumors to those who use it, the microchip should not be passed." (Now the thesis is much more specific, and the reader gets a clear idea of what the essay is going to be about.)

http://www1.aucegypt.edu/academic/writers

3. Follow an "although ..., ... " format

The "although ..., ..." format is one of the most effective ways of finding something original and controversial to say. In effect, you are telling someone that what he or she thought to be previously true really is not. You are saying, Hey, you thought X? Well, you are wrong. Really, it is Y! Whenever you look beyond the obvious and give readers something new to consider, you are going to get their attention. Nothing works better than this "although ..., ..." format to set you up in delivering an insight.

Example:

Although it appears that computers may help students learn to write, they can become a detriment to the generation of what creative writers call "flow."

Example:

Although many people believe that <u>extraterrestrials</u> and <u>crop</u> circles are a figment of the imagination, there is strong evidence suggested by collective, distinct anecdotes that alien encounters are real.

Example:

Although some philosophers profess to lead more pure, thoughtful lives, they are not different from other publication-hungry academics.

Practice¹: Choose the thesis statements that are appropriate to the topic. There can be more than one possible answer.

- 1. What is the most important decision you have made? Why was this decision important? Use specific reasons and details to explain your answer.
 - (A) Decisions are important because without them nothing would get done.
 - (B) Deciding to leave home to attend school in the US has been so far the most important decision I have made.
 - (C) Although my parents wanted me to study medicine, I knew that I should follow my heart and get a degree in nuclear physics.
- 2. Someone who was considered an educated person in the past (for example, in your parents' or grandparents' generation) would not be considered an educated person today. Do you agree or disagree? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
 - (A) If you define education as earning degrees, then I would have to agree that today people

¹ This practice was taken from Barron's writing for the TOEFL iBT

are more educated than they were in the past.

- \swarrow (B) It was more difficult to get an education in the past since there weren't as many schools.
 - (C) Both my grandfather and my grandmother attended university, which is where they met.
- 3. Many people visit museums when they travel to new places. Why do you think people visit museums? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
 - (A) New museums are opening in almost every city in the world.
 - (B) Museums hold the historical and artistic record of a region, so visiting museums is the best way to understand a new place.
 - (C) Travelers want to see in person famous works of art that they have only seen in books so they head to museums when in new cities.
- 4. In the future, students may have the choice of studying at home by using technology such as computers or television or of studying at traditional schools. Which would you prefer? Use reasons and specific details to explain your choice.
 - (A) Interaction with my fellow students is important to me, so I would prefer to study in a more traditional setting.
 - (B) Computers and television are two examples of technology that will change a lot in the future.
 - (C) The advantages of studying what you want, when you want, and where you want do not, for me, <u>outweigh</u> the disadvantages of using technology for home education.
- 5. In general, people are living longer now. How will this change affect society? Use specific details and examples to develop your essay.
 - (A) People are living longer now because of improvements in medical care.
 - (B) As the majority of our population becomes older, our communities will have to shift their focus from providing services to the young, like schools, to services to aging adults, like medical care.
 - (C) Society has been around a long time and it is always changing.

Answer Key:

- **1. B and C** They both mention a specific decision.
- 2. A It answers the question Do you agree or disagree?
- 3. B and C They both mention reasons why people visit museums.
- **4. A and C** They both state a preference.
- 5. B It states an opinion.

Identifying the task

Example: Stating a Preference

In this essay type, the candidate must consider the <u>pros and cons</u> of, the advantages and disadvantages of, something, and must discuss, compare, or contrast both sides of the issue <u>in hand</u>, by giving support, details and examples, and then tell which side he or she agrees with. You should not state that you agree with both sides of the issue, i.e. <u>sitting on the fence</u>. <u>Rather</u>, you must make a choice.

A typical question for this type of writing may look like this:

Some people prefer to live in the country, while others prefer to live in the town or big cities. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

There are some key words or phrases which show whether the topic <u>in hand</u> is State a Preference <u>or otherwise</u>. Some of these words and phrases are as follows: <u>Some do/say ..., while others do/say ...</u>; <u>which opinion do you agree with?</u>; <u>in your opinion, which one is better?</u>; <u>which one would you prefer?</u>; <u>would you prefer to...</u>; <u>which is better for you?</u>; and finally, <u>which viewpoint do you agree with/approve of?</u>.

Having determined the task type, in this case being State a Preference, you are to start jotting down as many ideas as you can, as your general notes, before <u>embarking on</u> (starting) the writing task. This is sometimes called **the brainstorming stage**. To set a practical example, I will follow these steps one by one.

Having read the essay topic, that is, a choice between the country life or that in the town or big cities, and having determined the essay type, a preference in this case, I write my thesis statement which is as follows

As far as I am concerned, the advantages of the city life basically outweigh those of the country life.

After writing the thesis statement, I am supposed to write my general ideas in this regard, which will be shown below. Here, I try to write as many ideas as I can so that I will be able to choose two or three of them that will later form the body of my essay. I will list the elements that may affect life in the country or in the city. To me, these are the main factors affecting the city or country life:

People/physical and psychological health/facilities/cost of living/privacy/the upbringing of children/entertainment.

Now, from among the general ideas I already thought of, I should choose three of them for which I have enough supporting details such as facts, examples, and statistics, to name but a few. I,

personally, can provide ample evidence and support for three of the above-mentioned ideas, <u>namely</u> the quality of life, the issue of health, and children's <u>upbringing</u>.

