

Independent Writing Task

The independent writing task requires you to explain and defend a position.

Task format

You will have thirty minutes to write an essay. Sometimes the prompt will ask you to choose from more than two options as you write your response. However, many times you need to choose the better of two options or choose one side of an argument. If you need to make this kind of a choice, make a clear choice instead of trying to defend both sides.

Example: TOEFL Independent Writing Prompt

If you could change one important thing about your hometown, what would you change?

Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.

What is the topic?
change about your hometown?

What ONE thing would you

What type of writing?

An opinion essay

**What is the focus?
change it.**

Reasons for why you would

1 Exercise: Understand the Independent Writing Prompt.

Read each essay prompt and answer the related questions.

1. Prompt: Nowadays, food has become easier to prepare. Has this change improved the way people live? *Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.*

1. What is the topic of the essay?
2. What style of essay should you write?
3. What are the controlling ideas focused on?

2. Prompt: *Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?* Parents are the best teachers. *Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.*

1. What is the topic of the essay?
2. What style of essay should you write?
3. What are the controlling ideas focused on?

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

1. What is the topic of the essay?
2. What style of essay should you write?
3. What are the controlling ideas focused on?

Response format

Your answer should look like a balanced essay. You should write a four or five paragraph essay with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Choosing the number of body paragraphs will depend on your ability to write fluently and develop your ideas. Typically, it is easier for students to develop their ideas if they choose to write two body paragraphs. Writing two developed body paragraphs is better than writing three underdeveloped body paragraphs. An effective response is usually around 300 words.

Scoring

In order to receive a high score on this section, you need to answer the question with writing that is organized, developed, unified, and generally accurate.

Strategy

Many students find it much easier to write their essay within the time limit by following this time sequence:

30:00-27:00	Write your thesis and topic sentences
27:00-20:00	Write your first body paragraph
20:00-13:00	Write your second body paragraph
13:00-8:00	Write your introduction paragraph
8:00-3:00	Write your conclusion paragraph
3:00-0:00	Revise and edit your essay

If you have never written an essay beginning with the body paragraphs, try it out and see if it is faster for you. Maximize the amount of time you are typing and minimize the amount of time you think without writing anything.

When you revise and edit, don't spend too much time trying to fix things you don't know. Read through to fix easy things, like spelling or typing errors. Then go through and check to make sure your subjects and verbs match (and that you don't have fragments). Don't be overly concerned about fixing prepositions or articles if you don't know how to fix them. Focus on fixing what you know you can fix. You may also take this time to add academic words that would make your writing more clear.

Can I use "I" in my answer? Yes. The TOEFL rubric does not penalize you for using personal pronouns. While you are not graded on your formality, you are graded on your accuracy, and if it is easier to be accurate with your grammar using personal pronouns and examples, do it! For academic college writing, many professors will ask you to avoid personal pronouns, so you may need to clarify with your instructor what you should use in your essays for class.

Example: TOEFL Independent Writing Prompts

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Television has destroyed communication among friends and family. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- "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.
- How do movies or television influence people's behavior? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.

Example: TOEFL Independent Writing Question

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Use examples and reasons to support your position.

A university education should be provided free of charge to all interested students.

Example: TOEFL Independent Writing Response #1 (Good)

Imagine a place without taxes. That would be amazing! We would save a little more money. How about a place without having to pay for a university education? Oh better! Most families start saving money for university for their children before their children are even born. I know a way with less weight on parents' shoulders. I should tell you that I think it is better to pay. Just think of paying for a university education like a donation to the needs of school. The school needs the money to give service to the school and to pay teachers.

First, obviously the university needs service. Where else can they find the money to buy mops, soap, paper towels and paper? All of these things are needed for student's comfort. If they feel uncomfortable, they cannot study well. Imagine if they spend most of their day in school, if the floor isn't clean or the bathrooms are without paper, they will want to go. Another example, besides the cleanliness of schools, is the light of the classrooms sometimes needs to be replaced. Who is going to change it? They need people to change it, and we need to pay the school to support the people. For example, in Summer it's very hot and the air conditioner needs maintenance. Who is going to fix the air conditioner? The students? The teachers? Schools need people in charge of this area and these people need tools, ingredients, etc. Since universities need services, paying for university is not bad.

Also, the university has to have teachers. Paying for a university education is a way to help the school pay the wages of the teachers. Who wants to go to university without teachers? In that case, it is better to study at home. Teachers are part of the plan of education because they teach. As simple as that. The teachers prepare their classes with time to help students learn about what they need. They

have more experience, and they also, in the past, went to university to become a teacher. It's a circle of doing the same thing over and over. They have existed for a long time, and they are good. Of course there are different types of teachers. It just depends on what they want to teach and what students want to learn. One more time, paying for a university education is a good way to support teachers.

In conclusion, I'm in favor of paying for a university education. Yes, I know they are expensive. Maybe they can lower the charge, but this is another topic.

Example: TOEFL Independent Writing Response #2 (Better)

Is it right to spend public money on improving the capacity of people in our country? Some people think that each person needs to pay for their own education. If someone does not have the money, they can apply for a scholarship to go to a university. However, in my opinion, I think that a university education should be provided free of charge because of the need for equality and the rights of students.

