



Speaking and Writing Topics for the TOEFL® Test

OVER 100 INDEPENDENT QUESTIONS



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In both the speaking and writing sections of the TOEFL test, you will encounter independent questions. There is one independent question in the speaking section and one in the writing. An independent question is a general inquiry into your opinion on an array of various issues. While the possible issues that may arise on test day vary tremendously, these 100 questions have been grouped into 12 different subjects:

- *Campus Life*
- *Education*
- *Parenting*
- *People*
- *Community and Government*
- *Science and Technology*
- *Work*
- *Money*
- *Travel*
- *Lifestyle*
- *Entertainment*
- *Volunteering*

The topics vary, but all questions aim to know your opinion on the subject. When asked advantages and disadvantages style questions, pick one side of the argument, and express yourself in favor of it. Don't try to see both sides. While recognizing both sides of an issue is an important skill in life, having a nuanced opinion on an independent TOEFL question usually leads to more language mistakes and less focused responses.

In both the speaking and writing, questions can be further divided into different types:

- *Advice*
- *Description*
- *General Opinion*
- *Agree or Disagree*
- *Preference*
- *Three-choice*
- *Advantages and Disadvantages* (not usually asked in the writing section)

Explaining the difference between each type is beyond the scope of this handout and unnecessary to know in order to answer the questions.



Campus Life

1. Many students are asked to evaluate their professors at the end of the semester. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach? **(S)**
2. Imagine that you have just begun studying at a new university. Which of the following do you think would be the best way for you to learn about the new campus? **(S)**
 - A. a second-year student gives you a personal tour of the whole campus
 - B. you are given a detailed map of the campus designed by the student services department
 - C. you join a group tour of the campus together with all the other new students
3. You are required by your school to join a club. Which type of club would you choose? **(S/W)**
 - A. academic
 - B. sports
 - C. volunteer
4. During your senior year of college, you must volunteer at the school library. Would you rather: **(S)**
 - A. stack books
 - B. read to children
 - C. help with Internet searches
5. You have been asked to choose between two apartments to live in next semester: one apartment is near the campus but slightly expensive, and the other is a little far from campus but cheaper. Which one would you prefer and why? **(S)**
6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Female and male university students should live in separate residence halls. **(S/W)**
7. If you could choose one way to commute to school, would you rather: **(S/W)**
 - A. ride a bicycle
 - B. take a train
 - C. drive your own car
8. If you were going to choose a roommate, which of the following characteristics would be the most important to you? **(S/W)**
 - A. cleanness
 - B. friendliness
 - C. quietness
9. Some universities allow students to watch TV in their dormitories. What are the advantages and disadvantages of watching TV in dorms? **(S)**



10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Students should be allowed to bring their cellphones to school. **(S/W)**
11. Some students think it is a good idea to choose their future career before entering a university. Others think it is better to take a few university classes before choosing their career. Which idea do you prefer? Explain why. **(S/W)**
12. When students first enter a university, they must learn more about the campus and student life. Would you prefer to learn by questioning older students, or would you rather enroll in an introductory course about campus life? **(S/W)**

Education

13. People learn in different ways. Some people learn by doing, other people learn by reading, and others learn by listening to people. Which of these methods of learning is best for you? **(S)**
14. More educators these days are using technology in the classroom. In fact, many teachers now record their lectures, upload them on a website, and ask students to watch them before their lesson. During class, students report on the lectures and discuss them together. Would you prefer to have a traditional style class or one where the lectures are pre-recorded? **(S/W)**
15. School administrators at an elementary school have recently decided to increase the amount of hours spent teaching kids about robotics, computer programming, and other elements of science and technology. However, they were forced to reduce the amount of hours spent on teaching art and music. Do you agree or disagree with this new policy? **(S/W)**
16. Many people think that students learn course materials more effectively by taking exams, while others think that students learn more effectively by doing other activities, like completing projects. Which one do you think is more effective? **(S/W)**
17. Some teachers prefer announcing their quizzes in advance, while others prefer to give surprise quizzes. Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of surprise quizzes. **(S/W)**
18. If you were assigned a project to complete in school, how would you prefer to work? **(S/W)**
 - A. alone
 - B. with classmates
 - C. with a tutor



19. Your teacher has assigned a presentation for homework. However, you can choose the format of your presentation. Which one would you choose? **(S/W)**
- A. act out a scene from a play
 - B. present a review of a novel you recently read
 - C. read a selection of poetry
20. Do you agree or disagree that it is important that young people need to learn some domestic skills, like cooking, sewing, and taking care of children? **(S/W)**
21. Do you think it is better to start learning a new language as an infant, as a child, or as a teenager? Provide reasons and examples to support your stance. **(S/W)**
22. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The best way to learn a foreign language is to speak it with native speakers. **(S/W)**
23. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It should be mandatory for all teenagers to take a world history class. **(S/W)**
24. Some teachers allow students to use cellphones in class, while others strictly forbid it. As a student, which policy would you prefer? **(S/W)**

