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# TOEFL iBT® Lesson Plans Writing

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# Writing, Lesson 1

Title	Writing, Introduction
Target Skill	Writing
Target tasks	All tasks
Proficiency Level	Intermediate
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the three question types in the updated TOEFL iBT Writing section.</li><li>• Understand the skills tested in the updated TOEFL iBT Writing section.</li></ul>
Materials	Student handout
Time	About 60–90 minutes

## Suggested Instructor Directions

### Handout Parts 1, 2, and 3

- Go to Handout Part 1: *Warm-Up Activity*.
- Tell the students to independently read the warm-up questions and answer them. Give the students five minutes to complete this task.
- Ask for a few students to volunteer their answers.
- Tell the students to read the short paragraph “How Civilization Developed” and to answer the questions that follow in pairs. Ask for a few students to volunteer their answers. Ask for volunteers to give ideas about how to increase typing speed and accuracy.
- Go to Handout Part 2: *What’s Included in the Updated Writing section?* Tell the students to read the descriptions of the three Writing tasks independently and answer the questions that follow the descriptions.
- Go to Handout Part 3: *Test Questions from Build a Sentence Task*. Explain that, on the actual test, test takers must drag the words into the blanks to complete the sentence, but during this class, they can write on the handout or on a piece of scratch paper to put the words in the correct order. Tell the students to work independently to complete the test question and to be ready to explain how they arrived at their answers. Give the students three minutes to complete this task.
- Set a timer for three minutes.
- Put the students in pairs to explain to one another how they arrived at their answers. Model how to explain an answer. For example, tell them that they need to explain that “who” must follow “know” because the verb “know” needs an object, and “who” connects the verb to the clause that follows it.
- Ask for a few students to volunteer their answers.

## Handout Part 4

- Distribute Handout Part 4: *Quiz on the Updated TOEFL iBT Writing Section*. Tell students to independently complete the worksheet. Tell them there is a time limit.
- Set a timer for five minutes.
- Tell students to submit their quizzes for review. Use the results from this quiz to gauge how much your students learned in the previous parts of this lesson about the **updated** Writing section. You can distribute the answer keys for Handout Parts 2 and 4 or read the information aloud.

# Writing, Lesson 1

## Student Handout

### Part 1: Warm-Up Activity

- On a typical day, how much writing in your own language do you do? What kinds of things do you write? Include writing by hand, typing, and texting.
- How often do you type on a full keyboard (laptop, computer, or tablet)? Do you know how many words per minute you type? Do you know how fast you type in English?
- What do you find most challenging about writing in English?

### Part 2: What's Included in the Updated Writing Section?

There are three types of Writing tasks: the Build a Sentence Task, Write an Email Task, and Write for an Academic Discussion Task.

**Build a Sentence:** In the Build a Sentence task, test takers see several sentences with words or phrases in the wrong order and move them to form a grammatical sentence or question. This task measures the test taker's command of sentence structures, a skill that is essential for all written communication.

**Write an Email:** In the Write an Email task, test takers are presented with a scenario in text regarding either an academic or social setting. A written explanation of the scenario and visual graphics are used to provide context to the task. Test takers are asked to share information in writing for a specific communicative purpose—for example, making a recommendation, extending an invitation, or proposing a solution to a problem.

**Write for an Academic Discussion:** The Write for an Academic Discussion task presents a question from a professor written in an online discussion and short responses from different students. Your task is to write your own answer to the professor's question, taking into account the other students' responses. You have ten minutes total to read the information and type your answer. You should write a minimum of 100 words. The professor's question and other students' answers stay on the screen the whole time.

Now answer some questions about the information you just read about.

There are three types of tasks on the Writing section, (1)\_\_\_\_\_, (2)\_\_\_\_\_, and (3)\_\_\_\_\_. Write the number of the task that corresponds to the example of the task that follows. For some of the tasks, only a part of the sample test question is shown.

A.

Your professor is teaching a class in economics. 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.

This is an example of Task \_\_\_\_.

B.

Make an appropriate sentence.

What was the highlight of your trip?

The \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ fantastic.

were the was old city showed us around who tour guides

This is an example of Task \_\_\_\_.

C.

Write an email to the editor of the magazine. In your email, do the following.

- Tell the editor what you like about the new magazine.
- Describe the problem you experienced.
- Ask about the status of your submissions.

Write as much as you can and in complete sentences.

This is an example of Task \_\_\_\_.

### Part 3: Test Question from Build a Sentence Task

Make an appropriate sentence.