After determining the three main paragraphs of my essay, I should start making specific notes to support my opinion, which will be thoroughly (completely) dealt with in the next step.

1.3 Step 5: Include Specific Details to Support Your Opinion

Having written my general notes, I <u>am supposed to</u> write specific details which support my argument. As for the essay type, State a Preference, we should have a table like the one that follows in order that the specific details <u>for or against</u> each choice can be clearly written. Just a word of caution, in stating a preference, <u>never ever see things simply</u> as "black and white." By this, I mean you should not mention only positive points about one and negative points about the other, <u>but rather discuss the merits</u> and <u>demerits</u> of <u>both cases</u> and finally express your own preference based on your argument and reasoning. To clarify what I mean by this, let's see the specific supports provided in the following table concerning our topic.

A detailed plan for this topic may sound like this:

City life ++/-		Country life/+
+ high-speed internet		
+ modern malls		- almost no amusement
+ transportation	The quality of life	- difficult to bear
+ high-tech sport		- low quality of life
+ <u>recreational</u> centers		
		+ healthy life style
+ access to experienced		+ wholesome foods/fresh air
doctors		+ peace of mind
+ state-of-the-art hospitals &	Health	but
facilities		- no hospital or professional
+ high level of hygiene		doctors if necessary
		- life-threatening
+ state-of-the-art educational		+ corruption-free atmosphere
services		but
+ their talents are discovered	Children's Upbringing	- limited access to advanced
and developed $ ightarrow$	Simulation o oppositioning	upbringing facilities
knowledgeable → success in		- poor educational conditions
life		

[→] To read the sample writing for this topic, go to the Stating a Preference Section 4.1.

2. Writing

2.1 Step6: Write the Introduction

The introduction of your writing should <u>enjoy</u> four important elements, three of which that is—the first three elements, which will follow, must be mentioned in your introduction, and the last one is usually mentioned, but if it is not, your score will not suffer. These elements are outlined as follows:

- 1. A general statement (a fact)/a proverb/a quote/a rhetorical question (a fact in the form of a question)/an anecdote
- 2. Restatement of the topic
- 3. Your thesis statement—your stance—which is necessary
- 4. Your reasons (optional)

In order to <u>commence</u> writing the introduction, you can <u>opt for</u> one of the choices mentioned in item 1, the best and easiest of which being the general statement. In order to clarify how you can apply each of the <u>aforementioned</u> options, I will provide at least an example for each of them, which have been taken from the sample responses written by my students or the ones offered by me.

2.1.1 Step 1 in Writing the Introduction

A) General Statement

The simplest item from among the ones mentioned already, general statement seems to be the easiest and the most practical one. To have a better understanding of its usage, take a look at the following examples.

Example 1: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The best things in life do not cost money. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

In this world, everything has a price, <u>yet</u> this price is not always evaluated by money. As a fundamental element in socio-economic context, money plays an absolutely essential role in our life; however,...

Example 2: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: books are not needed any more because people can read information on computers.

Today, as it is commonly sensed, the <u>galloping</u> rate at which science and technology are flourishing requires an efficient and <u>innovative</u> approach to the application and storage of information. As far as storing information is concerned, books have been an inseparable and truly unforgettable element in human history; however,...

Example 3: **

Leaders like John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King have made important contributions to the people of the United States. Name another world leader you think is important. Give specific reasons for your Choice.

From among all positions, leadership is the most important one in a society. From long ago, the world has seen the face of many leaders, some of whom loved killing innocent people, and some loved human beings and tried their best for the sake of humanity. In my opinion,...

B) Proverb

Example 1:

"When people succeed, it is because of hard work. Luck has nothing to do with success." Do you agree or disagree with the quotation above? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.

There is a French proverb that says, "Everyone is the author of his own good fortune."

A French proverb says, "Everyone is the author of his own good fortune."

A French proverb says (that) "everyone is the author of his own good fortune."

OR

There is an English proverb that says, "Everyone is the maker of his own fate."

OR

There is a Chinese proverb that says, "Everything can be done with enough perseverance."

Example 2: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: books are not needed any more because people can read information on computers.

An old Persian proverb **states**², **"Your** best friend is your book, <u>for</u> it teaches you <u>quite a few</u> things in a pleasant manner." It is generally <u>agreed upon that the commencement/advent of</u> computers has led to a gradual decline in the number of books, which are sold all over the world.

¹ If "says", "states", etc. are followed by a comma, the first word after the quotation mark is capital letter. If there is no comma after them, the first word is small letter.

²I, personally, do not know whether or not we have such a proverb in our language, but it seems quite natural and "cleverly-devised."

C) Quote

Example 1: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

As Vincent van Gogh once said, and I am quoting, "It is a pity that, as one gradually gains experience, one loses one's youth." <u>In this regard/With this in mind</u>, some people are of the opinion that...(My own example)

Example 2: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Subjects such as art, music, and drama should be a part of every child's basic education. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Stella Adler once **said that "life** beats down and crushes the soul, and art reminds you that you have one."

Example 3: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

A philosopher, whose name <u>eludes</u> me at the moment, once said, "The <u>prime</u> of one's life directs his or her lifestyle."

In order for you to find "Famous Quotes, Quotations, Proverbs, and Sayings", you can refer to the following site, http://www.worldofquotes.com, which provides you with an <u>invaluable</u>, <u>priceless</u> treasure of famous quotes which are organized by the author and topic, as well as proverbs that are organized by nationality or origin.

