TOEFL iBT Test 1

WRITING

This section measures your ability to write in English to communicate in an academic environment.

There are two writing questions in this section.

For question 1, you will read a passage and listen to a lecture about the same topic. You may take notes while you read and listen. Then you will write a response to a question based on what you have read and heard. You may look back at the passage when answering the question. You may use your notes to help you answer the question. You have 20 minutes to plan and write your response.

For question 2, you will write an essay based on your own knowledge and experience. You have 30 minutes to plan and complete your essay.

Directions: Give yourself 3 minutes to read the passage.

Reading Time: 3 minutes

Archaeologists have recently found a fossil of a 150-million-year-old mammal known as *Repenomamus robustus* (*R. robustus*). Interestingly, the mammal's stomach contained the remains of a psittacosaur dinosaur. Some researchers have therefore suggested that *R. robustus* was an active hunter of dinosaurs. However, a closer analysis has made the hypothesis that *R. robustus* was an active hunter unlikely. It was probably just a scavenger that sometimes fed on dinosaur eggs containing unhatched dinosaurs.

First, *R. robustus*, like most mammals living 150 million years ago, was small—only about the size of a domestic cat. It was much smaller than psittacosaurs, which were almost two meters tall when full grown. Given this size difference, it is unlikely that *R. robustus* would have been able to successfully hunt psittacosaurs or similar dinosaurs.

Second, the legs of *R. robustus* appear much more suited for scavenging than hunting: they were short and positioned somewhat to the side rather than directly underneath the animal. These features suggest that *R. robustus* did not chase after prey. Psittacosaurs—the type of dinosaur found in the stomach of *R. robustus*—were fast moving. It is unlikely that they would have been caught by such short-legged animals.

Third, the dinosaur bones inside the stomach of the *R. robustus* provide no evidence to support the idea that the dinosaur had been actively hunted. When an animal has been hunted and eaten by another animal, there are usually teeth marks on the bones of the animal that was eaten. But the bones of the psittacosaur inside the *R. robustus* stomach do not have teeth marks. This suggests that *R. robustus* found an unguarded dinosaur nest with eggs and simply swallowed an egg with the small psittacosaur still inside the eggshell.

Listen to Track 19.

Directions: You have 20 minutes to plan and write your response. Your response will be judged on the basis of 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 to 225 words.

Listen to Track 20. 

Response Time: 20 minutes

1. Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they respond to the specific points made in the reading passage.

Directions: Read the question below. You have 30 minutes to plan, write, and revise your essay. Typically, an effective response will contain a minimum of 300 words.

Response Time: 30 minutes

2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

   Technology has made children less creative than they were in the past.

   Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

ANSWERS

Writing Section

Prompts, Topic Notes, and Sample Responses with Rater Comments

Use the sample Integrated and Independent Writing Rubrics in Appendix A to see how responses are scored.

This section includes topic notes that are guides to the kind of information raters expect to read in a high-level response.

This section also refers to sample responses, which can be found on the accompanying DVD. These responses were scored at the highest level. The responses are followed by comments from certified ETS raters.

Question 1

Prompt

Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they respond to the specific points made in the reading passage.

Topic Notes

The reading discusses three reasons to believe that a small mammal, R. robustus, could not have been an active hunter (perhaps it was a scavenger that sometimes fed on unhatched eggs of the psitticosaur dinosaur), but the lecturer presents reasons why each of these three reasons are unconvincing.

Point made in the reading	Corresponding point from the lecture
R. robustus was smaller than psitticosaurs so given their size, R. robustus was not likely to be a successful hunter of psitticosaurs or similar dinosaurs.	R. robustus was too small to hunt adult psitticosaurs, but it could have hunted baby psitticosaurs or other similarly sized dinosaurs—prey that was smaller than or had less mass than R. robustus.
R. robustus would not have been able to move fast enough to catch prey because it had short legs positioned to the side.	There is a modern day mammal, the Tasmanian Devil, that has the same leg features as R. Robustus but can achieve speeds fast enough to make it an effective predator.
The lack of teeth marks on the bones found in the stomach of R. robustus indicates it was not an active hunter (and that it probably just swallowed a dinosaur egg whole).	R. robustus probably swallowed its prey whole or in large pieces; R. robustus had no marks on its back teeth, which were probably not used for chewing.

Responses with scores of 4 and 5 typically discuss all three points in the table.

Sample Response

The lecture completely refutes the reading passage. The professor use the following points to indicate that R. robustus could have been actively hunting baby psittacosaur and similar sized baby dinosaurs.

First, although R. robustus was small, it was much bigger than baby psittacosaurs dinosaur, more than twice in size. This means R. robustus was big enough to hunt baby psittacosaurs.

