Sample Essay 01

              Most people agree that the Internet affects society in many different ways.  In my opinion, the most prominent effect of the Internet is that it has strengthened democracy.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, online investigative reporting plays a major role in exposing political corruption and keeping politicians honest.  In the past, there were only a limited number of news outlets and they often had deep connections to powerful politicians and were hesitant to criticize them. These days, however, there are many independent publications on the Internet that are willing to expose political misbehavior.  For example, an online magazine recently published a story revealing that the mayor of my hometown had taken bribes from a property developer.  The report was so detailed and well-researched that the mayor had no choice but to resign.  Although the evidence was not hard to locate, only this independent website was willing to write about it.  This example demonstrates how the Internet helps to strengthen democracy in the modern world.

               Secondly, the free exchange of ideas found online motivates people to become politically active.  In countries all over the world, people use social networking sites to share their ideas and opinions.  While in the past people might have thought that they were alone in their beliefs, they can now realize that others share their ideas. My own experience demonstrates this concept.  When I was a university student, I learned that a municipal park near my residence was going to be demolished to make room for a parking lot.  This bothered me a lot because I enjoyed spending time in the park.  At first I thought that there was nothing that I, as an individual, could do to stop this from happening.  However, I later joined a Facebook group dedicated to opposing the plan.  When the members of the group learned how many people in the city loved the park we were happy to get together and enthusiastically protest in front of city hall until our voices were heard.  I think that finding each other on that Facebook group gave us the courage to actively protect our park.

               In conclusion, I strongly believe that the Internet has strengthened democracy in modern society.  This is because online investigative journalism plays a big part in keeping politicians honest, and because social networking sites encourage people to be politically active.

### Sample Essay 02

(question from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

          Classes where students engage in discussion and classes where the professor does most of the talking each have their own advantages and disadvantages.  In my opinion, classes with a lot of discussion are better than those without.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          To begin with, I feel that classes where I have the opportunity to speak help to develop my intellectual abilities.  Classes where the teacher does all of the talking are very passive, in my opinion.  They mostly  involve the memorization of facts and details which do not help students in the long run.  On the other hand, classes which involve a lot of debate and interaction create very intelligent students.  For example, I recently took a political science class that changed the way I think about the world.  The cut and thrust of debate in the class made me consider where my political beliefs came from and if they were actually correct.  I was required to listen to the opinions of others, so I was a more open-minded person after the class finished.  I believe that I would not have developed in such a way by just listening to lectures.  This example demonstrates how valuable discussion-based classes can be.

          Secondly, classes that involve a lot of discussion can help students develop the skills necessary to work well in groups.  Many freshman students arrive at university very shy and unable to communicate well.  Discussions in class teach students how to communicate effectively, and they can use this skill to excel in their future careers.  My older brother’s experience demonstrates that this is true.  When he started university he was a very introverted person and did not enjoy either communicating or working with others.  However, after four years of participating in debates, discussions and presentations in his classes he became a very confident communicator.  As a result, when he began his career after graduation, he excelled in group work and was seen by his co-workers and supervisors as a natural leader.  He was promoted quickly and advanced through the ranks of his company.  Without participating in discussions with his professors and classmates he would not have developed the skills necessary to succeed in this way.

          In conclusion, I feel strongly that classes which are centered on discussions between professors and students are preferable to those in which the professor does all of the talking.  This is because such classes help students develop academically and because they teach students the skills that they need to find success in the future.

### Sample Essay 03

          When students do research for their class assignments they use both printed and online sources, and both types have distinct advantages and disadvantages.  However, I agree that it is better to use printed materials rather than Internet-based resources.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, printed materials such as books and articles are more reliable than online sources of information.  This is because websites can be edited by anyone in the world, regardless of whether or not they are qualified academics.  As a result of this, articles in online encyclopedias often contain incorrect and biased information.  I have even heard that some people insert incorrect facts into online databases as a mischievous joke.  My own experience demonstrates the danger of relying too heavily on online sources of information.  Two semesters ago, I was assigned a research paper in a freshman history class.  I cited data that I found on Wikipedia which turned out to be completely incorrect.  The information that I included in my essay was so hopelessly wrong that my professor spotted it immediately, causing me to fail the assignment and receive a fairly low grade in the class at the end of the semester.  If I had taken the time to compare what I had read online to a book or a scholarly article I would not have included it and not have received such a bad score in the class.

               In addition, books are superior to online articles because they provide a greater depth of information.  Books are much longer than online articles, so they are much useful to students.  Students who use printed resources when doing research also benefit from the detailed indexes and biographies which they include.  I have personally experienced some of these benefits during my time as an undergraduate student.  For example, when I wrote a paper last semester in a history class, the very first book that I consulted contained a long description of the both the underlying causes and long-term effects of the historical event I was writing about.  In contrast, most of the online articles that I consulted contained little more than facts and dates.  I based my research on the book rather than the articles, so I was able to write an insightful essay.

               In conclusion, I strongly believe that printed information is more useful than online resources.  This is because printed sources of information are less likely to be biased or contain errors, and because books provide a superior level of detail.

### Sample Essay (question from the [Official TOEFL Guide](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ)) 04

          As modern education continues to develop, the usefulness of grades as a form of assessment has been called into question.  Personally, though, I believe that grades do encourage students to learn.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

           To begin with, grades motivate students to approach their studies in a deep and meaningful fashion.  When a student feels that his grades are on the line, he will spend more time working on his assignments and will therefore absorb more information and comprehension.  On the other hand, students who do not have to worry about their grades will achieve merely a superficial understanding of the topics they are studying.  My own experience as a student demonstrates convincing evidence of this. During my sophomore year I was assigned a major presentation in a classical studies seminar which I was a member of.  The assignment made up about half of my total grade in the class, so I approached my work with diligence and care.  I wrote a compelling speech and spent hours  preparing for every possible question that my classmates might have.  If the presentation had not been graded, I would not have worked  so hard in preparing it.  Just like me, students all over the world today are motivated to work hard by the chance to achieve high grades in their classes.