D) Rhetorical Question

First, let's take a look at the definition of the rhetorical questions, and then we can go through some relevant examples. "A rhetorical question is a figure of speech in the form of a question that is asked in order to make a point and without the expectation of a reply. The question is used as a rhetorical device, posed <u>for the sake of</u> encouraging its listener to consider a message or viewpoint. Although these are technically questions, they do not always require a question mark¹."

¹ Wikipedia

→ Rhetorical questions are less common in TOEFL these days, so I just offer two examples for it.

Example 1: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Who, in his or her right mind, can deny that youth is the prime of life for every single human being? (My own example)

Example 2:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In any society, the contributions of scientists and engineers are more important than the contributions of artists and writers. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Who can question scientists' and engineers' contribution and services to human society since the dawn of civilization? (My own example)

E) Anecdote

An anecdote is a short and amusing or interesting story about a real incident or person¹. Anecdotes are the least common form of writing an introduction, yet if they are adeptly used, they can make a very good impression on the readers.

Example 1: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

In response to Napoleon who said, "You have not kept track of the years you have lived," one of his colonels promptly replied, "Sir, I always count my money, my shirts, and my horses - but <u>as for</u> my years, I know nobody who wants to steal them, and I shall surely never lose them²." I believe that the youth of today are like this colonel and are <u>incognizant</u> of the <u>priceless</u> period of their life—youth. (My own example)

Example 2: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? We should always tell the truth to our friends. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

The topic reminds me of the novel Les Misérables, written by Victor Hugo, in which a priest tells a lie to the police to save the face of a criminal, Jean Valjean, which later led to his becoming a righteous, respectful, and benevolent person. However, I, personally, believe that we can tell a white lie for our friends, but under no circumstances are we supposed to tell any lie to them. (My own example)

¹ Wikipedia

² Taken from http://www.liraz.com/Anecdote.htm

2.2 Step 2, 3, and 4 in Writing the Introduction

Since these three steps are generally <u>interwoven</u>, I put them under one heading and provide the reader with some examples <u>having to do with</u> the topics introduced in step 1 above.

After writing the general statement, a proverb, a quote, a rhetorical question, or an anecdote, you <u>are supposed to</u> paraphrase or restate the topic, then write your idea, thesis statement, and finally mention your reasons to support your stance. In order to paraphrase the topic, you should change the grammatical structure as well as the wording of it.

<u>NB</u> Copying the topic without changing its syntactic structure and wording will dramatically reduce your score.

2.2.1 Some Examples on How to Approach Steps 2 through 4

TOEFL essay question #1

Some people prefer to eat at food stands or restaurants. Other people prefer to prepare and eat food at home. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Restatement & Thesis

People have two options when deciding where to eat. They can prepare meals and eat at home, or they can go out to stands or restaurants. I prefer to go out to eat because the food is more varied and interesting, it is less work for me, and it saves time.

Analysis

The restatement mentions the two types of options people have for eating and tells which one the author prefers. In addition, it gives three reasons for that preference. These three reasons will make up the three main idea paragraphs in the body of the essay.

TOEFL essay question # 2

Is it better for children to participate in team sports or individual sports? Why? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Restatement & Thesis

It is better for children to participate in team sports <u>rather than</u> individual sports. In team sports, children learn how to cooperate. They learn good <u>sportsmanship</u> and how to rely on their teammates. These are important lessons that will benefit children throughout their lives.

Analysis

The first sentence clearly states the author's opinion. This is followed by three reasons for the opinion. Finally, the author mentions life lessons. In the essay, the three reasons will make up the three main idea paragraphs in the body of the essay. In addition, the author will mention how each main idea is useful throughout life.

TOEFL essay question #3

Some people prefer to live in a small town, while others prefer to live in a big city. Which place would you prefer to live in? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

Restatement & Thesis

There are many good reasons to live in a big city and an equal number of good reasons to live in a small town. I, myself, prefer to live in a small town because it is more personal and <u>homey</u>, it is easier to get around in, and it is safer than a big city.

Analysis

The first statement says that both a city and town have positive aspects. The next sentence tells the author's preference and reasons for that preference. These reasons will make up the body of the essay.

2.2.2 Strong and Weak Points of an Introduction¹

Topic 1: People attend college or university for many different reasons (for example, new experiences, career preparation, and increased knowledge). Why do you think people attend college or university? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Version A

I believe that people attend college for many different reasons. These reasons are personal to them.

Version B

People attend colleges or universities for many different reasons. I believe that the three most common reasons are to prepare for a career, to have new experiences, and to increase their knowledge of themselves and the world around them.

Comment

Version A starts with the writer's opinion, but it does not tell us much. What are these reasons? We need to know the basic reasons, so we can prepare ourselves to find supporting details in the body of the essay.

Version B gives three specific reasons that the writer believes are the most important ones: to prepare for a career, to have new experiences, and to increase their knowledge of themselves and the world around them. From this introduction, I will expect to see a paragraph on each of these reasons.

Topic 2: If you could make one important change about your hometown, what would you change? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.

Version A

I think there are changes necessary in my hometown. It is always the same. There has to be something different.

Version B

If I could change one thing about my hometown, I think it would be creating a <u>sense of community</u> among people here. People do not feel connected, they do not look out for each other, and they do not get to know their neighbors.

Comment

Version A starts with the writer's opinion but doesn't say what changes are necessary. We need some guidance.

