

TOEFL Prep

Writing Session 2



Writing Task 2

Writing for an Academic Discussion

In this section, your ability to write in English in an academic setting and to present your ideas in a clear, well-organized way is measured.

In your response, you should do the following:

- express and support your opinion
- make a contribution to the discussion in your own words

An effective response will contain at least 100 words.

You will have 10 minutes to write it.



Writing Task 2

Test takers need to

- respond to or build on ideas expressed in other text
- clearly state or elaborate on a position or argument
- show accurate and meaningful use of a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary in the academic context

This task demonstrates proficiency in a shorter time with the same high level of reliability and validity.



Writing Task 2

Scoring Criteria

The Writing rubrics are scaled on a range of 0 to 5.

The response is a relevant and very clearly expressed contribution to the online discussion, and it demonstrates consistent facility in the use of language.

A typical response displays the following:

- Relevant and well-elaborated explanations, exemplifications, and/or details
- Effective use of a variety of syntactic structures and precise, idiomatic word choice
- Almost no lexical or grammatical errors other than those expected from a competent writer writing under timed conditions (e.g., common typos or common misspellings or substitutions like there/their)



Writing Task 2

Skills for Academic Discussion – Question 1

Your professor is teaching a class on economics. Write a post responding to the professor's question.

In your response, you should:

1. express and support your opinion
2. make a contribution to the discussion

An effective response will contain at least 100 words. You will have 10 minutes to write it.

Dr. Achebe

When people are asked about the most important discoveries or inventions made in the last two hundred years, they usually mention something very obvious, like the computer or the cell phone. But there are thousands of other discoveries or inventions that have had a huge impact on how we live today. What scientific discovery or technological invention from the last two hundred years—other than computers and cell phones—would you choose as being important? Why?



Writing Task 2

Skills for Academic Discussion – Question 1

Paul

I mean, we're so used to science and technology that we are not even aware of all the things we use in our daily lives. I would probably choose space satellites. This technology happened in the last hundred years, and it has become important for so many things. Just think about navigation, or telecommunications, or even the military.

Claire

I am thinking about medical progress. Like, for example, when scientists discovered things about healthy nutrition. I am thinking of identifying all the vitamins we need to stay healthy. I am not sure exactly when the vitamin discoveries happened, but I know they are very important. Our health is much better than it was 200 years ago.



Writing Task 2

Skills for Academic Discussion – Question 1

Response

In the past 200 years, tons of scientific discoveries or technological inventions have been shown to the world. If I had to choose one in particular it will probably be vaccine or antibiotics. With Pasteur's work and discoveries, the world changed in a way people couldn't imagine. So many people were dying really young because at that time life's conditions were not as good as the one we have now. With vaccine, we could now eradicate diseases that were killing millions of people, we learn so much about the immune system and ways our body was reacting to pathogens and the answers he could produce to defend us against it. Medicine evolved so much and keeps evolving every day because scientists are curious to understand how our body is working and how he is able to communicate with our environment. People aged 40 are now not that old and still have a really long life to live and enjoy when 2 centuries ago it was synonymous of 80% chance of dying.



Writing Task 2

Skills for Academic Discussion – Question 1

Explanation

This is a fully successful response. The writer chooses vaccines/antibiotics as the most important invention of the past 200 years. The author then provides a description, for contrast, of what life was like before Pasteur's work (people dying young) and after the vaccine was created (millions of lives saved, more understanding of the immune system). The writer continues on to point out that medicine continues to evolve because of Pasteur's work and how human lifespans have been extended. Overall, the response provides well-elaborated explanations and details to support the main opinion and provides a relevant contribution to the discussion. While there are almost no errors in grammar and word choice, there are a few minor ones that have little impact on meaning (such as "life's conditions were not as good as the one we have" rather than "were not as good as they are now," and "how our body is working and how he is able to communicate" rather than "how it is able to communicate"). However, these errors are fairly minor and such errors might be expected when writing under timed conditions. The writer is able to use some complex sentences and relatively precise vocabulary, which is expected in a 5-level response.



Writing Task 2

Skills for Academic Discussion – Question 2

Your professor is teaching a class on sociology. Write a post responding to the professor's question.

In your response, you should:

1. express and support your opinion
2. make a contribution to the discussion

An effective response will contain at least 100 words. You will have 10 minutes to write it.

Dr. Diaz

Over the next few weeks, we are going to look at lots of different materials about the role of television programs and television watching in people's lives. But first, I want to know what you think about this topic.

So here's a question for the class discussion board:

What do you think is the most significant effect that watching television has on people? Why do you think television has this effect?



Writing Task 2

Skills for Academic Discussion – Question 2

Kelly

I know that one way that television influences people's behavior is that when you are watching television, you are not moving around or exercising. This is especially true for children. The American Academy of Pediatrics says that when children spend a lot of time watching television, they have a greater tendency to be overweight.

Paul

I think the main effect that television has on people is to broaden their experience. There are so many programs devoted to nature and travel. Think of all the different places in the world you can experience through television! Last night I watched a program about life in Antarctica, and it was fascinating!