Parenting

25. Do you think it is a good idea for parents to buy cell phones for their children? Why or why not? **(S/W)**
26. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Parents should read their children's text messages. **(S/W)**
27. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Children who use electronic devices earn better grades than children who do not. **(S/W)**
28. Some young children spend a great amount of their time participating in sports. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this commitment. **(S)**
29. Do you think that parents should be allowed to educate their children at home, or should they be required to send children to school? **(S/W)**
30. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Video games offer more benefits than drawbacks to children. **(S/W)**



31. Some parents believe that it is a good idea for their children to have a pet since it can teach them how to be responsible. Other parents feel that pets distract children from more important tasks, like studying or spending time with friends. Which do you believe? **(S/W)**
32. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: If money is not an issue, parents should always avoid public school and enroll their children in private school. **(S/W)**
33. Some people believe that television has a negative impact on children and should be avoided. Others feel that television is one of many ways a child can learn. Which do you believe? **(S/W)**

People

34. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a strong leader in your group? **(S)**
35. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Co-workers make the best friends. **(S/W)**
36. If you had to share your home with a new roommate, which would you prefer? **(S/W)**
- A. a friend
 - B. a family member
 - C. a stranger
37. Do you think it is better to address problems with a sense of humor or a serious tone? Provide reasons and examples to support your point. **(S/W)**
38. Imagine you have to give your friend some bad news. Would you rather do it in a quiet private room or a loud public place? **(S/W)**
39. Which of the following people can give the most useful advice in your future career direction? **(S/W)**
- A. family
 - B. friends
 - C. teachers

Community and Government

40. Your local government has decided to improve their community. Do you think they should: **(S/W)**
- A. build a public park
 - B. build a public library
 - C. build a public pool



41. Your city government has decided to open an elementary school on your street. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this plan? **(S)**
42. Your local government is planning to open a new shopping center in your neighborhood. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this plan? **(S)**
43. You are planning to donate money to a charity and want it to have a major impact on people. Should you donate to a small local group or to a large international organization? **(S/W)**
44. The school administration has received additional funding and has decided to use the money to fund a new course that teaches practical skills. Which of the following courses do you think the school should create? **(S/W)**
- A. a class on how to use social media
 - B. a class on how to save money
 - C. a class on how to cook
45. Which of the following choices do you think has the greatest impact on environmental protection? **(S/W)**
- A. governmental regulations
 - B. environmental awareness groups
 - C. individual effort
46. Most citizens have the right to vote. What do you believe is the type of background best suited for someone who will become a national leader? **(S/W)**
- A. business background
 - B. legal background
 - C. military background

Science and Technology

47. Do you think scientists should be given the freedom to test and experiment however they please, or should they be limited in what they can study? **(S/W)**
48. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Technology has had a negative effect on relationships between friends and family. **(S/W)**
49. Which of the following technological developments has had the greatest impact on students' lives? **(S/W)**
- A. digital books
 - B. online classes
 - C. smartphones



50. What are the advantages and disadvantages of giving smartphones to teenagers? **(S)**
51. Do you prefer to buy a newly-released-product as soon as possible or wait for a while and then decide later if you still want to buy it? **(S/W)**
52. Some people believe that robots will someday completely replace human beings at work while others disagree. What do you think? Give reasons and examples to support your stance. **(S/W)**
53. Do you agree or disagree: People who spend more than an hour a day on social media are less happy than those who spend less time on social media. **(S/W)**
54. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a lot of friends on social media? **(S)**
55. Climate change is a growing concern around the world. Changes are taking place at local, national, and global levels to reduce the world's carbon footprint. The school administration has decided to change some aspects of campus life to help reduce their impact on the environment. Which of the following new policies do you think the school should implement? **(S/W)**
- A. Increase the amount of free shuttle buses to campus
 - B. Increase the amount of garbage cans and recycle bins on campus
 - C. Increase the amount of locally grown food in the campus cafeteria
56. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In the future, bicycles will be replaced by a more convenient means of transportation. **(S/W)**
57. Some people think that with the development of technology and the Internet, libraries will disappear, while others think libraries will always be necessary. What is your opinion? **(S/W)**
58. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? With the popularity of technology that focuses on entertainment, people read fewer books than before. **(S/W)**
59. Some people believe that the best way to preserve the environment and slow down climate change is to stop eating meat. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? **(S/W)**
60. Technological advances are continuing to make our daily lives look more futuristic. One new invention that will soon become more popular is driverless car technology. If you had a choice, would you prefer to own an autonomous car or a car that you drive yourself? **(S/W)**