          Secondly, grades motivate students because they serve as an objective measurement of our knowledge.  Grades are assigned in a systematic way and they clearly demonstrate which students in a class are the best and brightest.  As a result, in classes where grades are given, students will strive to succeed so that they can set themselves apart from their peers.  For example, in my freshman year I took a “pass/fail”  course in  literature.  Since only a moderate amount of effort was required to pass the class, I completed my assignments and presentations with only a slight amount of care and effort.  In contrast, when I took a graded class on the same subject in my junior year I spent hours in the library researching my papers so that I could show my professors that I was intellectually superior to my classmates.  This may appear somewhat shallow,  but in today’s competitive academic environment it is absolutely necessary for students to distinguish themselves.  This demonstrates another way in which grades motivate students to excel.

          In conclusion, I strongly believe that grades encourage students to learn.  This is because they force students to approach their studies with enthusiasm and diligence, and because they give young learners a way to distinguish themselves from their peers.

### Sample Independent Essay 05

(Note that this question came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL, 4th Edition](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071766588/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0071766588&linkCode=as2&tag=tore0e4-20&linkId=RQMXZ7XCZA7AS76W), which is a really great book)

               Neighbors play an important role in our lives, and almost everyone in the world has at least one neighbor.  For this reason, it is important to consider what characteristics define a good neighbor.  In my opinion, a good neighbor is both supportive and respectful.  I will explore the reasons why I feel this way in the following essay.

               To begin with, a good neighbor must be supportive because our lives are full of unplanned emergencies.  Oftentimes the people live close to us are the only ones who can provide assistance when things go wrong.  For example, my family experienced a major house fire several years ago.  It was a traumatic experience as it happened in the middle of the night and we lost most of our belongings.  No one was injured, but we suffered a lot of emotional trauma.  Our situation was aided, however, by a compassionate neighbor who immediately called the fire department when he saw the fire and who also provided us with clean clothes, food and a place to stay for the night.  This example demonstrates how important it is to have kind and supportive neighbors when an emergency happens.

               Moreover, a good neighbor is someone who is respectful of those around him.  People view their home as a place to escape from the stressful modern world, and if their neighbors do not respect this belief they will suffer a lot.  My own experience demonstrates this reality.   Five years ago, I lived alone in an apartment in a busy city.  My job at that time was extremely stressful and also physically draining.  After a day at work I wanted nothing more than to go home and unwind.  However, the person living in the apartment above me played loud music all night which made it almost impossible for me to relax.  He had no respect for those around him and thought only of himself.  In contrast, the person who lives above my family today does not do this and though I have the same job, I am better able to deal with its difficulties.  This illustrates the value of having a neighbor who respects those who live nearby.

               In conclusion, I strongly believe that good neighbors are both supportive and respectful.  This is because such people can help us handle life’s unexpected emergencies and allow us to feel comfortable in our own homes.

### Sample Essay 06

               Over the last few decades, as environmental awareness has increased, cars have become a very controversial topic.  I am of the opinion that people have become too reliant on automobiles.  I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, I feel that many people have become disinterested in the amount of pollution that their personal vehicles create.  It is a well-known fact that automobiles are one of the biggest sources of deadly greenhouse gases, which are the main cause of global warming.  However, it seems that many people simply do not care about how much pollution they create by driving their cars.  For example, my uncle drives an extremely large sport utility vehicle to work every day, even though he commutes alone.   His vehicle is not energy efficient, and he ought to use public transportation or at least carpool to work.  When I asked him why he continues to drive such a harmful, vehicle he responded that even though he is aware of how much fuel it uses, he does not care because of how happy he feels driving an expensive car.  This example demonstrates how neglectful many members of modern society have become as a result of their dependence on automobiles.

               Furthermore, our current obsession with automobiles has resulted in neglected and ineffective public transportation systems in cities all over the world.  As a result of people who are obsessed with their personal vehicles, governments have felt justified in failing to develop bus and rail networks in their urban centers.  My city, Toronto, is a good example of this.  Despite being the largest city in Canada it has only two subway lines and just a handful of underdeveloped bus routes.  While this frustrates me quite a lot, most people simply do not care and the issue is never considered by our municipal government.  It seems evident that our current dependence on automobiles has resulted in a lower quality of living for many people in Toronto.

               In conclusion, I strongly believe that people in modern society are too dependent on automobiles.  This is because our love of cars has contributed to global warming, and because it has resulted in under-funded and poorly developed public transportation systems in major cities.

### Sample Essay 07

               Traveling the world is something I have dreamed about doing ever since I was a small child.  If I was given the choice of visiting a country of my choosing, I would definitely go to Peru.  There are two main reasons why I feel this way, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, Peru is a land of varied landscapes and I believe that getting in touch with nature is the best way to enjoy a vacation.  Peru is unique in that it contains a tropical rainforest, some of the highest mountains in the world and even pristine beaches – all within close proximity to each other.  Few countries offer easier access to such a plethora of natural wonders.  One similar country is the United States; I remember that when I traveled across that country several years I was struck by how many different natural environments I was able to experience.  I felt that seeing such scenes helped me really get to know America.  I think that I could have a similar experience in Peru, and since that country is much smaller I would have an easier and more affordable vacation.

               Secondly, Peru is attractive because it has an extremely varied national cuisine.  I have heard that Peruvian food has been influenced by quite a few sources, including Spanish settlers, local indigenous groups and recent immigrants from the rest of the continent.  Not only that, but visitors to Peru can choose from several different dining venues, ranging from trendy modern restaurants to charming street vendors.  I feel that eating the food of a place is another great way to really get in touch with a society.  I recall that when I visited Japan during my last summer vacation I felt connected to the Japanese people when I visited a local sushi restaurant.  I am certain that I would enjoy a similar feeling dining in Peru which would make a visit to that country very worthwhile.