Writing Task 2

Skills for Academic Discussion – Question 2

Response

In my opinion, Paul is right when he says that watching television might broaden your experience. By watching for example science programs, you can gain valuable insights into new topics. On the other hand, I think that a high percentage of people don't watch TV to increase their knowledge. I am of the opinion that many people watch TV in order to get distracted from their real lives. They watch films or series to be entertained and to forget problems they have at work or in their private lives. At least for me, this works well -for instance if I am sad, I watch a comedy or a funny soap opera and afterwards, I am in a better mood. Therefore, I think that being entertained and distracted is the most significant effect of TV.



Writing Task 2

Skills for Academic Discussion – Question 2

Explanation

This response is in the high writing proficiency range. It would probably earn a score of 5 based on the Academic Discussion Scoring Rubric. The writer conveys complex and well-argued ideas that contribute nicely to the discussion.

While the writer mentions Paul’s point of view, the writer does not just repeat it. Instead, the writer takes Paul’s ideas as the starting point, and goes on to present a different point of view, arguing that watching TV is not mainly educational but rather a relaxing experience. The writer then goes on to develop this point of view, explaining why people need to relax, and providing the writer’s own personal experiences: why the writer usually watches TV, which programs, and so on.

The language the writer uses has a nice variety, both in how the sentences are formed and in the range of the vocabulary used. There are almost no errors; the word “valuable” in the second sentence is misspelled, but that may be expected from even competent writers writing under timed conditions, as the Scoring Rubric explains.



Writing Task 2

Class Assignment – Question 1

Your professor is teaching a class on sociology. Write a post responding to the professor's question.

In your response, you should do the following:

- Express and support your opinion.
- Make a contribution to the discussion in your own words.

An effective response will contain at least 100 words. You will have 10 minutes to write it.

Doctor Achebe

Let's think about population trends in urban and rural areas (villages). Living in urban areas can be expensive; nonetheless, when they have a choice of where to live, people in some countries do not wish to live in rural areas even if the cost of living there is lower. If governments of some countries want to attract more people to live in rural areas or villages, what is the best strategy or approach that governments can use? Why?



Writing Task 2

Class Assignment – Question 1

Claire

I would live in a rural area if the government gave more financial help to farmers. Although it may cost very little to live in a rural area, it costs a lot to begin a career in agriculture. If I had financial help, I would start my own farm and be happy to live in a rural area.

Kelly

In my country, urban centers are great places to live because you can access shops, restaurants, and museums. If the government of my country wanted to attract me to live in a rural area, the area would first have to attract more businesses focused on entertainment and culture than most rural areas have



Writing Task 2

Class Assignment – Question 2

Your professor is teaching a class on education. Write a post responding to the professor's question.

In your response, you should do the following:

- Express and support your opinion.
- Make a contribution to the discussion in your own words.

An effective response will contain at least 100 words. You will have 10 minutes to write it.

Doctor Gupta

This week, I want you to discuss assessment criteria. Some schoolteachers give high grades (marks) only to those students who perform well on their homework assignments and tests. Other teachers, however, may give high grades to students who have worked very hard on their assignments but have not performed so well.

Which approach do you think is better: Giving grades based only on performance, or grading students not just on performance but also on their effort?



Writing Task 2

Class Assignment – Question 2

Kelly

I think grades should be based on performance only. It's a matter of fairness. I'd be really upset if another student got nearly the same grade that I did when I turned in work that was almost perfect and the other student's work had incorrect answers or unclear ideas. It wouldn't matter to me if they worked harder.

Paul

Sure, evaluation should mainly be based upon the student's performance, but hard work should count for something. A student who works hard, even when the final grade isn't the highest in the class, builds character, which will benefit the student later in life when they go to university or apply for a job.



Writing Task 2

Class Assignment – Question 3

Your professor is teaching a class on consumer behaviour. Write a post responding to the professor's question.

In your response, you should do the following:

- Express and support your opinion.
- Make a contribution to the discussion in your own words.

An effective response will contain at least 100 words. You will have 10 minutes to write it.

Doctor Diaz

This week, we will be looking at how consumers feel about their purchases of technology. Many people find that buying devices such as mobile phones or personal computers can be very difficult. They feel like they're not prepared to make the best decision to suit their needs. In your posts, I want you to discuss the following question: What do you believe is the biggest mistake that people make when buying tech products? Explain what this mistake is.



Writing Task 2

Class Assignment – Question 3

Claire

I think one problem is that people don't match the product's capabilities to their actual needs. My brother just got a new mobile phone, and he is very excited about how highly rated the camera is. But he hardly ever takes photos. So, he paid for a feature that he doesn't really need.

Paul

When people buy a new piece of hardware, like a laptop, they often don't consider the software they are purchasing along with the hardware. If the software is not what you are used to or doesn't work with your existing files, it can be frustrating to learn a new way of using your laptop.





Thank you