Work

61. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? People must love their jobs to be happy. **(S/W)**
62. Would you prefer to work at one job your entire life or to switch jobs every five years? **(S/W)**
63. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Success in life only comes through hard work. Provide details to help explain your stance. **(S/W)**
64. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Teenagers should work while they go to school so they can learn how to be more responsible. **(S/W)**
65. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Working for a large company is better than working for a small company. **(S/W)**
66. Would you prefer to have a higher-paying job with longer hours or a lower-paying job with shorter hours? **(S/W)**
67. Which of the following companies would you prefer to work for? A company that offers you challenging and interesting projects but very few vacation days or a company that offers you a job with boring work each day but long vacations each year? **(S/W)**
68. Some people prefer to get up early in the morning and start the day's work. Others prefer to get up later in the day and work until late at night. Which do you prefer? **(S/W)**
69. Consider a situation where you are asked by your supervisor to participate in a group project at work. Your supervisor wants you to work with someone who has opinions that are very different than yours. Moreover, they feel very strongly about these opinions. Do you think that working with this person is a good idea? **(S/W)**
70. Some bosses are more strict with their employees, while others are more laidback. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a strict boss? **(S)**
71. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Work has a bigger impact on your overall happiness than your social life. **(S/W)**
72. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a part-time job while attending university? **(S)**
73. Which would you prefer: to work at home alone or work at an office with others? **(S/W)**
74. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is better to have your own small business than it is to work for a salary at a large company. **(S/W)**



75. Your university has made it mandatory for all seniors to volunteer for at least 100 hours in order to graduate. They have provided students with a list of various volunteer programs. If you had to volunteer, would you prefer to: **(S/W)**
- A. read to seniors
 - B. work in an animal shelter
 - C. feed the homeless

Money

76. If you had a small amount of extra money, would you spend it right away or save it? **(S/W)**
77. Is it better to use your extra money to buy products, like clothes and electronics, or is it better to use the extra money to invest in experiences, like going on a vacation or to a concert? **(S/W)**
78. Imagine you have just been given \$10,000. Would you: **(S/W)**
- A. spend it
 - B. save it
 - C. invest it

Travel

79. Some people like to relax when they go on vacation while others like to go sightseeing and do activities. Which do you prefer and why? **(S/W)**
80. You are now planning your first trip abroad. You are both excited and nervous about it. Your best friend has heard about your trip and wants to come along. Would you rather travel alone or with your best friend? **(S/W)**
81. When traveling to an unfamiliar city, some people like to plan, while others like to explore and enjoy without a plan. Which do you prefer? **(S/W)**

Lifestyle

82. Some people enjoy going to parties and meeting new people, while others prefer to stay at home and relax. Which do you prefer? **(S/W)**



83. If you had to live in one area for the rest of your life, would you prefer to live in? **(S/W)**
A. the city
B. the suburbs
C. the countryside
84. Would you prefer to live in the mountains or on the beach? **(S/W)**
85. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It is better to live with your best friend than to live alone. **(S/W)**
86. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: People should not be allowed to take pictures of strangers without their permission. **(S)**
87. After years of using public transportation, you have decided to buy a car. Would you prefer to buy a used car and save money or buy a new car and pay full price? **(S/W)**
88. There has been a growing interest in the scientific community about sleep. More specifically, there has been much debate as to how much sleep per night is necessary. Some claim that people need at least eight hours of sleep per night. Others suggest that this number is too high and six hours per night is enough to function throughout the day. What do you think? Is it better to sleep six hours a night or eight hours a night? **(W)**
89. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Children and teenagers should not be allowed to use any social media until they are 18 years old. **(S/W)**
90. Cooking at home is a traditional practice that is becoming less popular throughout the world. Many young people and working professionals believe that cooking is a waste of time. They prefer to eat out or order food to be delivered at home. There are others who feel that preparing home-cooked meals is important and continue the tradition. Which do you prefer? **(S/W)**

Entertainment

91. Some people prefer to watch entertainment programs on television. Others prefer to watch educational programs. Which do you prefer? **(S/W)**
92. Would you prefer to watch movies alone or with a friend? **(S/W)**
93. Do you agree or disagree that it is every celebrity's responsibility to set a good example for children? **(S/W)**



94. Some people prefer to buy new books while others prefer used books. Which do you prefer? **(S/W)**
95. Some people prefer to read stories of fiction created by an author's imagination. Others prefer to read works of nonfiction or books based on facts, real events, or real people. Do you prefer to read fiction or nonfiction? Why? **(S/W)**
96. If you were going to learn a new hobby, which of the following would you choose? **(S/W)**
- A. study a new language
 - B. learn how to play an instrument
 - C. join a sports team

Volunteering

97. Your local community has a rising population of homeless people. Some people believe the best way to address this issue is to have more people in the community volunteer to help find jobs and secure housing for them. Others think that taxes should be raised, and the increase in revenue should be given as a basic income to each homeless person. Which option would you prefer? **(S/W)**
98. A community garden has just opened up in your neighborhood. Each member of the neighborhood is expected to contribute in some way. Would you rather: **(S/W)**
- A. donate money
 - B. help plant vegetables
 - C. sell vegetables in the local market
99. Your university is located in a community with a struggling economy. The school administration has decided to make it mandatory for each student to volunteer at least 40 hours per year to one of the town's many volunteer programs. Do you agree or disagree with this policy? **(S/W)**
100. Many people feel that volunteering to help feed, clothe, and employ the homeless reduces the population of those in need. Others feel that helping the homeless actually makes them dependent on others and less likely to find work and make money on their own. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of volunteer programs for the homeless. **(S)**
101. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? All university students should be required to volunteer in order to graduate. **(S/W)**

