



Practice Test #1

FOR THE TOEFL®
WRITING SECTION



Practice Test #1
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Writing Section



The TOEFL Writing Section: *Directions*

 This section measures your ability to use writing to communicate in an academic environment. There will be two writing tasks.

For the first writing task, you will read a passage and listen to a lecture and then answer a question based on what you have read and heard.

For the second task, you will read an online discussion. A professor has posted a question about a topic, and some classmates have responded with their ideas. You will write a response that contributes to the discussion.

When you see the audio icon  it means that there is an audio version of the text. [Please click the icon to get redirected to the audio file.](#)

If you would like to see a model essay of the question you are answering, you can refer to the answer key.

When you're ready, turn the page to see the directions for the first writing task.



Writing Task 1 - Integrated Question

 Directions: For this task, you will read a passage and listen to a lecture about an academic topic.

You may take notes during this time. After the passages have finished, you will then be asked a question about them. After the question, you will have 20 minutes to write your response. Effective responses are usually between 250 to 350 words. You may look at the reading passage and your notes as you write. Keep in mind that the question will not ask for your opinion.

You have three minutes to read. You may begin reading now.

Easter Island, also known as Rapa Nui, is the most isolated inhabited island in the world. Not only is it famous for its 887 stone statues, called *Moai*, but also for numerous mysteries that have yet to be solved. One of them is what really caused the extinction of the Rapa Nui civilization. There are a few competing theories as to why the Rapa Nui civilization disappeared.

One of the most famous claims is that Rapa Nui's obsession with Moai caused the destruction of the island's subtropical forest, leading to a famine that killed most of the population. According to some researchers, natives used to clear trees to make space to transport these huge stone statues from one place to another. Over time, they cut down most of the trees on the island for this reason. This deforestation changed the ecosystem and made it much harder to survive on the island.

Some other historians believe that rats, not humans, were the cause of the fall of the Rapa Nui civilization. Thousands of rat bones have been found on the island, suggesting that a huge population of rats could have caused an imbalance in the ecosystem. There are some estimates that suggest there were over 3,000,000 rats living on the island at one time. By eating the seeds of the island's trees, these rats could have also been the cause of deforestation which eventually led the Rapa Nui to die out or migrate off the island.

There are reasons to believe that the Rapa Nui extinction was caused by the arrival of Europeans in the 18th century. When the Peruvian slave trade began in the 1860s, over 2,000 Rapa Nui inhabitants were captured and transported to Peru, greatly reducing the population of the island. Moreover, when some of them later returned to the island, they brought diseases like measles and smallpox, which infected and killed the Rapa Nui people who were not taken from their homeland.



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Now listen to part of a lecture on the same topic you just read about.

After you listen to the passage, answer the question.

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

You have 20 minutes to plan and write your response.



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Writing Task 2 - Writing for an Academic Discussion

Your professor is teaching a class on history. 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.



Mr. Singh

Today, let's discuss the impact of technological advancements on historical preservation. With the advent of digital technology, historical artifacts, and documents can now be digitized and accessed online. However, some argue that this digitization process may devalue the significance of physical artifacts and traditional archival methods. What are your thoughts on this matter?



Anika

I believe that digitization plays a crucial role in preserving history. By digitizing artifacts and documents, we can ensure wider accessibility and long-term preservation. People from all around the world can have access to historical resources, which can enhance our level of education. Furthermore, digitization can safeguard against the loss or damage of these artifacts.

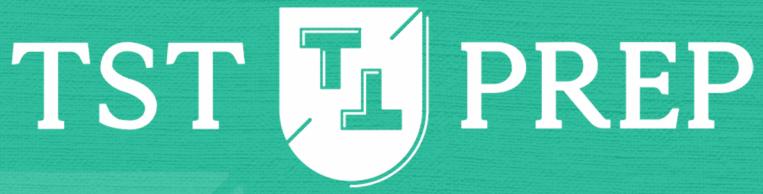


Maryam

While I understand the benefits of digitization, I believe physical artifacts hold immense value. The tangible nature of historical objects connects us to the past in a unique way. Examining an artifact up close, feeling its texture, and witnessing its age can evoke a sense of awe and connection that digital replicas might not provide. Physical artifacts also have historical provenance that adds to their authenticity and significance.

Space for typing answers on test day. You will have ten minutes to read and write.