               In conclusion, if I could visit any country in the world, I would choose to travel to Peru.  I feel this way because of Peru’s amazing natural environment, and its tantalizingly varied national cuisine.

### Sample Essay 08

                These days tourism is more popular than ever, and everyone has their own style of travel.  Some people like to take trips alone, while others like to travel with a companion.  Personally, I prefer to travel with a partner.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, traveling with a companion is more economical than vacationing alone.  As leisure travel has become more and more popular, hotel operators have started to charge increasingly high costs for accommodation.  Single occupancy rates are fairly uncommon nowadays, so sharing a room with a friend is good way to cut costs.  Not only that, but people traveling in pairs have better access to package deals on tours, entrance fees and other activities.  My own experience demonstrates some of the financial benefits of vacationing with a friend.  When my girlfriend and I traveled together through Peru last year, we were able to rent an entire hotel room for less than the cost of both of us sleeping in a shared dorm.  Over the course of our one month trip, we saved several hundred dollars in this way.  As a result of saving so much money, we were able to change our plans and extend our trip for almost an entire week.  This example demonstrates some of the financial benefits of traveling with a companion.

               Moreover, it is much easier to talk to local people when traveling in a pair, and this makes any trip much more rewarding.  While a lone stranger can be seen as intimidating, a traveling couple is often considered more approachable.  For example, when my girlfriend and I took the aforementioned South American trip last year, we were often welcomed into people’s homes and businesses with open arms.  The individuals who invited us often pointed out that they were willing to do so because we looked so happy, friendly and cheerful spending time together. When I traveled by myself in Bolivia a year before I wanted to make similar connections, but I faced a lot of difficulty in doing so.  While a single traveler may actually be quite kind and outgoing, this can be somewhat difficult to determine from a distance.

               In conclusion, I definitely prefer to travel with a companion rather than alone.  This is based on the financial benefits of doing so, and because traveling with a partner makes it easy to interact with local residents.

### Sample Essay 09

(this question is taken from the [official guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

               In today’s turbulent economic environment, it is difficult for governments to decide which areas they should spend money on.  Some people believe that it is important to fund the arts, while others feel that it is preferable to prioritize environmental issues.  In my opinion, protecting the environment is more important than funding the arts.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, environmental problems are a more urgent concern than issues surrounding the arts.  While we are certainly living in a society where the arts are  severely underfunded, the environment is a matter of life and death for many people.  The consequences of environmental degradation not only hit close to home, but also affect human beings all over the world.  For example, I recently read a report in a major newspaper which pointed out that within three decades certain countries in South Asia will suffer from catastrophic flooding as a result of global warming.  One country that was mentioned was Bangladesh, which just happens to be the poorest nation in the region.  Public officials are trying to deal with the issue, but because of the poverty in that country they are wholly unable to do so.  This means that nations in the developed world need to fund programs that will help them deal with the looming crisis.

               Moreover, while arts funding is a wonderful idea, it is entirely possible for artistic and cultural programs to be privately funded.  Many businesses and individuals are willing to make donations to artists in exchange for promotional considerations.  Not only that, but the Internet has made it possible for artists to fund their work through online “crowdfunding” promoted through social networking sites.  For instance, there is a community theater group in my hometown which recently lost a significant portion of its public funding following recent budget cuts by the municipal government.  While the situation looked dire at first, the group was able to attract financial support from companies who wished to have their logo displayed on theater programs and assorted paraphernalia.  In addition, the company took to the Internet and raised money from individual donors who were happy to help their favorite theater group.  These examples demonstrate some of the methods that artists can use to attract funding to replace government support in times of economic trouble.  The amounts of money needed to solve environmental programs, in contrast, cannot be raised using such methods.

               In conclusion, I feel that if the government is forced to make a choice, it should choose to fund environmental programs rather than the arts. I feel this way because environmental problems are a more pressing concern, and because the arts can often be privately funded.

### Sample Essay 10

               We all have problems in life, and everyone has their own approach to problem solving.  When I am faced with a dilemma, my solution is to talk to someone about it, preferably a person who is older and more experienced than I am.  There are two reasons why I feel this way, which I will explore in the following essay.

               First of all, my problems are not particularly special and there are many people in my social circle who have already dealt with identical issues.  My experience has taught me that when I have a crisis, there is always an older person in my life who has dealt with the exact same issue.  Not only that, but they have lived through the consequences of the actions they took in response.  For instance, when I was a university freshman I was terribly behind on one of my assignments.  I could not decide between asking my professor for an extension, which may have made me look lazy in her eyes, or submitting a poorly done assignment which would make me look like a terrible student.  Fortunately, a sophomore in the department explained that most professors are happy to provide extensions when needed.  He told me that none of them would view me as lazy, as they all understand the pressures that students are under these days.

               Furthermore, I find that simply vocalizing my problems helps me to put them in perspective.  Merely having someone to listen to my problems assists my problem solving, even if that person does not have a lot of advice to give me.  For example, after talking about the above issue with my classmate, I realized that it was not the end of the world.  I know now that I was over thinking the problem, and that my professor would not see me as a bad person either way.  Moreover, when I explained to my upperclassman that the assignment was worth only one-fifth of my final grade, I realized that I could stop worrying about the problem.  This came to me even before he voiced his opinion on the matter.

               In conclusion, my approach to problem solving is to talk to someone about my problem.  I do this because there are many people in my life who have endured the same problems, and because vocalizing my issues helps me overcome my worries.