¹ These examples were taken from Barron's writing for the TOEFL iBT

Version B narrows in on the topic and talks about the <u>sense of community</u>. The writer says that, "People do not feel connected, they do not look out for each other, and they do not get to know their neighbors." From this introduction, I will expect to see a paragraph on each of these reasons.

Topic 3: Some people prefer to eat at food stands or restaurants. Other people prefer to prepare and eat food at home. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Version A

I believe that some people like to eat at food stands, and some like to eat in restaurants. There are different reasons for this.

Version B

Some people like to eat out at food stands and restaurants, while others like to prepare food at home. Often it depends on the kind of lifestyle people have. Those with very busy jobs outside the house do not always have time to cook. They like the convenience of eating out. Overall, though, I think it is cheaper and healthier to eat at home.

Comment

In Version A, the writer does not share what these reasons are. There are no general statements. In Version B, the writer tells us that the choice depends on a person's lifestyle. The writer will probably give us more details about the reasons of convenience, costs, and health.

→ Now, read the question below and the example introduction that follows¹ (The four steps are included in it).

Topic: *

Living in an apartment instead of a university dormitory has advantages and disadvantages. Discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of apartment living. Then state and defend your preference.

Introduction

When a person decides to enter a university away from home, he or she must also consider living accommodations. Although most universities offer student dormitories, students frequently opt to live in an apartment. While there are many advantages attributed to apartment living, there are also disadvantages. Before a student decides to live in an apartment, all of the aspects of that kind of living accommodation should be reviewed.

1. The first sentence introduces the general topic of university living accommodations.

¹Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test (4th Edition).

When a person decides to enter a university away from home, he or she must also consider living accommodations.

2. The second sentence narrows the topic down to apartment living.

Although most universities offer student dormitories, students frequently \underline{opt} to live in an apartment.

3. The third sentence restates the specific question.

While there are many advantages to apartment living, there are also disadvantages.

4. The fourth sentence is the thesis statement. It gives the controlling idea of the essay.

Before a student decides to live in an apartment, all of the aspects of that kind of living accommodation should be reviewed.

→→ Now, let's see how my students have done the four steps mentioned above in their sample writing.

Topic 1: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The best things in life do not cost money. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Example: ***

Cos 2) they will

In this world, everything has a price, <u>vet</u> this price is not always evaluated by money. As a fundamental element in socio-economic context, money plays an absolutely essential role in our life; <u>however, money is not what life is all about. The gift of life has some precious characteristics such as wisdom, experiences and knowledge, as well as human **virtues**, which are beyond price.</u>

Topic 2: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Books are not needed any more because people can read information on computers. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Example 1: **

An old Persian proverb states that "your best friend is your book, for it teaches you <u>quite a few</u> things in a pleasant manner." It is generally agreed upon that the <u>commencement/advent of</u> computers has led to a gradual decline in the number of books which are sold all over the world. I, too, <u>subscribe to</u> the idea that using such modern technologies as computer and the Internet can be beneficial in several ways, although they have their own <u>demerits</u>. The use of computers <u>enjoys</u> a number of advantages, three of which—that is—up-to-the-minute information, easy accessibility, and, above all, the preservation of natural resources are the most <u>conspicuous</u> ones.

Example 2: ***

Today, as it is commonly sensed, the <u>galloping</u> rate at which science and technology are flourishing requires an efficient and <u>innovative</u> approach to the application and storage of information. As far as storing information is concerned, books have been an inseparable and truly unforgettable element in human history; however, they are eventually being replaced by digitized media, giving way to computers, the most prominent tool that one can possess today.

Topic 3: Leaders like John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King have made important contributions to the people of the United States. Name another world leader you think is Important. Give specific reasons for your Choice.

Example: **

From among all positions, leadership is the most important one in a society. From long ago, the world has seen the face of many leaders, some of whom loved killing innocent people and some of

them loved human beings and tried their best **for the sake of** humanity. <u>In my opinion, Cyrus the</u>

<u>Great, King of Persia, was one of the most influential leaders who made the world a better place. He made many remarkable contributions to the society and possessed many **substantial** characteristics, among which are enjoying miraculous management techniques, establishing the first human rights rules, and being kind toward people.</u>

Topic 4: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Example: **

A philosopher, whose name <u>eludes</u> me at the moment, once said, "The <u>prime</u> of one's life directs his or her lifestyle." The way through which the young pass their youth is always a <u>controversial</u> topic among parents and their children. <u>Whereas parents believe that teenagers use their youth inefficiently, I—for one—subscribe to the view that, by a close observation of the life of the young, we can find out that not only do they enjoy this period, but they use it efficiently as well. The young <u>enjoy quite</u> a <u>few</u> benefits during their youth, three of which—that is—the formation of <u>behavior</u>, the gain of experience, and, above all, the <u>alleviation</u> of negative stresses are the most <u>conspicuous</u> ones.</u>

Topic 5: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Subjects such as art, music, and drama should be a part of every child's basic education. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Example: **

Stella Adler once said that, "Life beats down and crush the soul, and art reminds you that you have one." It is crystal clear that in the current world in which the most important portion of minds is involved with some trivial problems, which are the components of modern life style—for example financial problems—learning a kind of art like music, painting, and drama can be a shelter for our tired spirit. To tell the truth, learning art can be a brilliant chance for one to air new ideas, have stronger national identity, and live in peace; therefore, it is essential for the new generation to learn these kinds of arts.