Second, even though R. robustus had short legs and they were positioned somewhat to the side, these features are not sufficient indications that R. robustus could not run as fast enough to be successful predator. The professor pointed out that Tasmanian Devil, a morden-day successful predator whose legs share similar "disadvantages", can run as fast as 50 KM/H and is an active and very successful hunter today. So its possible R. robustus could run just as fast and therefore be as successful in hunting.

Last but not the least, lack of teeth marks on the dinosaur bones is not enough evidence to support conclusion that the dinosaur was not actively hunted. Studies of fossil records show that though R. robustus had powerful jaws but also, it did not use its back-teeth for chewing because its back teeth had no wear and tear. So we can also guess that R. robustus could had swallowed the baby dinosaur whole and therefore not leaving any teeth marks.

Rater Comments

This response earns a score of 5. Grammatical errors are few and minor. This response clearly conveys the three main points from the lecture and shows how those points challenge the information from the three points in the reading passage. Note that the response does not discuss the dinosaur egg to get the point across as to why the bones of the prey did not contain teeth marks; although this would have been helpful, it could be argued that this is not essential information for conveying the point clearly. Therefore, even though this last sentence is not quite as clear as the rest of this response, holistically, it still conveys all of the relevant information with sufficient clarity to rate a score of 5.

Question 2

Prompt

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Technology has made children less creative than they were in the past.

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Topic Notes

This topic asks you whether you believe technology has negatively affected children's creativity over time. Successful responses can agree with the statement, disagree with the statement, or show the merits of both positions. No matter which position you take, it is important to support your opinion with details and examples.

If you agree with the statement and believe that technology stifles children's creativity, you might support that by explaining how the computer keeps kids in the home and away from other kids; the ability to deploy communication skills in face-to-face situations, suffers as a consequence, and this in turn hinders the development of creativity. You might argue that children who experience the world by being out in it rather than being online all the time can use their imagination to create their own games or put on performances; however, this has become very rare these days because with the advancement of technology, most forms of entertainment that kids are interested in are ready-made. You could even extend the argument to say that this is becoming a problem with modern life in general: most problems have been solved, so no special thinking or creativity by anyone—whether it be adults or kids—is needed these days to deal with new situations or problems.

If you disagree with the statement, you might point out and develop the ways in which technology stimulates the imagination. Rather than stifling creativity, technology allows kids to engage in such creative endeavors as producing their own blogs and websites, or designing clever and interesting new games and apps for computers or phones. More resources and viewpoints than ever before are now within reach of most people, including children, because technology has provided us with new ways to access such a wealth of information; this exposure can lead to enhanced creativity. In a response that explores reasons for disagreeing with the statement, you might come to the conclusion that the meaning of creativity itself has shifted over time.

Sample Response

Technology is today part of the everyday life; we are surrounded it by it and can't live without it. But despite all the good things that derive from technology, I strongly agree that there are some ways that technology causes children to think less.

For one thing, there is almost no information that cannot be found on the internet. When it comes to reading, many high school students agree to refer to "notes" sites instead of reading a complete book assigned by their teachers. These sites usually map out the important stories, passages, and characters for the student. This destroys creativity by not allowing the student to understand the story on his or her own and discover the true personal meanings of the assignment. An activity such as reading is suppose to question one's intellect and challenge one's thinking but with these sites available, kids now rely on the information given and fail to appreciate and grow that is the purpose of reading many books.

During other activities encountered in school, such as projects, children now tend to rely on the internet to come up with ideas. I have observed this many times. When a creative assignment is given by the teacher, instead of brainstorming ideas together, children just hop on a computer and search for ideas on the internet. It's one thing to use the internet as a tool as oppose to using it incessantly and not letting your imagination and creativity take charge.

Other forms of technology such as video games and TV has a great impact on using up time that used to be devoted to imagination and creative activities. Before TV and computer, children invented their world just on their own using their fantasy when building things with blocks or being outdoors in the nature. They used simple things for constructing adventures and had great ideas for new games together or alone. This means they learn to be creative and also self-determined and self-conscious. Nowaday, how can they learn these skills when passively watching TV or doing what the computer says?

In summary, there is a lot about technology that takes away from chances for children to be creative and develop creative skills.

Rater Comments

This 5-level response mainly presents examples of how technology has reduced opportunities to be creative and develop creative skills. The writer first discusses the existence of book summaries and interpretive notes on Web sites, and explains how students use this information instead of actually reading books assigned at school; this results in students not being able to read well or form their own creative interpretations of what they are reading. In the third paragraph the writer talks about students getting ideas for projects from Web sites instead of interacting with other students to creatively brainstorm ideas together. And in the fourth paragraph the writer explains that what used to be time for creative fantasizing or inventing playtime activities has now been replaced by time watching TV or following instructions on the computer. This response is well-organized and unified, and gives ample support for the writer's point of view. Grammatical errors are very minor and a variety of complex structures are used.

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