### Sample Independent Essay 11

(note that this question came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL, 4th Edition](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071766588/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0071766588&linkCode=as2&tag=tore0e4-20&linkId=RQMXZ7XCZA7AS76W), which is a really great resource)

               Everyone has different dreams when it comes to where they wish to live.  Some people think that living in a small town is desirable, while others choose city life.  Personally, I would prefer to live in a large city.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, cities offer a great environment for raising children, and I am a person who values family above all else.  Urban areas have numerous parks and recreation centers which encourage children to lead vital and healthy lives, and they also have well-funded community centers which contribute to the intellectual development of young people.  My own experience demonstrates the value of such facilities.  Both my husband and I work full time jobs, and are not home when our two sons finish school.  This is not a problem, though, as both of them go directly to a local community center when their classes are over.  Our eldest son participates in a computer club there, while our youngest son practices photography.  Their participation in these programs sets my mind at ease, as without access to the community center they would spend this time home alone.  This situation compares favorably to a friend of mine who lives in a small town and is forced to hire an expensive babysitter to watch her children when they get home from school, as there are no meaningful activities for them to engage in when their classes finish.

               Secondly, I believe that large cities offer cultural experiences that adults can enjoy and appreciate.  Most large cities have a plethora of museums, ethnic restaurants, libraries, theater groups and other stimulating and cosmopolitan facilities.  My city is no exception.  For example, my colleagues and I spend every Friday evening visiting a new ethnic restaurant for dinner.  Over the past three months we have enjoyed food from more than a dozen different national cuisines.  Meanwhile, my sons and I go to a different museum once a month.  I have found that I enjoy our visits almost as much as they do.  These are the sort of outings that are only possible in a large urban area.  Small towns offer easy access to beautiful natural vistas, but I prefer the intellectual and cultural stimulation that my city offers.

               In conclusion, I am of the opinion that living in a large city is preferable to living in a small town.  This is because cities are a better environment to raise children, and because they also offer stimulating intellectual and cultural experience that adults can enjoy.

### Example Essay: 12

               Many people claim that success comes only as a result of hard work, while others believe that it is mostly the product of good fortune.  I believe that success is only achieved by people who are diligent, hard-working and perseverant.  I will explore these ideas in the following essay.

               To begin with, success is not the result of a single lucky strike, but is instead the cumulative result of a lot of hard work.  Success happens over time and only after a series of correct decisions and small victories.  A stroke of luck, in contrast, is generally perceived to be a one-time event.  The experience of my uncle, a successful entrepreneur, is a compelling example of what I mean.  He runs a very profitable technology firm which manufactures and sells a wide range of products.  His business started very small when he invested his savings to  market a single product and hired his first employee.  When his single product found success, my uncle compounded his success with a series of profitable mergers that increased the size of his company.  His company later grew from a single employee to include a staff of dozens.  While my uncle might have been lucky at one stage of his company’s growth, the long-term success of his firm cannot simply be the result of good fortune.

               Secondly, people today tend to misattribute the results of hard work and diligence to simple blind luck.  Too many people ascribe to luck things which are actually the result of careful planning, research and “business smarts.”  For example, some people said that my uncle was lucky when his initial product offering was successful.  However, he was confident that his product would be a hit even before he started manufacturing it.  This is because he spent thousands of dollars on market research and focus groups.  It was this investment, not luck, which ensured the early success of his business.  Likewise, when his small firm completed its first merger just before the target company rose to prominence some called him lucky.  However, my uncle had spent weeks interviewing the research and development team at that company and predicted their success based on what they told him about their planning.  Had he not been confident of their success, he would not have completed the merger.   Again, this victory was the result of diligence rather than luck, despite what some observers say about it.

               In conclusion, I strongly believe that success comes as a result of hard work, rather than good fortune.  This is because success is a gradual and cumulative process, and because the public’s conception of luck is very superficial and hollow.

### Example Essay 13

(Question from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

               Funding for athletic programs at colleges and universities is a very controversial issue these days.  Some people believe that universities should fund libraries and educational facilities rather than sports teams, while others feel that the opposite is true.  I am of the belief that universities should provide more funding for athletics.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, most universities offer identical academic programs, and are only able to set themselves apart from the crowd through the popularity of their sports teams.  These days there are hundreds of universities across the United States which are almost entirely interchangeable.  Only a very select few Ivy League schools are known to be better than average.  It may seem somewhat arbitrary, but a sports team can help such middling schools stand out from the crowd and attract new students.  For example, my cousin is a very average student.  When he graduated from high school a few years ago, he chose to attend  California State College based solely on the fact that he loves basketball and that school is known for its on-court success.  This may seem superficial, but it mattered a lot to him, and according to recent surveys he is not the only student who chose to attend for this reason.  The college earned his loyalty as a result of the care and attention it has paid to its athletic program.

               Furthermore, sports are very profitable and are a good source of revenue in today’s precarious economic times.  Schools across the nation are facing a funding crisis, but they still need to build facilities and dormitories for new students.  University sports are a huge business in America, and are even more popular than professional sports in a lot of areas.  These teams can generate money for their schools through corporate sponsorships, ticket sales, licensing and broadcast agreements.  These profits can then be used to pay for academic facilities, including libraries.  This type of operation does not always seem the most idealistic thing for a university to do, but it certainly is a pragmatic solution to some of the problems that schools face today.

               In conclusion, I strongly believe that colleges should provide more funding to their sports teams than they do to their academic facilities.  This is because sports help universities stand out in a crowded market of schools, and because the profits they generate can be used to fund other programs.