2.2.3 Things Not to Do in the Introduction¹

A) Never Apologize

Never suggest that you do not know what you are talking about or that you are not enough of an expert in this matter that your opinion would matter. Your reader will quickly turn to something else. Avoid phrases like the following:

* In my humble opinion,...

Or

* I'm not sure about this, but...

B) Do not Announce Your Intentions

Do not <u>flatly</u> announce what you are about to do in an essay. *In this paper, I will...

Or

*The purpose of this essay is to...

Get into the topic and let your reader perceive your purpose in the topic sentence of your beginning paragraph.

C) Do not Use a Dictionary or Encyclopedia Definition

*According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, a widget is...

Although definitions are extremely useful and it might serve your purpose to devise your own definition(s) later in the essay, you want to avoid using this <u>hackneyed</u> beginning in an essay.

¹ Taken from http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/intros.htm

2.3 Step7: Write the Body of the Essay

The body of your essay should contain at least two developmental paragraphs. Each developmental paragraph should have a topic sentence that supports and develops the controlling idea presented in the thesis statement of your essay. The ideas in each paragraph should support the topic sentence of that paragraph¹.

2.3.1 Writing Developmental Paragraphs²

To write effective developmental paragraphs, follow these steps:

1. Use your plan.

Your plan will help you focus on the ideas that support the thesis statement in your introduction.

2. Write a topic sentence for each paragraph you plan to write.

Each topic sentence should relate to your thesis statement and introduce what the paragraph will be about. If you find that the topics you want to discuss do not support the thesis statement you have written, revise your thesis statement or reconsider your topic sentences. A good topic sentence is neither too broad nor too narrow.

An example of a good topic sentence is:

The main reason that I prefer e-mail or telephone for communication <u>rather than</u> face-to-face communication is that communication by telephone or by e-mail is more convenient.

3. Write ideas that support your topic sentences.

The topic sentence for each paragraph tells the reader what the paragraph will be about. The ideas stated in the rest of the paragraph should all relate to the topic sentence.

Read the following example paragraph: *

Hobbies are important for many reasons. First, a hobby can be educational. For example, if the hobby is stamp collecting, the person can learn about the countries of the world and even some of their history. Second, engaging in a hobby can lead to meeting other people with the same interests. A person can also meet other people by going to parties. Third, a person's free time is being used in a positive way. The person has no time to be bored or get into mischief while engaged in the hobby. Finally, some hobbies can lead to a future job. A person who enjoys a hobby-related job is more satisfied with life.

¹Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test (4th Edition).

² ibid

→ The topic sentence tells the reader that the paragraph is about hobbies. The supporting idea is the reasons why they are important. All of the sentences that follow should be about reasons for the importance of hobbies. However, the sentence, "A person can also meet other people by going to parties," does not refer to the reasons hobbies are important. This sentence weakens the paragraph and should be deleted.

4. Add details.

To write a more fully developed paragraph, you need to add details to your supporting ideas. Invariably students shift topics and lose focus within their paragraphs because they do not know how to adequately develop their ideas. They usually know the paragraph needs to be longer, but they do not know how to expand their idea to fill that length. Try these techniques for development:

- 1. give an authoritative quotation or proverb regarding the issue
- 2. use facts, examples, or personal experiences.
- 3. use statistics, but never mention an exact research or number.
- 4. illustrate your idea with an anecdote.
- 5. mention the opposing point of view, but do not elaborate upon it.
- 6. back your ideas with more evidence.

Examples:

1. give an authoritative quotation or proverb regarding the issue.

Topic: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? If people have the opportunity to get a secure job, they should take it right away <u>rather than</u> wait for a job that is satisfying. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Disagree

Second Paragraph: Proverb

Although it may seem that by accepting the first job more money will be earned, it can adversely affect one's financial future. Since he or she is not usually inclined to the very job, the future promotion and possible increase in salary are not likely. Furthermore, bosses' dissatisfaction and even getting fired are highly probable due to the mismatch between one's skills and the job's duties, whereas if the person makes his or her best effort to find the ideal job, they will soon improve, make more money, and know the value of their position, which has its roots in the hardships confronted for achieving it. In this regard, a renowned Persian proverb states, "The loss of something that has not been obtained with attempt is highly probable," which emphasizes that one should try hard to find his or her favorite job so as to know its worth.

2. use examples, personal experiences, or facts.

Topic A: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Face-to-face communication is better than other types of communication, such as letters, email, or telephone calls. Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

Disagree

First paragraph: Example

Time is, as we all know, money. Such valuation of time leads people to extreme efforts to maximize their use of time. In particular, the 21st century is indisputably the century of delirious construction and manufacturing. Given the consumerist disposition of human beings, no room is left for squandering the most precious gift of life—time. Take, for instance, the case of a giant corporation in the East coast, which has undertaken a project of major proportions on the West coast. Engineers from this corporation would have to waste countless hours of their otherwise productive time to travel a distance of hundreds of miles to visit the site in person—a task which causes not only the progress of the project to suffer, but also its timeline to be disrupted...

Topic B: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Boys and girls should attend separate schools. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Segregated Better

Paragraphs 2: Personal experience

... . As an example for this model of schools, years ago, a beautiful movie named Dead Poets Society impressed me much. This movie demonstrated that the boys, who are studying away from girls, focus all their attention on their lessons without any distraction.

