

Chapter 17

Writing Practice Drills

You're now ready to crack the Writing section. We've provided lined pages on which to write your responses, but it would be better to practice typing your answers on a computer because that's how you'll be doing it on the actual TOEFL. Try the following practice prompts. After you've finished, read through the sample essays in the next chapter to get an idea of what TOEFL graders are looking for in the essay responses.

Writing Practice Drill #1

The first type of writing question will provide you with the following directions:

You will have 3 minutes to read the following passage. You may take notes during your reading. After the 3 minutes are up, you will hear a lecture on the topic. You may take notes during the lecture as well.

After the lecture ends, you will have 20 minutes to write your response. An effective response is generally 150–225 words long. You may use your notes to help you answer, and you may refer to the reading passage. Your essay will be graded on the quality of your writing and on the completeness of the content.

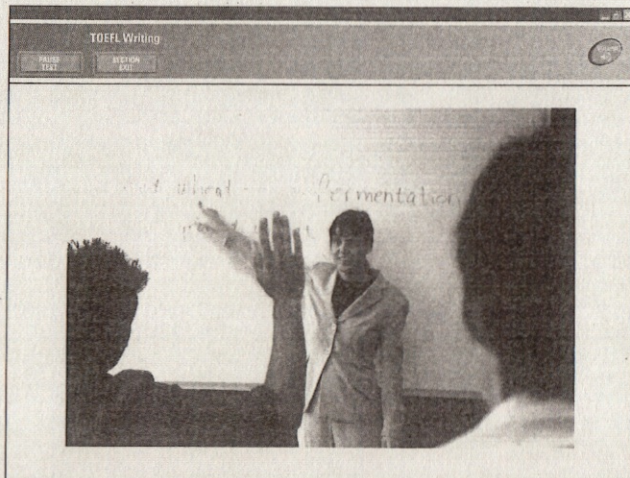
Now let's look at a writing question. On the actual test, you will hear a prompt that will ask you to read a passage in 3 minutes. For our purposes here, you will need to stop the audio to read the passage and either time yourself or ask a friend to time you. After 3 minutes, resume the audio for the listening passage.

Begin playing Track 23 on the CD or in your Student Tools.



Narrator: Now read the passage about the first grain-based food. You have 3 minutes to read the passage. Begin reading now.

[Stop the audio for 3 minutes while you read the passage on the next page.]



TOEFL Writing

PAUSE TEST RESUME TEST HIDE TIME 00:29:57

Scant physical evidence remains of the first human domestication of grain. Still, there is enough to conclude that ancient peoples, motivated by the nutritional value of bread or cakes made of wild wheat, looked for controlled ways to grow it to provide a consistent food supply. Three related discoveries are likely to have led to the introduction of bread as the first grain-based food.

The first discovery was that wheat could be prepared for use by grinding. People probably began consuming wheat by chewing it raw. Because wheat is very hard, they gradually discovered that it was less trouble to eat if crushed to paste between two stones. The result would have been the ancestor of the drier, more powdery wheat flour we use today.

From there, it was a short step to the next breakthrough—baking the simplest bread, which requires no technology but fire. Loaves of wheat paste, when baked into bread, could be stored for long periods, certainly longer than raw seeds. This kept the food value of wheat available for an extended period after it had been harvested.

Finally, ancient peoples found that if the paste was allowed to sit in the open, yeast spores from the air settled on it and began fermenting the wheat. This natural process of fermentation caused bubbles to form in the wheat paste, suggesting that it would be lighter in texture and even easier to eat when baked.

Resume playing Track 23.

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



N: Summarize the points made in the lecture you just heard, explaining how they cast doubt on the contents of the reading. You may refer to the passage as you write.

TOEFL WritingPAUSE TESTSECTION EXITHIDE TIME 00:29:57

Directions: You have 20 minutes to plan and write your response. Your response will be graded on the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the points in the lecture and their relationship to the reading passage. Typically, an effective response will be 150–225 words.

Question: Summarize the points made in the lecture you just heard, explaining how they cast doubt on the contents of reading. You may refer to the passage as you write.

Scant physical evidence remains of the first human domestication of grain. Still, there is enough to conclude that ancient peoples, motivated by the nutritional value of bread or cakes made of wild wheat, looked for controlled ways to grow it to provide a consistent food supply. Three related discoveries are likely to have led to the introduction of bread as the first grain-based food.

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Copy

Cut

Paste

Word Count: 0

Lined writing area for the response.

Writing Practice Drill #2

The second type of writing question asks you to write a response to a question in 30 minutes. It will look something like the following:

The screenshot shows a software interface for TOEFL Writing. At the top, it says "TOEFL Writing" and has buttons for "PAUSE TEST" and "SECTION EXIT". On the right, there are buttons for "HELP", "EXIT", and "NEW", along with a "HIDE TIME" button and a timer showing "00:29:57". Below the header, there are "Copy", "Cut", and "Paste" buttons, and a "Word Count: 0" indicator. The main content area contains the following text:

Directions: For this essay, you will have 30 minutes to write a response to a question that asks you to state, explain, and support your position on an issue. An effective essay is usually 300 words in length. Your response will be graded on the quality of your writing, the organization of your ideas, and the accuracy of the language you use.