### Sample Independent Essay: 14

(Note that this question came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071766588/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0071766588&linkCode=as2&tag=tore0e4-20&linkId=RQMXZ7XCZA7AS76W), which is a really great book)

          As travel becomes increasingly accessible, more and more people take long vacations every year.  Sightseeing is a popular activity for many tourists, and museums are one of the places that they are attracted to.  I am of the belief that people visit museums in order to add an intellectual aspect to their trips.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          To begin with, museums offer a very easy way to gain insight into the history and culture of a location.  These days, museums are designed to be accessible to the general public.  In the past, they often contained stuffy and uninteresting exhibitions of boring artifacts, but today museums contain interactive and stimulating hands-on displays.  My own experience while traveling last month in Canada is a good example of this.  While visiting the city of Winnipeg, I spent an afternoon visiting Canada’s National Human Rights Museum.  I saw that the museum contained touch-screen displays, sensor-activated exhibits and frequent presentations by experts.  I learned an enormous amount from what I experienced, much more than I would have if the museum contained nothing but artifacts kept under glass.  I feel that this example is typical of museums in the modern age.

          Furthermore, I believe that a backlash against lazy vacations has emerged in recent years.  Throughout the late twentieth-century most tourists went to resorts and cruise ships.  Guests to these places sat on a beach for days at a time eating pre-heated food from a buffet table.  While such a vacation is certainly relaxing, it can feel rather lazy and unintellectual to some.  As a result, vacation goers now seek out museums in order to feel better about their travels.  For example, when I was vacationing at an all-inclusive resort in Cuba last year I made certain to schedule one full day at the city that was closest to the resort.  At that city I visited a number of churches, parks and museums.  Adding an intellectual element to my vacation made me feel good about my sloth and gluttony during the rest of the trip.

          In conclusion, I strongly believe that people visit museums in order to add a scholarly aspect to their vacations. This is because museums are increasingly being designed with mass appeal in mind, and because people feel the need to balance out the laziness of their trips with something that is more deep and meaningful.

### Sample Essay 15

          There is no shortage of debate about whether it is better to raise children in a large city or in a small town. In my opinion, it is more advantageous to raise young people in an urban environment.  I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          First of all, cities include a vast number of academic and cultural facilities.  A child who visits such places on a regular basis will undoubtedly become very interested in some of them.  In addition, they will be able to make well-informed decisions about their future.  My own experience is a compelling example of this. When I was young I lived in a major urban area, so my parents could easily take me to a cultural event almost every weekend.  We attended book readings at the local library, art openings at many of the galleries throughout the city, and literary festivals during the summer.  As a result of attending these outings I developed a strong interest in artistic expression, and decided to major in music at university.  Now I enjoy a successful career as a recording artist. For this reason, I strongly believe that it is beneficial to grow up in a large city.

              Secondly, children who live in cities are exposed to people from many walks of life, while those in the countryside communicate with only one type of person.  Cities are usually magnets for new immigrants to my country, and are populated by individuals from many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is useful for children to have friends who come from different walks of life.  For instance, my young cousin is growing up in New York, which is the largest city in my country.  She is still just a college student, but she is comfortable interacting with people who speak a variety of languages, and who have religious beliefs that are different from her own. Moreover, she recently mentioned that she was able to find employment at a company looking for workers with an international perspective.  Accordingly, I think that people who live in cities can enjoy a variety of beneficial interactions.

              In conclusion, I strongly believe that it is better for children to grow up cities than in rural areas.  This is because cities are home to a variety of educational venues, and because they have very diverse and cosmopolitan populations.

### Example Essay 16

              Human activity is causing the world to change at a rapid pace these days. I am of the opinion that humanity has had a mostly negative effect on the planet.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

              To begin with, industrial development has caused major air pollution, which has a terrible effect on human health.  Every week I hear news reports about how horrible air quality is in major cities all over the world.  Additionally, we often hear that chronic lung diseases are on the rise and that there is connection between these two trends.  I am reminded of the years I spent living in Beijing, China.  After having spent most of my life living in the Canadian countryside where the air is mostly clean, I immediately noticed the smog and pollution of big city China.  Within months I was suffering from a variety of respiratory illnesses and had difficulty breathing.  I spent quite a few afternoons at a local hospital being treated for various throat and lung infections.  A majority of the population of the Earth now resides in cities, and they often suffer from the consequences of industrial development.

              Secondly, human development has lead to a massive accumulation of trash, which spoils the natural beauty of the planet.  While in the past products were often made of biodegradable materials like paper and wood, today most manufactured goods are made of plastic that never breaks down.  Such materials sometimes find their way into permanent landfills, but often they just end up as litter.  When I traveled to the island of Borneo last summer I was impressed by the beauty of the place, but I also noticed that the natural environment was marred by an accumulation of plastic bags and water bottles that were strewn everywhere.  Had I visited the island a century ago I would not have found it tainted in such a way.

              In conclusion, I strongly believe that human activity has made the planet a less pleasant place to live.  This is because people are more likely to suffer from the effects of pollution than in the past, and because human waste has destroyed the natural beauty of our world.

### The Example Essay 17

(question taken from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

             Only a very narrow minded person would suggest that making money is the sole reason why people go to work each day.  While money is important, I feel that there are two additional reasons why people hold jobs and go to work.  First, working makes one feel that his life is meaningful.  Second, regular employment gives us a chance to interact with people outside of our normal social circle.

              First of all, having employment gives us a sense that our life is meaningful, which is very important in today’s world.  The objectives of our job give us something to strive for each day and allow to us make long-term goals about what we want to accomplish.  Without a job, people often feel that their life lacks a sense of purpose.  My own experience is a compelling example of this.  In 2008, after ten years of working in a fast-paced corporate environment, I was laid off from my job.  Even though I was financially secure and did not need to get another position right away I felt quite depressed because I did not have an offi.  Pursuing my hobbies was fun, but I lacked something to strive for each day.  At work I always had sales objectives and profit objectives to work towards.  Accomplishing them always gave me a great sense of satisfaction.