What was the highlight of your trip?

The \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ fantastic.

were the was old city showed us around who tour guides

### Part 4: Quiz on the Updated TOEFL iBT Writing Section

Mark *T* for True or *F* for False next to each statement.

1. The Build a Sentence task asks you to write a sentence explaining your opinion on a topic.
2. The Write an Email task will always involve reading an e-mail about an academic topic.
3. For the Write an Email task, your response will be rated on how accurate and appropriate your use of a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary is.
4. You might be asked to make a recommendation in your response to the Write an Email task.
5. There is no recommended minimum for the number of words you write in the Write for an Academic Discussion task.
6. You should read the professor and student posts carefully before you start writing your response to the Write for an Academic Discussion task.
7. For the Write an Email task and the Write for An Academic Discussion task, you will have the same amount of time to type your response.
8. For some tasks on the Writing section, there is a word count function.
9. For some tasks on the Writing section, there is a spell-check function.

# Writing, Lesson 1

## Answer Key

### Part 2

There are three types of tasks on the Writing section, (1) Build a Sentence, (2) Write an Email, and (3) Write for an Academic Discussion.

- A. 3
- B. 1
- C. 2

### Part 4

1. **False.** In the Build a Sentence task, you will see several sentences with words or phrases in the wrong order and move them to form a grammatical sentence or question; you will not write about your opinion.
2. **False.** Some topics will be in regard to an academic setting, while others will be in regard to a social setting.
3. **True.** Accurate and appropriate use of a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary is one of the criteria on which responses to this task will be rated.
4. **True.** Making a recommendation is one type of information you might be asked to share.
5. **False.** The recommended minimum is 100 words.
6. **True.** To make an effective contribution to the discussion, you should read the professor and student posts before you begin writing your response.
7. **False.** For the Write an Email task, you will have seven minutes in total to read and respond. For the Write for an Academic Discussion Task, you will have ten minutes.
8. **True.** For the Write an Email task and the Write for an Academic Discussion task, you can make use of the word count function.
9. **False.** No task on the Writing section includes a spell-check function for responses.

## Writing, Lesson 2

Title	Writing, Combining Sentences
Target Skill	Writing
Target tasks	Build a Sentence
Proficiency Level	Intermediate
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review terms related to sentence structures (a good command of sentence structures is a skill that is essential for all written communication).</li><li>• Learn and practice correct punctuation for combining sentences.</li></ul>
Materials	Student handout
Time	About 30 minutes

### Suggested Instructor Directions

#### Handout Part 1

- Tell students they are going to review different ways to combine clauses to make longer sentences.
- Check that students know the meaning of *independent clause* (has a subject and a verb and can stand on its own as a complete sentence), *dependent clause* (has a subject and a verb but cannot stand on its own), and *phrase* (is missing either a subject or a verb).
- Point out that knowing this terminology makes it easier to talk about how to improve one's writing.
- Tell students to independently complete Handout Part 1, *Joining Clauses*, and check the answers using the Answer Key before they proceed to Parts 2 and 3; if students' knowledge of the terms used in the handout seems insufficient, spend some time discussing the terms.
- Distribute the Answer Key or read it aloud.



## Handout Part 2

- Review the explanations of conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs.
- Tell students to independently complete the chart on Handout Part 2. Give the students three minutes to complete this task.
- Put students in pairs and ask students to compare their charts to their partner's.
- Distribute the Answer Key or read it aloud.

## Handout Part 3

- Tell students to independently complete the sentences. Give the students ten minutes to complete this task.
- Put the students in pairs and ask each partner to check the other's sentences only for punctuation. Remind them of the following guidelines as they check the sentences:
  - Sentences with coordinating conjunctions generally include a comma before the conjunction.
  - Sentences with subordinating conjunctions generally do not include a comma before the conjunction UNLESS a subordinate clause begins the sentence.
  - Commas should follow conjunctive adverbs if they begin the sentence.
- Tell students to submit their sentences for review.

# Writing, Lesson 2

## Student Handout

### Part 1: Joining Clauses

Write **I** by the independent clauses, **D** by the dependent clauses, and **P** by the phrases.

- A. in spite of the cold \_\_\_\_\_
- B. do you know the time \_\_\_\_\_
- C. by the river \_\_\_\_\_
- D. moreover, she forgot to bring the report \_\_\_\_\_
- E. until the meeting ended \_\_\_\_\_
- F. the newly hired assistant for the branch office \_\_\_\_\_
- G. even though the weather was nice \_\_\_\_\_
- H. approximately 50 years ago \_\_\_\_\_
- I. the conditions were not met before the deadline
- J. unless they lower the price \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 2: Connectors

Study the connectors and example sentences that follow.

