

# TWE 2004 Introduction

**Read this for the introductory TWE class. Keep it handy for use in later units.**

Until Sept. 2005 you will have to take only the Personal Opinion test. From Sept. 2005 the writing component of the TOEFL will consist of two essays:

1. Synthesis of reading, listening, writing.
2. Personal opinion

In English 1 through 4 we've been preparing indirectly for the synthesis test. This year in English 4 we'll focus on the personal opinion test, for those who will take the test before September 2005.

## I. The Personal Opinion test

### Features

- personal opinion but academic format (the one we've been using in E1-E4). A multi-paragraph essay with (suggested) two-sentence introduction, two or three body paragraphs, and a one- or two-sentence closing paragraph. (Think of it as a dehydrated English 3 or 4 essay.)
- 30 minutes
- Evaluation focuses on expressive language and clear, full development of ideas (see the scoring guidelines, below).
- Note-writing is permitted.

### The questions

- personal opinion but require logical development
- types (See "IV. Types of Questions," below)

### The answers

- academic format: multi-paragraph, introduction paragraph with Thesis statement, body paragraphs (with topic sentence, body, closing sentence)
- specific requirement for each question type

## II. Four essential steps in writing a good answer

1. Accurate analysis of the question: In order to answer a question well, we must first understand the question and its requirements exactly.
2. Plan: Write your thesis statement (see "Missing the point" below) and a two-level outline. Use the principles that you learned in English 1-4
  - deductive organization that shows good reasoning
  - a good topic sentence for each body paragraph (but not a closing sentence)
  - coherence (including fronting your point)
  - cohesion (distinguishing global and local transitions)
  - full development. (HOWEVER, if you provide as much support as Mr. H has required, you won't be able to finish the essay within 30 minutes; provide a clear explanation, but don't provide for deep understanding).Don't spend too much time on planning; you are given 30 minutes for this essay; spend only around 5 minutes planning, because you'll need time to write careful English, to revise if you run into trouble with development of your ideas, and to edit your language.
3. Write. Remember to leave five minutes for editing.
4. Edit. (Before you take this test, develop the skill of reading your writing through the eye of another person.)

### III. Scoring Guidelines

from *Test of Written English*, TOEFL, Princeton, New Jersey

- 6 Clearly demonstrates competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it may have occasional errors.
- A paper in this category...
- is well organized and well developed.
  - effectively addresses the writing task.
  - uses appropriate details to support a thesis or illustrate ideas.
  - shows unity, coherence, and progression.
  - displays consistent facility in the use of language.
  - demonstrates syntactic variety and appropriate word choice.
- 5 Demonstrates competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it will have occasional errors.
- A paper in this category...
- is generally well organized and well developed, though it may have fewer details than does a 6 paper.
  - may address some parts of the task more effectively than others.
  - shows unity, coherence, and progression.
  - demonstrates some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary.
  - displays facility in language, though it may have more errors than does a 6 paper.
- 4 Demonstrates minimal competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels.
- A paper in this category...
- is adequately organized.
  - addresses the writing topic adequately but may slight parts of the task.
  - uses some details to support a thesis or illustrate ideas.
  - demonstrates adequate but undistinguished or inconsistent facility with syntax and usage.
  - may contain some serious errors that occasionally obscure meaning.
- 3 Demonstrates some developing competence in writing, but it remains flawed on either the rhetorical or syntactic level, or both.
- A paper in this category may reveal one or more of the following weaknesses:
- inadequate organization or development.
  - failure to support or illustrate generalizations with appropriate or sufficient detail.
  - an accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage.
  - a noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms.
- 2 Suggests incompetence in writing.
- A paper in this category is seriously flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:
- failure to organize or develop.
  - little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics.
  - serious and frequent errors in usage or sentence structure.
  - serious problems with focus.
- 1 Demonstrates incompetence in writing.
- A paper in this category will contain serious and persistent writing errors, may be illogical or incoherent, or may reveal the writer's inability to comprehend the question. A paper that is severely underdeveloped also falls into this category.

## IV. Types of questions

From "TOEFL Essay Writing Tips," [www.editenglish.com](http://www.editenglish.com)

### 1. **Choose a point of view and support that view.**

Example: Some people believe that university students should be required to attend classes. Others believe that going to classes should be optional for students. Which point of view do you agree with? Use specific reasons and details to explain your answer.

### 2. **Describe something.**

Example: If you could invent something NEW, what product would you develop? Use specific details to explain why this invention is needed.

### 3. **Compare two points of view and tell which one you agree with.**

Example: Some people think that children should begin their formal education at a very early age and should spend most of their time on school studies. Others believe that young children should spend most of their time playing. Compare these two views. Which view do you agree with? Why?