              Secondly, jobs give us the opportunity to meet new people on a regular basis, which can provide us with a sense of happiness.  People who are unemployed interact mostly with their family and pre-existing friends, which can sometimes be boring.  When I was in high school, I worked in a local supermarket.  Although the job was not very well-paid, I often look back on that experience with fondness; indeed, in many ways it was the best job I have ever had.  I was very happy to chat with the eclectic assortment of customers who came in each day.  As they all came from radically different backgrounds than me, it was stimulating to learn about their lives.  Even though I now work at a job that pays me a much higher salary, I do miss my low-paying supermarket job sometimes.

              In conclusion, I strongly believe that in addition to making money, there are two reasons why people work.  They are the opportunity to give their life a sense of purpose, and the chance to interact with people outside of their usual social circle.

### Example Independent Essay 18

(this question came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL, 4th Edition](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071766588/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0071766588&linkCode=as2&tag=tore0e4-20&linkId=RQMXZ7XCZA7AS76W))

           Maintaining our health is one of the most effective ways of ensuring that we live a long and happy life.  I do many things in order to stay fit, but the most important is maintaining a healthy diet.  There are two reasons why I think this is critically important, which I will explore in the following essay.

          To begin with, eating healthy food prevents obesity, which is the cause of many very serious illnesses.  Obesity is debilitating all by itself, but it also causes patients to suffer from a variety of other illnesses, including diabetes, arthritis and heart disease.  It is important to be aware of this connection when making decisions about the food which we eat.  My eldest cousin is a compelling example of this.  While my cousin maintained a healthy weight throughout high school and university (despite eating a lot of unhealthy snacks and junk food), when he entered adulthood his metabolism changed and he began to rapidly gain weight.  My cousin is not a particularly self-conscious individual and was never bothered by how his weight gain affected his appearance, so he continued to eat an unhealthy diet.  However, he was eventually diagnosed with adult-onset diabetes which has had a profound effect on his quality of life.  As a result, he regrets not being more careful about his dietary choices.

          Secondly, eating healthy food gives me a lot of energy, which keeps me effective in my personal and professional pursuits.  It is no secret that people who lack certain vitamins and nutrients do not have the energy necessary to complete even simple tasks.  I recall how when I was a university student I often skipped meals because I was quite busy studying.  As a result of not eating proper meals, I started to suffer from fatigue and lethargy. My grades began to drop because when it came time to write my tests I could barely keep my eyes open long enough to answer the questions.  Moreover, my  assignments were poorly done because my fatigue made me unable to keep up with deadlines.  The following year I was a bit more diligent about making healthy food choices and my grades quickly recovered.

          In conclusion, the most important thing I do in order to stay healthy is maintain a nutritious diet.  This is because keeping a healthy diet prevents obesity and related diseases, and because it gives me the energy to keep up with my academic and professional requirements.

**Sample Essay 19**

(the question used here came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

          The construction of a shopping mall in my hometown would have a profound effect on the people who live here.  If such a project were to be proposed, I would vehemently oppose it. There are two reasons why I would do so, which I will explore in the following essay.

          To begin with, a shopping mall would cause many small local businesses to shut down, which would have a negative effect on employment.  It is true that a shopping mall would employ a lot of people from the community, but the jobs lost at small local retailers forced out of business would be greater in number.  For example, when a shopping mall opened in the small town where my parents live, it forced a local hardware store out of business.  Even though the hardware store found in the new mall was three times as large as the family store, it only employed half as many people.  Not only that, but the small local store employed well-paid experts, while the shopping mall mainly hires teenagers who earn minimum wage.

          Secondly, shopping malls often result in urban sprawl, which is something that would reduce the quality of life in my town.  While local shops of the sort I talked about above are usually located at the center of a city, shopping malls are usually found on the outskirts of town.  It is possible for customers to walk to local stores found downtown, but it is necessary to drive to shopping malls.  Not only that, but after a shopping mall becomes successful, other business will open up nearby and patronizing them will also require driving.  I am of the opinion that the ability to walk to shops and services is a part of a high quality of life.  This means that a shopping mall will cause life in my hometown to be much less enjoyable.

          In conclusion, I would strongly oppose the construction of a shopping mall in my hometown.  This is because it would force small family-run businesses to shut down, and because it would cause my life to be less pleasant.

### Example Independent Essay 20

(this question came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL, 4th Edition](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071766588/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0071766588&linkCode=as2&tag=tore0e4-20&linkId=RQMXZ7XCZA7AS76W))

              Everyone has their own preferred study methods, and all of them have their benefits.  I am of the opinion that it is better to study alone than to study as part of a group.  I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

              To begin with, studying alone allows me to focus on specific areas of a subject that I am struggling with, rather than doing a broad overview of the class.  I always attend my classes and communicate regularly with my professors and teachers, so I am constantly aware of which topics I need to focus on when I study.  When I study in a group, everyone in the group has different needs, and the study session is required to touch on all of them.  As a freshman four years ago, I was not aware of this and found myself wasting my time studying in a group for an important European history exam.  I knew that I really needed to focus on religious history, but sat uncomfortably through a group study session that progressed through political, cultural, scientific, literary and artistic history before touching only briefly on the issue of religion.  As a result, I performed more poorly on the test than I would have if I had just studied alone.

              Furthermore, I recognize that I am a very social creature, and this means that when I study in a group I am easily distracted.  I am not the only person who has this problem; many people will agree that they too desire to socialize rather than study when in a group of friends and classmates.  My example of studying for that European history class is a good example of this.  Not only did I suffer from the fact that the we only touched briefly on my problem area, but certain group members (including myself) were easily drawn off-topic.  We were quick to make jokes about the material being covered, or make tenuous and meaningless connections between those topics and our own lives.  Thankfully I have avoided this problem since then as I have decided to always study by myself.

              In conclusion, I strongly believe that studying alone is better than studying in a group.  This is because studying alone allows me to focus on the areas that I need to, and because it helps me to avoid  socializing when I should be studying.