**Coordinating conjunction:** I took the bus, and then I transferred to the train.

**Subordinating conjunction:** I took the bus because the train was late. OR  
Because the train was late, I took the bus.

**Conjunctive adverb:** I took the bus; however, the train would have been faster. OR  
I took the bus. However, the train would have been faster.

Write the connectors in the correct category.

*although, but, even though, for, furthermore, moreover, nevertheless, nor, or, since, so, therefore, unless, while, yet*

Coordinating Conjunctions	Subordinating Conjunctions	Conjunctive adverbs
Example: and	Example: because	Example: however

### Part 3: Focus on Punctuation

Write a second independent or dependent clause and join that second independent or dependent clause to the first independent clause by using the type of connector indicated. Be careful to use the correct punctuation.

- A. (coordinating conjunction) I couldn't find my phone this morning
- B. (subordinating conjunction) I didn't like playing sports as a child
- C. (subordinating conjunction) The final exam is next week
- D. (conjunctive adverb) Construction on the new highway starts tomorrow
- E. (subordinating conjunction) They need to move to a new apartment
- F. (conjunctive adverb) The computer lab will be closed this weekend
- G. (subordinating conjunction) He frequently reviews his vocabulary flashcards
- H. (coordinating conjunction) She felt confident answering the interview questions

# Writing, Lesson 2

## Answer Key

### Part 1: Joining Clauses

- A. P
- B. I
- C. P
- D. I
- E. D
- F. P
- G. D
- H. P
- I. I
- J. D

### Part 2: Connectors

<b>Coordinating Conjunctions</b>	<b>Subordinating Conjunctions</b>	<b>Conjunctive adverbs</b>
and, for, nor, but, or, yet, so	because, although, even though, since, unless, while	however, furthermore, moreover, nevertheless, therefore

### Part 3: Focus on Punctuation

Answers will vary, but the following will usually be true of correct sentences:

- Sentences with coordinating conjunctions include a comma (for example, I couldn't find my phone this morning, so I was late for class.).
- Sentences with subordinating conjunctions do not include a comma (for example, I didn't like playing sports as a child because I preferred to spend my time reading.) UNLESS a subordinate clause begins the sentence (for example, Because I preferred to spend my time reading, I didn't like playing sports as a child.).
- Commas should follow conjunctive adverbs if they begin the sentence (for example, However, children should be encouraged to get lots of exercise.).

## Writing, Lesson 3

Title	Write an Email Sample Response
Target Skill	Writing
Target tasks	Write an Email
Proficiency Level	Intermediate/Advanced
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the Write an Email task.</li><li>• Understand what makes a successful response to the task.</li></ul>
Materials	Student handout
Time	About 30 minutes

### Suggested Instructor Directions

Handout Parts 1, 2, and 3

- Distribute Handout Part 1: *Sample Task*.
- Ask for a few students to volunteer an explanation of what the task is asking test takers to do.
- Confirm or correct their understanding of what they must do for this task.
- Distribute Handout Part 2: *Sample Response*.
- Direct students' attention to the criteria listed on the handout. Check students' understanding of, for example, elaboration and clarity.
- Ask students to read the sample independently.
- Tell the students to work with a partner to answer the question about why the sample response is considered a high-level response.
- Wrap up by asking students to work together to create a list of tips that, based on their experience working with the sample response, can help a test taker who is preparing for the task.
- If students need help getting started, you can model the process by suggesting one or more of the following: "I think that to do well on the Write an Email task, you should ..." (choose one or more to model):
  - read the email carefully and make sure you understand the information provided
  - make sure you are answering the assigned question carefully
  - make sure to write in complete sentences
  - make sure to use correct vocabulary
  - make sure to use correct grammar

# Writing, Lesson 3

## Student Handout

### Write an Email Task

#### Part 1: Sample Task

A new poetry magazine has asked its readers for submissions, and you decided to submit two of your poems. However, you had a problem using the online submission form, and you are not certain that your submissions were received.

Write an email to the editor of the magazine. In your email, do the following.

- Tell the editor what you like about the new magazine.
- Describe the problem you experienced.
- Ask about the status of your submissions.

Write as much as you can and in complete sentences.