### 4. **Agree or disagree with something.**

Example: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ONLY people who earn a lot of money are successful. Do you agree or disagree with this definition of success? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

### 5. **Explain why something is true.**

Example: People remember special gifts or presents that they have received. Why? Give specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

### 6. **Support an idea or plan.**

Example: It has recently been announced that a new restaurant may be built in your neighborhood. Do you support or oppose this plan? Why? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

## V. Common problems

- Many writers' introductory and concluding paragraphs are too long; keep them to two or three sentences. The length of the TWE is one page or less. The essays you have been writing are three pages. So you should give less space to the introductory and concluding paragraphs. Don't spend time on fulfilling the function of seducing the reader, and don't plan for the introductory or the concluding paragraph in your outline.
- Very few essays have thesis statements that show major supports.
- The writers often neglect to provide an effective topic sentence. (You don't have to present major supports.)
- Many do not use suitable language. For example, the language in one question is: "The world would be better off..." so you should use the modal "would" and imaginary conditionals.
- Mistakes with elementary grammar and awkward expression. The best and only way to solve this problem is RECONSTRUCTION on a regular basis. (Reconstruction is good not only for avoiding mistakes; it's also helpful in expanding your expression power.) Also develop the skill of objective editing of your own work.
- Support for major supporting points is weak. A good rule to follow is: Present your point, then provide abstract-general explanation, then provide more explanation, abstract-specific and/or concrete-specific.

## VI. Tips

### 1. DON'T MISS THE POINT

**Here is a sample question:** Like most things, progress is neither all good nor all bad. Progress has brought great advancements in standards of living, but it has also caused great damage to the Earth and its people in the form of environmental damage and more effective weaponry.

#### **Problem first paragraph:**

The nobleness & the use of progress in any field, to an individual, or to the society on the whole, will depend on what use the progress is being put to, and I feel, cannot be generalized as stated above.

One of the most common errors is committed in this introduction—failure to restate the topic.

#### **Comment:**

Some essays claim that progress is always a good thing, for example, in school or in one's career, but fail to talk about the sacrifices or disadvantages involved in making that progress. Other essays missed the point in another way—they discussed how advancing in one field might coincidentally lead to misfortune, for example, moving to a new city because of a promotion at work and dying in a car accident in the new city. Such an event is not truly related to the progress; rather, it is simply an unfortunate coincidence.

Still other essays did not discuss "progress"; rather, they discussed "success" and the advantages and disadvantages of success rather than the advantages and disadvantages of progress."

The TWE experts agree: "Restate the question in the form of a thesis. That way, you will frame your essay around the demands of the assignment. Your thesis statement should include three or four key points that will be discussed in the essay. Do not copy the question word for word. Restate the question in your own words as you create your thesis sentence." ([http://members.xoom.com/xmcm/buckoff/new\\_page\\_9.htm](http://members.xoom.com/xmcm/buckoff/new_page_9.htm))

**Here is a sample question:** Some people say that it is best to be loyal and to work for one company during one's life. Others take the opposite view and say it is better to change jobs frequently in one's life. Discuss these positions, using specific examples of both. Then tell which one you agree with and explain why.

#### **A good restatement:**

In the workplace, some people prefer to be loyal to one company by working there all of their life. Other workers disagree by saying it is better to change jobs frequently. Each position deserves some consideration.

([http://www.testmagic.com/Knowledge\\_Base/TOEFL/Writing/samples/o39\\_progress\\_always\\_good/5.25\\_01.htm](http://www.testmagic.com/Knowledge_Base/TOEFL/Writing/samples/o39_progress_always_good/5.25_01.htm))

### 2. USE A SUITABLE STRUCTURE

Plan the structure that will most effectively meet the requirements of this type of question. Here is an example of the best structure for one type of question (from [http://members.xoom.com/xmcm/buckoff/new\\_page\\_9.htm](http://members.xoom.com/xmcm/buckoff/new_page_9.htm)):

"The issue question is a very popular type of TWE question. Many students read this question and begin the essay with their opinion. However, the essay is asking the writer to discuss both positions first. After a thorough discussion of both views, then the writer should indicate his position.

Here is a sample question: Some people say that it is best to be loyal and to work for one company during one's life. Others take the opposite view and say it is better to change jobs frequently in one's life. Discuss these positions, using specific examples of both. Then tell which one you agree with and explain why.

- I. Introduction: The issue of being loyal to an employer or changing jobs frequently is a very controversial one. In the workplace, some people prefer to be loyal to one company by working there all of their life. Other workers disagree by saying it is better to change jobs frequently. Each position deserves some consideration.
- II. Body: Some say that it is better to be loyal to one company. [reason #1 and reason #2]
- III. Body: Others say that it is better to change jobs often in one's career. [reason #1 and reason #2]
- IV. Conclusion: In the final analysis, it is better to... your reason #1 and your reason #2.

Here is another sample question: In addition to their specialized classes in their major, students should also be required to take general education classes in a university. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons to support your opinion.

This issue question is also a very popular type of TWE question. This issue question is different from the first one because it does not ask you to discuss both positions. However, I still recommend that you begin the essay with a counter argument. It is important to briefly acknowledge the opposite view, so the reader knows that you have carefully thought about both sides. But do not waffle on the issue. You must take a very clear position. State your position directly in the thesis. Be sure to give three specific reasons why. Then you can develop each reason in subsequent paragraphs. Restate the thesis sentence and include a clear three-point argument. Taking general education classes will better prepare the student for the real world, it will help eliminate racism and discrimination, and it will help advance our society by giving us more broadly educated individuals.

### 3. THE INTRODUCTION

The introduction should be simple, not more than three sentences. Present the thesis statement as the last statement, and present the major body parts in the thesis statement.

From "TOEFL Essay Writing Tips," [www.editenglish.com](http://www.editenglish.com):

Let's look at some more essay questions to see how to restate the question and how to write your thesis statement.

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 rather than individual sports. In team sports, children learn how to cooperate. They learn good sportsmanship 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. 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 homey; 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.