### The Sample Essay 21

(the question used here came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

         These days, people enjoy a plethora of dining options.  It is now possible to eat food at fine restaurants serving food from around the world, or to use modern technology to prepare great food in the comfort of our own homes.  I prefer to eat at home, rather than going out.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

             To begin with, home cooked meals are healthier than meals from restaurants, and I strongly value my health.  While meals prepared at restaurants are certainly delicious, they include a lot of oil, salt and sugar.  Over consumption of such ingredients can have a profound effect on our health, and can even lead to chronic illnesses.  When I cook for myself at home, I precisely measure the amounts of unhealthy ingredients that go into my recipes and try my best to limit them whenever possible.  It is true that my meals may not taste quite as savory at those I might get at a restaurant, but this does not diminish my enjoyment of the meal.  Rather than enjoying just the taste of the food, much of my pleasure is derived from the enjoyment that went into the cooking of it, and the peace of mind that I gain from knowing that I am taking care of my body.

             Secondly, these days restaurants are increasingly expensive, and this is a major consideration in today’s precarious economic situation.  I do not blame the restaurants for this - they must pay a lot for labor, real estate and utilities - but it is true that a meal that might cost five dollars to prepare at home will cost ten times that amount when purchased at a restaurant.  Moreover, my country  has a tipping culture, which adds increased costs every time I eat out.  For example, I remember last month how I paid about fifteen dollars for a simple meal of fish and chips.  Potatoes are clearly one of the most inexpensive vegetables in the world, and since I live near the sea, fresh fish can be bought at a local market for just a few dollars a pound.  I enjoyed my meal, but paying that much for it made me feel like I was being irresponsible with my money.

             In conclusion, I certainly prefer to eat at home rather than at a restaurant.  I feel this way because eating at home is healthier, and it makes a lot more economic sense than going out for an expensive meal.

### The Example Essay 22

(question taken from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

            As online technology develops and ideas about learning change, there are many different opinions about whether it should still be mandatory for students to attend classes.  I am of the opinion that it remains important for students to physically attend their classes.  I will explore why I feel this way in the following essay.

              To begin with, being physically present in a class makes it more likely that a student will participate in conversation and debate, which will help him following his graduation.  A university education is not just about writing essays and getting grades, but rather it is about spending time in a stimulating academic environment.  It is very important for students to share their opinions with others both inside and out of the lecture hall, and even to engage in healthy debate with their professors.  Exchanges of this type shape young minds, and students who miss out on them do not get as much from their degree program as they ought to.  My own experience is a compelling example of this.  I learned an enormous amount about effective communication by participating in classroom discussions as an undergraduate.  Moreover, classroom discussion showed me how to support my opinions with facts, and also how to remain polite when talking with others.  My finely honed communication skills were very useful when it came time for me to find professional employment

              Furthermore, attending classes helps students to network with like-minded people, which also makes it easier to find jobs following their graduation.  As I said above, students are likely to talk to their classmates during lectures.  This not only helps them to become effective communicators, but also assists them in forming relationships and friendships with their peers.  Again, my experience demonstrates the value of this.  Following my graduation,  I was able to get recommendations and referrals from classmates who had already been hired by prestigious firms.  My insider connections were critical when it came to landing job interviews and eventual employment.  Had I not developed close relationships with my peers I would not have had this valuable resource.

              In conclusion, I strongly believe that it is still very important for students to attend classes.  This is because doing so helps them to perfect their communication skills, and because the opportunities for networking that it provides are extremely valuable.

**Sample Essay 23**

              Everyone has their own preferred study methods, and all of them have unique benefits.  I am of the opinion that it is better to study with a teacher than it is to study alone.  I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

              To begin with, studying with a teacher helps students to stay focused and avoid distraction, which are two things that young people often struggle with.  Students today have a world of technological distractions right at their fingertips, including smartphones, social networking websites and satellite television.  Even when we make firm plans, it is difficult to stay focused on our studies when we can so easily consume some frivolous entertainment instead.  When I was attempting to learn English for the first time, my studies faltered because I pulled out my phone whenever I hit a difficult part in my exercise book.  When I switched to studying with a tutor, however, simple courtesy prevented me from using a phone in her presence.  Additionally, whenever I tried to begin some idle small talk in order to avoid hard work, she gently nudged me back to my important studies.  I progressed much more quickly with her than I did while studying on my own.

              Furthermore, students have an inflated sense of their own ability and intelligence, which causes problems when they try to study alone.  Many people believe that with just a nice textbook they can master any topic on their own.  They are of the opinion that they can create a curriculum all by themselves and formulate their own study plan.  However, this is something that only trained experts are actually very good at.  My own experience is a compelling example of this.  As I said, I began studying English all by myself.  I drew up complicated lesson plans and schedules that were supposed to predict my progress.  Sadly, I did not progress as quickly as I anticipated.  When I started studying with a tutor, she immediately assessed my needs and ability level and created a more realistic timeline for my studies.  As a result, I have been able to make realistic progress without feeling discouraged.

              In conclusion, I strongly believe that studying with a teacher is better than studying alone. This is because teachers help us to avoid distractions, and because they can assist us in creating realistic goals and objectives for our learning.

### The Sample Essay 24

(the question used here came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

          People today spend an enormous amount of time at their workplace, and how much they enjoy that time depends largely on the attitude and attributes of their supervisor.  I am of the opinion that there are two main characteristics of a good boss, which are his experience and his professionalism.  I will explore these two factors in the following essay.