Your Response:

To: [editor@sunshinepoetrymagazine.com](mailto:editor@sunshinepoetrymagazine.com)

Subject: Problem using submission form

## Part 2: Sample Response

What follows is a sample response to the Write an Email task.

As you read it, think about the following aspects.

- Overall success in addressing the task
- Elaboration
- Clarity
- Range of grammar and vocabulary

Read for about five minutes. As you read, think about this question:

What makes this response a high-level response?

Hi Editor,

I hope you are well! I wanted to say that I really love the new Sunshine Poetry Magazine. It's refreshing to see such a diverse range of voices, and the layout is very engaging. However, I had some trouble with online submission form when I tried to submit two of my poems. After I uploaded the files and hit submit, the page just kept loading and loading, and eventually, I wasn't sure if my poems can successfully sent. Could you please confirm if you received my submissions? I'm really excited to be a part of your magazine and would appreciate any help you can provide to fix this issue. Looking forward to your response.

Best regards.

## Part 3: Tips for Success on the Write an Email Task

To do well on the Write an Email task, you should:

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## Writing, Lesson 4

Title	Write for an Academic Discussion Role-Play and Practice Task: Self-Employment
Target Skill	Writing
Target tasks	Write for an Academic Discussion task
Proficiency Level	Intermediate/Advanced
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write for an Academic Discussion task.</li><li>• Write and support an opinion.</li></ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student handout</li><li>• Discussion strips</li></ul>
Time	About 60 minutes

### Suggested Instructor Directions

#### Handout Parts 1 and 2

- Distribute Handout Part 1: *Warm-Up Activity: Self-Employment*
- Tell the students to work in small groups to produce a list of advantages and disadvantages of self-employment.
- Ask for volunteers to name one advantage and one disadvantage that the group discussed.
- Distribute Handout Part 2: *What Do Students Do on Online Discussion Boards?* Tell the students to review the actions described there. Explain to the students that academic discussion boards are a common requirement in some university courses and are represented on the TOEFL iBT. Explain that a successful contribution involves more than simply stating your opinion.
- Organize the students into groups of four.
- Distribute the discussion strips, ensuring that each student in the group has a different part.
- Explain that for this activity, you will be assuming the role of a character who has an opinion about self-employment. This opinion may be different from your own; that is OK. Later, you will have a chance to write about your own opinion on this topic.
- Tell the students to read their part aloud to the group. Encourage the students to ask each other at least one follow-up question and make up answers.
- Give the students fifteen minutes to complete this task.
- Go back to the three actions on Handout Part 2. Ask the students which character in their group did the best job with completing the actions listed there. Why?



## Handout Part 3

- Distribute Handout Part 3: *Write for an Academic Discussion Practice Task: Self-Employment*
- Remind the students about the importance of the actions listed on Handout Part 2 but note that as they go on to practice including their own opinion about the topic of self-employment in writing, they will not be able to ask follow-up questions of the other students on the discussion board.
- Set a timer for fifteen minutes. Encourage students to review their responses if they finish before the time is up. Remind them that the time limit for this task on the TOEFL iBT test is ten minutes. You may want to repeat this task on another day and use the ten-minute time limit.
- Tell students to submit their responses for review.

# Writing, Lesson 4

## Student Handout

### Part 1: Warm-Up Activity

Self-Employment Advantages	Self-Employment Disadvantages

### Part 2: What Do Students Do on Online Discussion Boards?

Participating successfully on a discussion board can require these three actions:

- Stating your opinion, recommendation, or thought
- Explaining why you have that opinion; be sure to include details and examples to support your opinion
- Furthering the discussion by adding a new perspective or asking your own question

### Discussion Strips

**Tiffany:** I love being my own boss! I used to be an employee at a large accounting firm and now I work as an independent contractor. The freedom and independence of working for myself has improved my quality of life. For example, because I make my own schedule, I can do other important activities like helping care for my elderly father and going to the gym.

**Scott:** I'm also an accountant and proud to be an employee of a large firm. My work schedule is not flexible, and I don't have much free time. However, I receive a consistent paycheck and other benefits like paid time off for vacation and illness. For example, last winter I became quite ill and missed three weeks of work. Fortunately, I still received my paycheck during that time.

**Rose:** What I really like about being self-employed is being able to choose which projects I want to work on and who I want to work with. At my old job, my boss assigned my projects, and I had to do the work even if it was uninteresting or a waste of time. It was boring and unfulfilling. Now I feel motivated and excited about my work projects.