Co-ed Better

Paragraphs 2: Personal experience

First, competition plays a significant role as far as the development of any school is concerned. Psychologically speaking, girls and boys are in a constant competition with one another, which results in their becoming knowledgeable engineers, lawyers, teachers, and doctors, to name but a few. On the other hand, segregated classes deprive them of such a blessing, resulting in unqualified human resources in the future of a nation. I, personally, have witnessed guite a few students who attended co-ed classes and became experts in their profession, and many others who took part in segregated schools and became maladroit in their job. One such example is my brother who, despite his lack of interest in education, attended co-ed classes and competed with his opposite sex peers and outshined all of them in university, and now he is one of the experts in his field, while my cousin, who was a genius, attended segregated schools, and because of not having any motivation to study, she became a very unskilled engineer.

Paragraph 3: Facts

Secondly, the co-educational system creates a competitive atmosphere among students <u>so</u> <u>much so that</u> they do their best to <u>outperform</u> the students of opposite sex. If they are taught together, a sense of healthy competition among them will be created, increasing their scores in general and their level of thinking in particular. When boys and girls study in the same class, they try to outdo the opposite sex, <u>paving the way</u> toward achieving the apex of success. In contrast, in segregated schools, they do not have much motivation to do so, which results in their becoming <u>unqualified</u> engineers, doctors, and teachers, to name but a handful. This phenomenon is more <u>prevalent</u> in <u>undeveloped</u>, backward nations, which can be considered as one of the elements impeding their progress <u>in this regard</u>.

Paragraph 4: Facts

Last but not least, segregated schools can increase/give rise to/cause sex discrimination in any given society. Women are generally <u>discriminated</u> against in many societies. However, by the help of co-educational systems, men will know that women are also as intelligent as they are to contribute to the development of economic, social, scientific, political, and other areas of the country. Similarly, women will become aware of their potentials and become active members of the society, which is the fruit of letting them be in the company of male students. Consequently, equality between men and women will be achieved, uprooting this undesirable social phenomenon, sex discrimination.

3. use statistics, but never mention an exact research and provide and number.

Topic: Some young adults want independence from their parents as soon as possible. Other young adults prefer to live with their families for a longer time. Which of these situations do you think is better? **

Agree with the former idea

Paragraph 2: Statistics

Another reason for this view is that financial independence is seen more among the young people who want independence early in their life. Statistics show the fact that the individuals being in the company of their parents for a long time are less likely to be prosperous than those who act independently as far as their financial aspect of their life is concerned. As a matter of fact, if the youth try to pave the way for being independent as soon as they consider themselves prepared for an independent life, they unconsciously will enhance their tendency to have their own business without any extraneous factors. This constant penchant for being independent influences other aspects of life.

4. illustrate your idea with an anecdote.

Topic: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? We should always tell the truth to our friends. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Disagree

Paragraph 2: Anecdote

Second, telling a white lie in many cases is preferable to telling a seditious truth. Let's take the novel of Les Misérables, written by Victor Hugo, in which a priest tells a lie to the police to save the face of a criminal, Jean Valjean, which later led to his becoming a righteous, respectful, and benevolent person. If the priest had done otherwise, the life of that innocent person would have been utterly spoiled. This shows that...

5. mention the opposing point of view, but do not elaborate upon it.

Topic: Some people prefer to live in the country. Others prefer to live in the town or big cities. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Paragraph 3: Mentioning the opposing point of view

Another <u>privilege</u> of the country life <u>has to do with</u> the physical as well as mental health that one can <u>enjoy</u> there. The tranquility and <u>serenity</u> of the countryside provides its people with the peace and refreshment of mind. In addition, the healthy diet of the people there guarantees their physical health. In contrast, the <u>hectic lifestyle</u> in the city and pollutions of any kind—noise, visual, and air pollution—make the city <u>rife</u> with stubborn diseases. It may be true that city dwellers have access to <u>state-of-the-art</u> hospitals and experienced doctors they can refer to while feeling unwell, but why should they become sick in the first place to be in <u>desperate</u> need of hospitals and spend enormous amounts of their money on treatment. They can live a healthy, peaceful, and economical life in the country, instead.

6. back your ideas with more evidence.

Topic: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Face-to-face communication is better than other types of communication, such as letters, email, or telephone calls. Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

Disagree

Second Paragraph: More evidence

The main reason that I prefer e-mail or telephone for communication <u>rather than</u> face-to-face communication is that communication by telephone or by e-mail is more convenient. There is no need to make an appointment with friends before meetings; all you need is just to remember their phone numbers or email addresses. Wherever you are and whenever it will be, communication is as easy as face-to-face talking. Moreover, it is more efficient for people to communicate.

2.3.2 Adding Details to Paragraphs¹

Many paragraphs can be made better by adding details. Look at the example box below. Asking and answering the kinds of questions shown in the box will help you strengthen your paragraphs.

On your own paper, rewrite the "weak" paragraph shown below using the questions as a guide for adding details.

Although seat belts have been shown to save lives, people give a number of reasons for not using them. First, many people think they are a nuisance. Second, many people are lazy. Third, some people do not believe they will have an accident. Finally, some people are afraid the seat belt will trap them in their car. All of these reasons seem <u>inadequate</u> since statistics show that wearing seat belts saves lives and prevents serious injuries.

The paragraph can be improved by adding details to answer the following questions:

- 1. Why don't people like seat belts?
- 2. In what way are people lazy?
- 3. Why do people think they won't have an accident?
- 4. Under what circumstances might people get trapped?