First, a free university education provides equality for everyone. All of the social and economic classes will have the same opportunity to obtain a bachelor's degree. Students who are interested in changing their future will have the same possibility to do it with a free university education. Sometimes students can't attend universities because they do not have the money to pay for it. As a result, they are not able to attain a better paying job with benefits and are stuck in the same lifestyle. If students have the same opportunities to learn, whether or not they have money, it would create equality for all.

Second, a free university education should be the right of a student who really works hard for it. These types of students could be determined by requiring a starting exam for all students who would like to receive a free education. The government needs to be sure that

they are paying for the right students. If the students illustrate the desired qualities, then they would have the right to receive a free university education. It is not fair for the government to pay for a university education for a student that does not want to put forth the effort required. Therefore, if the students are qualified, it should be their right to have access to a free education.

Free university education for students interested and qualified allows for equality and should be their right. The government can apply methods in order to determine who is fit to receive the free education. However, it should be a possibility so that students can have more control in shaping their futures.

2 Exercise: Analyze Example Responses

Read over the two example responses for the prompt "**Some people go right on to college after high school; others take a year or more off to work or travel. Which do you think is the better choice? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.**"

Even though they both are organized correctly into multiple paragraphs, what makes the second response better than the first?

Writing Response #1 (Good)

There are a lot of decisions that you can make after high school. A lot of people prefer to go right into college, other people choose to take a break and travel around the world. I think the best decision that you can make is to go right into college. I would like to explain in two reasons why it is better to go to college after high school than travel. First, you can graduate and travel around the world after college. Second you can be a professional, make a lot of money and have the opportunity to do whatever you want wherever you want. If you want

to have a great future and make a lot of money, it would be good for you to read the following explanations.

Graduating from college is an opportunity to be better. A lot of people feel confused after high school about what they need to do. The solution is to go right into college. If you look around you, there are more people with opportunities to travel after their graduation than people that want to travel for themselves. People who choose to graduate from college first also have more opportunities to succeed in life. For example, my cousin wanted to travel around the world, but he didn't have the opportunity to travel. So, he applied for college and in college he received a scholarship to travel to another country. If you want to be better or if you want to travel around the world, don't search anymore. Going right to college after high school is your solution.

Second, being a professional and making a lot of money is the best opportunity that you have to travel. This is why it is important to go to college because you can have necessities to enjoy your life. When I was in high school, I thought that when I finished, I would travel, but I realized that if I didn't work, I couldn't travel because I didn't have the money to travel. So, I went to college and after that I found a job and made money. As a result, I have been able to travel to a lot of countries. College is the door to know the world. There is a study that says "most of the people that go to college can have the opportunity to find a job and be better in their lives, be successful." If you want to be a professional and earn a lot of money, go to college after high school. You will enjoy your time there and I promise that you will have a better job and make more money than the other people that don't have an education.

Writing Response #2 (Better)

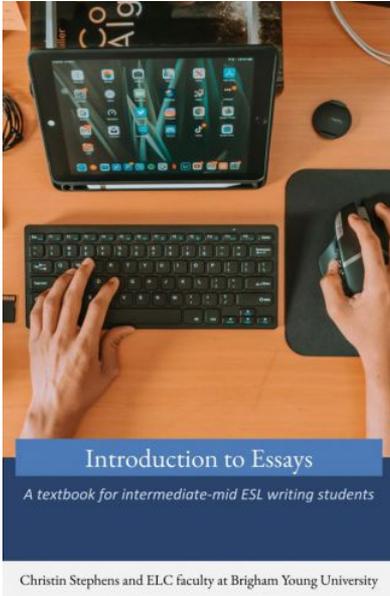
High school is a big moment in our lives. When we finish this moment in our lives, we need to be ready for the next chapter. Deciding what

this will be can be difficult. Our family situations may influence our decisions, but overall, when we graduate, we need to make the decision: What will we do after high school? Some people go right into college while other people take a year or more off to work and travel to different countries. In my opinion, it is better to take time off in order to save money for tuition and to have time to visit other countries.

First, some people take a year or more off to work and save money for tuition. Every situation is different. When I finished high school, I wanted to move to the USA and go to college, but money was a big factor. College in the USA is expensive for international students. As a result, I worked for almost two years to save money for tuition, rent and food for three years of college. Working and saving money can help you to be more independent in your life and to focus more on school when you finally go. Therefore, I think it is better to take time to work and save rather than going straight to college.

Second, some people take a year or more off to travel around the world. During the time that I was working before attending college, I had the opportunity to travel to different places. When I went to these different places, I had the opportunity to learn about different cultures and to see how beautiful the world is. It is not good to just work and work all the time; you need to take a break and be happy, too. Taking the two years off helped me to understand myself a little more and helped me to be closer to my family and friends around the world.

In conclusion, taking a year or more off to travel can help you to save money for the next three to five years of college and to have the opportunity to visit different parts of the world.



Foundations C Writing Packet.

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