

II-5. TOEFL Writing Task Types

Every day, people need to write, review, and edit texts in English for communication purposes that take place in a variety of settings, such as offices, labs, and classrooms. Such writing may take a variety of forms, including social media posts, instant messages, emails, and written course assignments. Writing skills are measured with the following task types: *Build a Sentence*, *Write an Email*, and *Write for an Academic Discussion*.

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 (see Figure 8). This task measures the test taker's command of sentence structures, a skill that is essential for all written communication.

Figure 8. Example of *Build a Sentence* Task Type

Make an appropriate sentence.



I'm going to study at the library this afternoon.



?

to do borrow any books you need

Source: TOEFL iBT® test, ETS

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 (see Figure 9). 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. This writing task measures the test taker’s ability to produce a multisentence written text that

- achieves the designated communication goal, following basic social conventions;
- is adequately elaborated, clear, and cohesive;
- makes accurate and appropriate use of a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary; and
- follows mechanical conventions of English (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).

Figure 9. Example of *Write an Email* Task Type

Your school’s 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 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
Subject: Problem using submission form

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Source: TOEFL iBT® test, ETS

Write for an Academic Discussion

In the *Write for an Academic Discussion* task, test takers are asked to state and support an opinion within the context of an online class discussion forum (see Figure 10). A post from the professor briefly frames the topic and poses a related opinion question for discussion. Brief posts from other students then provide different positions on the issue. The test takers contribute their own position on the question, supporting their opinion with their own reasoning, experiences, or knowledge. This task measures the test taker's ability to produce a multisentence written text that

- clearly elaborates an argument for a position by responding to arguments and/or using information provided in short texts;
- is adequately supported, clear, and cohesive;
- makes accurate and appropriate use of a range of grammatical structures and vocabulary; and
- follows the mechanical conventions of English (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).

Figure 10. Example of *Write for an Academic Discussion* Task Type

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 in your own words.

An effective response will contain at least 100 words.



Dr. Achebe

Volunteerism 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.

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TOEFL Research Report No. RR-106 and ETS Research Report No. RR-25-12 © 2025 Educational Testing Service

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