**David:** I have been self-employed and also worked as an employee, and I can say there are advantages and disadvantages to both situations. I became self-employed when the firm I was working for downsized. It was scary and also exciting to build my own business. After many years of hard work, and very little time off, I sold my business and got a job working as an employee again. Working for myself was very rewarding but a lot of responsibility.

### Part 3

Your professor is teaching a class on self-employment. 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.

An effective response will contain at least 100 words.

**Professor Walker:** Self-employment is steadily growing in popularity.

Independence and flexibility are two main reasons self-employment is an attractive option for many. With self-employment, you have more control over how you spend your time. Because you're not forced to work a certain number of hours and days each week, you can spend more time giving attention to other priorities like caring for your family. But is self-employment really the best option? What do you think? Why?

**Jay:** I believe self-employment is not the best option for most people because there is a lot of risk. When you are self-employed, you are directly responsible for generating a profit. This means your pay is not guaranteed. Businesses are often seasonal, and income fluctuates. How do you feed your family when your business isn't turning a profit?

**Monica:** In my opinion, being your own boss is best. It's true that income can be inconsistent when you're self-employed, so you need to budget carefully and think ahead. However, as Professor Walker noted, you have more control over your time when you're self-employed. Time is more precious than money. You can find ways to make more money, but you can't make more time. Isn't the freedom of being your own boss worth the risk?

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## Writing, Lesson 5

Title	Write for an Academic Discussion Sample Response
Target Skill	Writing
Target tasks	Write for an Academic Discussion task
Proficiency Level	Intermediate/Advanced
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the Write for an Academic Discussion task.</li><li>• Understand what makes a successful response to the task.</li></ul>
Materials	Student handout
Time	About 60 minutes

### Suggested Instructor Directions

Handout Parts 1, 2, and 3

- Distribute Handout 1: *Sample Task*.
- Ask for a few students to volunteer an explanation of what the task is asking test takers to do.
- Confirm or correct their understanding of what they must do for this task.
- Distribute Handout 2: *Sample Response*.
- Direct students' attention to the criteria listed on the handout. Check students' understanding of, for example, elaboration and clarity.
- Ask students to read the sample independently.
- Tell the students to work with a partner to answer the question about why the sample response is considered a high-level response.
- Wrap up by asking students to work together to create a list of tips that, based on their experience working with the sample, can help a test taker who is preparing for the task.
- If students need help getting started, you can model the process by suggesting one or more of the following: "I think that to do well on the Write for an Academic Discussion task, you should make sure ..." (choose one or more to model):
  - you have read the professor and student posts before you start writing
  - you are answering the assigned question carefully
  - to write in complete sentences
  - to use correct vocabulary
  - to use correct grammar

# Writing, Lesson 5

## Student Handout

### Write for an Academic Discussion Task

#### Part 1: Sample Task

Your professor is teaching a class on social studies. 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.

An effective response will contain at least 100 words.

Dr. Achebe

Volunteering refers to the act of offering your time and service without financial compensation to benefit a community, organization, or cause. While many people volunteer mainly to help others, some institutions have mandatory volunteer programs. High schools are one example where students may be required to complete a certain number of volunteer hours to graduate. What do you think? Should high school students be required to do volunteer work? Why or why not?

Claire

Yes, I think high schools should require volunteer hours because it helps students build a sense of civic responsibility. Many teenagers don't naturally think about helping others, and this requirement can introduce them to the idea that their time and effort can make a real difference in the lives of others.

Andrew

I don't think volunteer hours should be required because many students already have limited free time. Some have part-time jobs or take care of younger siblings after school. Adding a mandatory volunteer requirement could create extra stress and make it harder for those students to balance their existing responsibilities.

#### Part 2: Sample Response

What follows is a sample response to the Write for an Academic Discussion task.

As you read the sample response, consider whether the response successfully does the following.

- Clearly elaborates an argument for a position, responds to arguments, and/or uses information provided in the posts
- Is adequately supported, clear, and cohesive
- Makes accurate and appropriate use of a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary
- Follows the mechanical conventions of English (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization)

What makes this response a high-level response?

While I get Andrew's point about limited free time, I think it's good to have mandatory volunteer hours at high schools. Volunteering teaches students empathy and community service, helping them grow into responsible adults. Schools can give flexible options that fit student's schedules, like weekend or summer volunteering. What's more, volunteering can be a break from academic pressure, allowing students to engage in meaningful activities outside school. For example, helping at a community garden is both fulfilling and educational.

To do well on the Write for an Academic Discussion task, you should:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.