Question:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Teachers should encourage their students to question everything.

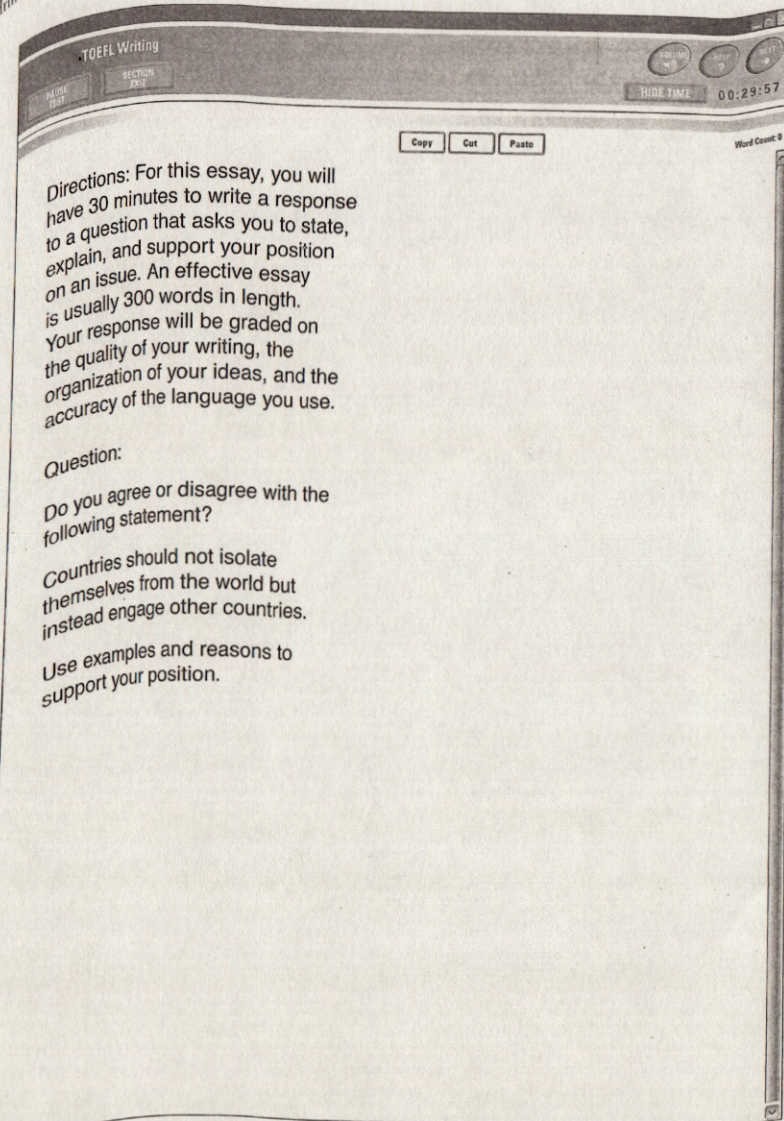
Use examples and reasons to support your position.

Lined writing area for page 442.

Lined writing area for page 443.

Writing Practice Drill #3

This drill again asks you to write a response to a question in 30 minutes.



The image shows a software interface for TOEFL Writing. At the top, it says "TOEFL Writing" and "SECTION 3011". There are buttons for "HIDE TIME" and a timer showing "00:29:57". Below the header, there are buttons for "Copy", "Cut", and "Paste". The main area contains the following text:

Directions: For this essay, you will have 30 minutes to write a response to a question that asks you to state, explain, and support your position on an issue. An effective essay is usually 300 words in length. Your response will be graded on the quality of your writing, the organization of your ideas, and the accuracy of the language you use.

Question:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Countries should not isolate themselves from the world but instead engage other countries.

Use examples and reasons to support your position.

Word Count: 0

A series of horizontal lines for writing an essay response.

Writing Practice Drill #4

This is another opportunity for you to write a response to a question in 30 minutes.

TOEFL Writing

PAUSE TEST SECTION ON HIDE TIME 00:29:57 HELP NEXT

Copy Cut Paste Word Count: 0

Directions: For this essay, you will have 30 minutes to write a response to a question that asks you to state, explain, and support your position on an issue. An effective essay is usually 300 words in length. Your response will be graded on the quality of your writing, the organization of your ideas, and the accuracy of the language you use.

Question:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Students, not teachers or administrators, should be in control of their own education.

Use examples and reasons to support your position.

Writing Practice Drill #5

Here's another chance to write a response to a question in 30 minutes.

The screenshot shows a software window titled "TOEFL Writing". At the top, there are buttons for "PAUSE TEST", "SECTION EXIT", "HELP", and "QUIT". A "HIDE TIME" button and a timer showing "00:29:57" are also present. Below the toolbar, there are "Copy", "Cut", and "Paste" buttons, and a "Word Count: 0" indicator. The main text area contains the following content:

Directions: For this essay, you will have 30 minutes to write a response to a question that asks you to state, explain, and support your position on an issue. An effective essay is usually 300 words in length. Your response will be graded on the quality of your writing, the organization of your ideas, and the accuracy of the language you use.

Question:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Before making a decision, it is important to find out if the decision will be popular with others.

Use examples and reasons to support your position.

A series of horizontal lines for writing an essay response, spanning the width of the page.