

TOEFL iBT Test 3

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

A recent study reveals that people, especially young people, are reading far less literature—novels, plays, and poems—than they used to. This is troubling because the trend has unfortunate effects for the reading public, for culture in general, and for the future of literature itself.

While there has been a decline in book reading generally, the decline has been especially sharp for literature. This is unfortunate because nothing else provides the intellectual stimulation that literature does. Literature encourages us to exercise our imaginations, empathize with others, and expand our understanding of language. So by reading less literature, the reading public is missing out on important benefits.


Unfortunately, missing out on the benefits of literature is not the only problem. What are people reading instead? Consider the prevalence of self-help books on lists of best sellers. These are usually superficial, poorly written, and intellectually undemanding. Additionally, instead of sitting down with a challenging novel, many persons are now more likely to turn on the television, watch a music video, or read a Web page. Clearly, diverting time previously spent in reading literature to trivial forms of entertainment has lowered the level of culture in general.

The trend of reading less literature is all the more regrettable because it is taking place during a period when good literature is being written. There are many talented writers today, but they lack an audience. This fact is bound to lead publishers to invest less in literature and so support fewer serious writers. Thus, the writing as well as the reading of literature is likely to decline because of the poor standards of today's readers.

Listen to Track 87. 



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 88. 

Response Time: 20 minutes

1. Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they cast doubt on 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. **Some people say that the Internet provides people with a lot of valuable information. Others think access to so much information creates problems. Which view do you agree with?**

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

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Writing Section Answers

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 cast doubt on the specific points made in the reading passage.

Topic Notes

The reading discusses three bad effects of people reading less literature than they used to. The lecture shows why these effects are not so bad or are caused by something other than people choosing not to read so much literature.

Responses with scores of 4 and 5 typically discuss all three points in the table with good accuracy. There can be some blending of the ideas in the first two points.

Sample Response

The lecturer discusses the points made in the text but reaches a different conclusion in each case. For one thing, she states that yes, people are reading less literature than they were in earlier times but this does not equal an immediate decline of culture. On the contrary, in her opinion our culture is simply evolving and changing. Although literature is one of the most obvious elements of culture, there are also lots of other forms of artistic expression in our everchanging culture, e.g. music. And those elements are not less valuable and less creative than literature and they appeal to more modern concerns than literature.

Also the lecturer disputes the text that says we are going to lose interesting writers of literature. She says that today literature is not interesting enough for the reader! In the lecturers opinion this is mainly due to the fact that modern literature is often written with the intention of being difficult to understand, which does not make it very attractive for the modern reader.

Point made in the reading	Corresponding point from the lecture
The passage argues that reading less literature means that readers are missing out on ways to stimulate their imagination and help with their mental development.	The lecturer points out that there are other forms of writing that are of high quality and just as intellectually stimulating as literature.
The passage argues that many of the kinds of reading that people currently spend time on instead of literature are just trivial entertainment and lead to lower cultural standards.	The lecturer argues that people spend time on culturally valuable activities such as listening to good music or watching good movies. The definition of culture is changing.
The passage says that another bad effect of the decline in reading literature is that talented writers of literature are not being supported.	The lecturer argues that maybe there is less readership of literature because the writers of literature nowadays are making their books/works too hard to understand.

And finally just because people are not reading literature anymore this does not mean they are not reading at all and losing their imagination and empathy; instead there are many other valuable types of books which people are reading, e.g. science textbooks and political analysis. These books can stimulate readers and provide satisfaction and learning.

Rater Comments

This response earns a score of 5. The response clearly conveys the key ideas contained in the three points from the lecture. Notice that the points are not presented in the order they are discussed in the reading and lecture, but the way that this writer has presented them is coherent and accurate. Grammatical errors such as “then” instead of “than” in the first paragraph and a missing possessive apostrophe with “lecturers” in the second paragraph are few and minor. Grammatical variety and complexity are clearly present.

Question 2

Prompt

Some people say that the Internet provides people with a lot of valuable information. Others think access to so much information creates problems. Which view do you agree with?

Topic Notes

This topic asks you to assess the value of the access to a large quantity of information that the Internet provides us with these days. 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, you should present and develop reasons that the quantity of information available is a good thing and has value. A reason may include the idea that the Internet has allowed people to learn about topics that they would not have had exposure to before the Internet became widely available. As part of supporting that

approach, you could explain that some topic you have researched on the Internet would have either been impossible or have taken a very long time to get information about if you were limited to looking up the topic in books at your local library.

If you disagree with the statement, you should present and develop reasons that the quantity of information now available can be overwhelming and detrimental to learners, consumers, or some other audience. A reason may include the idea that many people can't distinguish between good and poor quality information on the Internet, for example, when choosing a particular product to buy, and so they are no better off in terms of getting valuable information about the product than if they had just gone to a shop to ask the salesperson about it.

If you believe that both of these positions have merit, you can present a balanced argument that presents both sides of the issues.

Sample Response

It is a fact that in the past few years, the Internet has exploded in terms of size, amount of information and accessibility.

The usage of the Internet encompasses every aspect of day-to-day life with a few examples being Shopping, News, Weather, Live Webcasts and much more. People who used to rely on traditional sources of information like the radio, TV, Newspapers are now increasingly flocking to the Internet or the “Web” as it's popularly called.

As more and more people get on the Web, it becomes increasingly effective for companies to use the web to reach out for the consumers. This also applies for Advertisers, Marketers, Content Providers, Newsmakers etc to adopt the same strategies. All the information is now available online and when it all adds up, there is a wealth of information that is now available to whoever seeks to find them. So, I strongly agree with view that the Internet provides people with a lot of valuable information, much more than what is actually necessary.

Now, providing too much information can also prove to be counter-productive. How does a consumer pick the right information, when there is so much available online? How does he filter to get the data that he needs? Is there a chance that the data he needs is buried somewhere in the middle? It is highly probable, or let me say, this was the case a few years back. So, technically, people were correct when they said too much information also created problems.

Fortunately, Technology finds ways to make it easier to use an innovation over a period of time. In the last few years, Internet search engines have been getting smarter everyday. They enable a user to enter a search string and then it searches the Internet for the most relevant and appropriate data and presents them to the user, with the results listed in the order of importance. They also offer the user several options to further filter the provided results, making it easier to zone on the correct data.

In summary, while it is true that there is a lot of not very valuable information on the web, which may be counter-productive for users, there are also means to effectively seek and find the appropriate information, thus providing a great deal of value to people who

are looking to learn about a subject, buy the best product for their needs, or any one of many other activities that people need to do nowadays.

Rater Comments

This 5-level response acknowledges the merits of both positions, while ultimately coming out in favor of the idea that the Internet provides a lot of valuable information. The writer describes some reasons why people use the Internet, explains how helpful it can be for both individuals and companies, and concedes in the fourth paragraph that access to too much information online can be a bad thing. In the fifth paragraph, the writer explains how technology is advancing so that the negative aspects mentioned in the preceding paragraph are becoming less and less problematic. The writer goes on to conclude that in spite of some drawbacks, overall the Internet is quite valuable in what it provides to us. This is a good progression of ideas, and the writer has expressed those ideas by using, mostly accurately, a good range of vocabulary and sentence structure. Errors such as “reach out for the consumers” instead of “reach out to consumers” are minor and do not interfere with meaning.