→ Now, read the paragraph with added details. Notice how adding answers to these questions has improved it.

Although seat belts have been shown to save lives, people give a number of reasons for not using them. First, many people think they are a <u>nuisance</u>. They say the belt is uncomfortable and <u>inhibits</u> freedom of movement. Second, many people are lazy. For them, it is too much trouble to put on and adjust a seat belt, especially if they are only going a short distance. Third, some people do not believe they will have an accident because they are careful and experienced drivers. They think they will be able to respond quickly to avoid a crash. Finally, some people are afraid the seat belt will trap them in their car. They feel that if they have an accident, they might not be able to get out of a car that is burning, or they might be unconscious and another person will not be able to get them out. All of these reasons seem <u>inadequate</u> since statistics show that wearing seat belts saves lives and prevents serious injuries.

→ Now, a complete writing with its introduction, the body paragraphs, and conclusion <u>having to do</u> with the topic "Name a world leader you think is important" is mentioned here as an example. In

¹ ibid

each paragraph, each of the reasons introduced in the introduction is separately supported and dealt with.

Topic: **

Leaders like John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King have made important contributions to the people of the United States. Name another world leader you think is important. Give specific reasons for your Choice.

Introduction

From among all positions, leadership is the most important one in a society. From long ago, the world has seen the face of many leaders, some of whom loved killing innocent people, and some loved human beings and tried their best for the sake of humanity. In my opinion, Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, was one of the most influential leaders who made the world a better place. He did many remarkable things and possessed many <u>substantial</u> features, among which are <u>miraculous</u> management techniques, establishing the first human rights rules, and being kind toward people.

Paragraph 2

Cyrus's unique system of management is still efficient and, statistically speaking, used by some of the world's greatest managers. He was the first man who discovered that sharing the benefits of an enterprise with the workers results in a higher amount of manufacture. He used this principle in all the country's big projects and enriched not only his own treasury, but also the people of Persia.

Paragraph 3

Human rights are the most pivotal factor in modern societies, which Cyrus crystallized into a whole, named the bill of human rights, and inscribed them on a cylinder-shaped sculpture. This sculpture is kept in the Britain museum, and the passage which is written on it was rewritten as an inscription on the entrance of United Nations' building. He believed that all human beings are equal and should not be judged on their skin color or their race. By molding these ideas into an inscription, it is believed that he is the father of liberalism.

Paragraph 4

Many good characteristics turn him into not only a great leader, but a very loveable one as well, the most important of which was kindness to all human beings, especially the people of defeated cities and tribes. He never destroyed other empires, nor did he commit genocide. After defeating a group, he treated them with honor and respect and annexed their territory to the great Persian Empire so as to make their city a better place both socially and aesthetically.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Cyrus is the father of modern leadership in the world using both great management principles and an <u>assortment</u> of fantastic characteristics. Great leaders like him are sadly absent these days, but I am sure that the sun will soon rise again in the <u>realm</u> of leadership.

380 words

Khashayar Yazdanbakhsh: Sharif University of Technology (SUT)

2.4 Step 8: Write the Conclusion

This paragraph should include the following:

- 1. An <u>allusion</u>, reference, to the pattern used in the introductory paragraph.
- 2. A **restatement of the thesis statement**, using some of the original language or language that "<u>echoes</u>" the original language. (The restatement, however, must not be a duplicate of the thesis statement).
- 3. A summary of the three/four main points from the body of the paper (it should NOT introduce any new ideas).
- 4. A final statement that gives the reader signals that the discussion has come to an end. This can consist of one of the following formats:
 - 1. a general statement,
 - 2. a prediction,
 - 3. a recommendation, or
 - 4. a rhetorical question.
- 5. It should have the form of a paragraph (although it is usually the shortest of all paragraphs in the essay, just one or two sentences will not be enough).

Your conclusion is your opportunity to wrap up your essay in a tidy package and bring it home to your reader. It is a good idea to recapitulate what you said in your thesis statement in order to suggest to your reader that you have accomplished what you set out to accomplish. It is also important to judge for yourself that you have, in fact, done so. If you find that your thesis statement now sounds hollow or irrelevant—that you haven't done what you set out to do—then you need either to revise your argument or to redefine your thesis statement. Don't worry about that; it happens to writers all the time. They have argued themselves into a position that they might not have thought of when they began their writing. Writing, just as much as reading, is a process of self-discovery. Do not, in any case, simply restate your thesis statement in your final paragraph, as that would be redundant. Having read your essay, we should understand this main thought with fresh and deeper understanding, and your conclusion wants to reflect what we have learned.

A) General Statement

What will follow is an introduction and conclusion written by a TOEFL instructor, Mr. Akbari, who has professionally provided this example for his students. Since I had no access to him, I took the liberty of mentioning his sample response here.

Topic 1: ***

Which do you approve of: marriage before or after the age of thirty? Give specific reasons to support your opinion.

Introduction

It is <u>incontrovertibly axiomatic</u> that marriage is a crucially important <u>milestone</u> in anyone's life. It plays such an important role that a person's success is heavily based on this critical juncture of life. Many lives and futures <u>languish</u> or flourish owing to this very <u>weighty</u> matter. While some people advocate marriage before the age of 30, I subscribe to this idea that marriage must come about after the age of 30 on the grounds that one gets mature-minded and reaches financial stability. In addition, one chooses his or her spouse based on logic.