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Answer Key



Integrated Writing Transcript

OK, so, although there are a bunch of scholars claiming to have "solved" the disappearance of the Rapa Nui people, the reality is that all theories still remain just that--theories. There has not been enough evidence to support any of the claims mentioned in the reading.

Recent research has proven that the Rapa Nui natives were skilled farmers. A great number of tools found on Easter Island, that were mistakenly considered to be weapons, are now proven to have been agricultural tools. A group of people with such skill at farming, like the Rapa Nui, would have noticed the adverse effects of deforestation before every single tree was cut down. And even if there was a lack of farmland, there was still an abundance of seafood and fish in the Pacific waters, which would have definitely sustained the island's population for some time before it suffered from starvation.

And there's no way that the population of rats on the island could have brought down the civilization, either. Probably, they arrived in the boats of the first Polynesian settlers somewhere between 700 to 1100 AD. Procreating without any natural enemies, the population increased dramatically. They may have disturbed the peace of the island, but I have yet to find one shred of evidence that proves the abundance of rats somehow led to the complete demise of the population. Just because a place has a lot of rats doesn't mean that it's a problem.

And finally, while it is true that Peruvian slave ships visited the islands and did take some of the Rapa Nui inhabitants, sadly, none of them would ever return to the island to infect other people. How could they? The Rapa Nui turned into slaves once they entered these boats. They never had a chance to sail back to their homeland and spread European diseases, as was stated in the reading.



Task #1: Integrated Writing

The reading and the lecture are about the mysterious disappearance of the indigenous Rapa Nui civilization, who were the native people of today's Easter Island. The author of the reading believes there are three plausible theories that can explain what happened to them. The lecturer casts doubt on the claims made in the article since there isn't enough evidence to support the author's theories.

First of all, the author claims that the natives could have caused their own extinction through deforestation. The writer mentions that because the locals cut down trees, in order to build their statues of Moai, their fertile farmlands were washed away causing the Rapa Nui people to starve to death. This point is challenged by the lecturer. He says that these inhabitants were very skilled at farming the land and therefore would have noticed the effects that cutting trees down would have had on their ecosystem. Furthermore, he argues that there were plenty of resources from the ocean; even without farmlands, there would have been enough food to help the people avoid starvation.

Secondly, the author contends that the millions of rats that once lived on the island may have led to the end of the Rapa Nui civilization. The lecturer rebuts this argument. He posits that while there is evidence of a profuse number of rats living on Easter Island at one point, their presence would have merely disrupted the lives of the natives. He elaborates on this by mentioning that there is no indication that the existence of many rats could lead to the downfall of an entire society.

Finally, the author says that the Europeans who captured natives as slaves infected them with deadly European diseases that quickly spread through the island. The professor, on the other hand, suggests that even though some of these people were the victims of the slave trade, they could not have spread European diseases. Once they were captured, they never returned to the island.



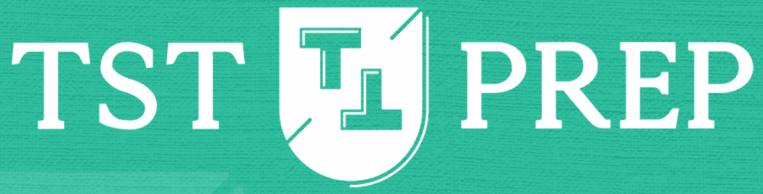
Writing Task 2 - Writing for an Academic Discussion

"With the advent of digital technology, historical artifacts, and documents can now be digitized and accessed online. However, some argue that this digitization process may devalue the significance of physical artifacts and traditional archival methods. What are your thoughts on this matter?"

I personally believe that digitization should not be used to preserve physical artifacts. Anyone with advanced technological skills could create digitized copies. For instance, imagine a digitized copy of the American Constitution is made available. Some could take that copy and create a nearly identical version with several keywords changed. They could then post this on social media, masquerading as an original source. In the online space, only an expert would be able to spot the difference.

I also agree that examining an artifact up close can lead to a sense of awe that digitization cannot replicate. I would further add that often, the trip to see the artifact is as much of an experience as the artifact itself. For example, last year, my friend recently made a pilgrimage to see the Black Stone of Mecca. Sure, he could have looked at a picture of it, but he was deeply moved, not just by the stone itself, but by the experience of being in its presence. He described hearing the sounds of the people praying around it and the smells in the air as he walked. He called it a deeply spiritual experience. That is something digitization cannot match. (199 words)





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