Conclusion

In summary, an opportune time for marriage to take place is after the age of 30 because people become <u>hard-bitten</u>, financially stable, and <u>circumspect</u>. <u>Marriage is a holy **alliance** that</u> requires commitment, partnership, and compromise that we cannot afford to take lightly. المده فيد سان نرده ع

lies

Topic 2: **

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.

In conclusion, with all this taken into account, I believe that the automobile was the most advantageous discovery for our nation in the past century on the grounds that it brought us comfortable transportation and astounding growth both in economy and in society. Without the automobile, our country as well as the whole world would not be anything as it currently is. Meisam Navaki Arefi: Amirkabir University of Technology.

B) Prediction

Topic 1: *

It has recently been announced that a new movie theater may be built in your neighborhood. Do you support or oppose this plan? Why? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

In sum, I believe that a new movie theater is a fine idea. I support it because of the changes it will bring to our citizens and our town. I believe that the reduction in crime, the increase in employment, and the improved **infrastructure** will make our town a nicer place to live¹.

Topic 2: **

If you could make one important change in a school that you attended, what change would you make? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.

To sum up, with all this taken into account, I would <u>take measures</u> to alter the educational system, because of its extreme significance. <u>If students have some time on their own, to create and convey their own novel ideas</u>, as well as to manage their relationships, they will be more likely to <u>develop a society consisting of insightful and prosperous members</u>.

Mahshad Samnejad: Sharif University of Technology (SUT)

C) Recommendation

Topic 1: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

It goes without saying that the infinite capability of humans in various aspects of life leads us to give the youth the best possible chance in making a good foundation for the rest of life. That some do not use their time in an efficient manner does not make us disappointed about the youth; however, the youth should know that they hold the key to having a good life in this period of their life.

Topic 2: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The best things in life do not cost money. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

To sum up, although money can possibly be utilized as an equipping element in fulfilling materialistic needs of human beings, <u>I believe that health, family, friends, and respect among people</u> are **invaluable blessings**, which should be given the highest priority.

Mahshad Samnejad: Sharif University of Technology (SUT)

¹Barron's writing for the TOEFL iBT

D) Rhetorical Question

Topic: *

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Parents are the best teachers. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

The most important thing to realize is that we all have many teachers in our lives. Where would we be without our parents, teachers, and our peers to quide us?¹

Topic 2: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The best things in life do not cost money. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

In conclusion, When will human beings come to their senses and recognize that there are quite a few things in life that cost very little but can mean a great deal to them. (my example)

Topic 3: ***

Some people prefer to live in the country. Others prefer to live in the town or big cities. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

In summary, with all this taken to account, I do believe that the city rather than the country is the ideal place for living on the ground that one can live a modern life, can bring up their offspring in an adequate fashion, and have access to high level of hygiene and health care. Who can ignore these essential facilities and live in the country simply for solace?

¹Barron's writing for the TOEFL iBT

Summary of the Writing Task Two

This is a summary of what you have already read about the Writing Task Two

Introduction

- 1. A general statement (a fact)/a proverb/a quote/a rhetorical question/an anecdote
- 2. Restatement of the topic
- 3. Your thesis statement—your stance—which is necessary
- 4. Your reasons (optional)

Body of the Essay (At least two paragraphs)

- 1. Write a topic sentence
- 2. Write ideas that support your topic sentence.
- 3. Add details.
 - A. Give an authoritative quotation or proverb regarding the issue
 - B. Use facts, examples, or personal experiences.
 - C. Use statistics, but never mention an exact research or number.
 - D. Illustrate your own idea with an anecdote.
 - E. Mention the opposing point of view, but do not elaborated upon it.

Write the Conclusion

- 1. A restatement of the thesis statement
- 2. A summary of the three or two main points from the body of the paper
- 3. A final statement that gives the reader signals that the discussion has come to an end.
 - A. A general statement
 - B. A prediction
 - C. A recommendation
 - D. A rhetorical question

3. Revising

3.1 Step 9: Check the Punctuation, Spelling, as well as the Clarity of the Text.

In order to acquire the mastery of revising, you <u>are supposed to</u> take part in grammar classes or gain this skill through self-study. To do so, refer to the Punctuation section of this book to learn some good points <u>in this regard</u>.

4. Identify the Task

There are four essay types on the TOEFL test, among which **Agreeing or Disagreeing** and **Stating a Preference** are the most common ones. A TOEFL test taker must know how to recognize these four tasks and how to approach them.

4.1 Stating a Preference

As was already mentioned, in this essay type, the test taker should mention the <u>pros and cons</u> of, the advantages and disadvantages of, something, and must discuss, compare, or contrast both sides of the issue <u>in hand</u>, by giving support, details and examples, and then tell which side he or she agrees with. You should not state that you agree with both sides of the issue, i.e., <u>sitting on the fence</u>. <u>Rather</u>, you must make a clear-cut choice.

As I pointed out earlier, the following samples have been written within a period of time much more than that given in the real test and have been corrected by the author. Hence, I hope you learn from these samples how to organize your writing, generate ideas, and improve your grammar, vocabulary, as well as punctuation. You do not need to write such a complicated writing. Even a simple writing, which observes the previously mentioned elements, can get a high score.

Once again, I want to mention that the writing samples are categorized into three groups and are identified with stars: one star (*) for almost easy samples, two stars (**) for difficult ones, and three stars (***) for advanced samples.