          First of all, the amount of experience that our boss has is very important, because we are more likely to learn from a supervisor who is very experienced in their field.  Young people who are just starting out in their careers absorb new information like sponges, but even older workers can learn from those who have been around for a long time.  My own experience is a compelling example of this.  When I began teaching ten years ago, my supervisor, Simon, had been working in education for more than ten years.  I was just out of college and knew very little about creating effective lesson plans, engaging students or even how to complete my paperwork.  Simon took the time to show me what he had learned over previous decade, and therefore I was soon able to keep up with my officemates.  In contrast, when I moved to a new school earlier this year, my supervisor actually had less experience teaching than I did.  Moreover, when I struggled with certain aspects of my job, he had very little to suggest that I did not already know.  As a result, my professional development stagnated.

          Secondly, I feel that the professionalism  is important for a boss, as it is essential to the maintenance of a good office environment.  My sister once told me that her first job following her graduation was difficult because of how toxic the office was.  Workers were prone to gossiping, shirking their duties and arriving late each day.  This was seen as acceptable because most of the supervisors in the firm behaved in the exact same way.  My sister was miserable, though, because she prides herself on her diligence and her ability to complete her tasks with care and enthusiasm.  This situation is a stark contrast to my experience with Simon, who I mentioned above.  He arrived early to the office each day, and never engaged in idle gossip about his officemates.  The people he supervised tried to do the same things.

          In conclusion, I believe that experience and professionalism are the hallmarks of a good supervisor.  This is because we can learn a lot from a knowledgeable boss, and because employees will strive to emulate a supervisor who acts with professionalism and dignity.

### The Example Essay 25

(question taken from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

          There are a plethora of reasons why human life spans are longer than ever before.  In my opinion, there are two main reasons why people are living longer, which are improvements in medical technology and  working conditions. In the following essay, I will explore these two reasons in detail.

               First of all, medical technology has developed in amazing ways, and can both prevent and cure many different illnesses.  Hundreds of diseases that might have killed us in the past can now be treated in safe and non-invasive ways.  Not only that, but technology can be used to identify potential illnesses even before they occur.  For example, I was told that my great-grandfather died of a heart attack when he was just forty-five years old, despite appearing outwardly healthy to his family.  However, thanks to modern medicine, I now know that males in my family are genetically predisposed to heart disease.  Thanks to this information I know to be extra-careful about my diet and when I exert myself.  When I am older I will begin taking blood thinning medicine as a preventive measure.  My great-grandfather did not have access to the predictive power of modern medicine and was not able to protect himself like I do today.

               Secondly, improved working conditions help us live longer, as humans today have safer and less strenuous jobs than people in the past.  My great-grandfather was not the only male in my family to die at a young age, as his brother passed away when he was in his fifties.  His brother did not die from heart disease, but died from lung disease brought on by many years of working in a dirty coal mine.  The physical toll of his work and the dusty air he breathed every day caused him to develop cancer, which eventually claimed his life.  He was not the only person in his society to be killed by his job, as it was common for men and women to work in dangerous resource extraction jobs, or to put in twelve hour days at terribly unsafe factories.  People back then had neither safe working conditions nor effective safety equipment.  Modern workplace safety rules and regulations, however, prevent the same tragedies from happening today.

               In conclusion, I believe that people are living longer today for two main reasons.  They are that doctors have access to a wide range of technology to both cure and prevent illnesses, and because our jobs are safer and less taxing than in the past.

**Example Independent Essay 26**

(this question came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL, 4th Edition](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071766588/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0071766588&linkCode=as2&tag=tore0e4-20&linkId=RQMXZ7XCZA7AS76W))

          Everyone in the world spends an enormous amount of time at their workplace, and how much they enjoy their job depends largely on the attitude and attributes of their co-workers.  I am of the opinion that there are two main characteristics of a good co-worker, which are professionalism and a willingness to learn new things.  I will explore these two factors in the following essay.

          First of all, co-workers with a sense of professionalism are desirable because they help to maintain an efficient work environment.  People who behave in a professional manner are less likely to act in a lazy fashion or pass their responsibilities off to others.  In my experience, this makes life much easier for everyone in an organization.  For example, last summer the staff at my company were quite overwhelmed by multiple assignments.  It was our busy season, and we had a number of unexpected orders come in from our international clients.  Filling these orders required everyone to focus intently on their areas of responsibility.  While this meant that some employees were working longer hours than others, I greatly appreciated that no one complained about the situation.  Instead, everyone maintained a professional demeanor, and we were able to get through the season.

          Secondly, it is good for workers to feel comfortable learning new things, because in modern society workplaces are changing at a rapid pace. The techniques and theories that we might have learned at school even a decade ago are increasingly becoming obsolete.  Employees who are unwilling to learn from their younger colleagues often create unpleasant workplaces.  My own experience is a compelling example of what I mean.  Last year my firm hired a new employee who had more than twenty years of experience in our industry.  While at first glance he seemed like a perfect addition to our organization, his techniques were wholly out of step with the modern world.  Not only that, but he became apprehensive and belligerent when younger staff members tried to show him about the current reality of our industry.  Eventually he was dismissed from the firm because of the negative effect he had on his co-workers.

          In conclusion, I believe that professionalism and a willingness to learn new things are the hallmarks of a good employee.  This is because a professional attitude is necessary to ensure a smooth and efficient work environment, and because in today’s rapidly changing world it is always necessary to learn new skills and techniques.

### Sample Essay 27

          While in twenty years there may be fewer cars on the road in my country, the rest of the world will tell a different story. In my opinion, on a global scale, twenty years from now there will be many more vehicles in use that there are today. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          First of all, the developing world is rapidly urbanizing, which means that more people than ever embark on a daily commute to their workplace. In the past, most people in developing nations engaged in subsistence labor near their home. In contrast, today people are more likely to live in an urban area. The apartment buildings that they inhabit are usually far from the factories where they work, which necessitates a long trip every day. My friend Lee is a good example of such a person. All of his ancestors worked on rice farms in northern China. Occasionally, they traveled short distances using pack animals, but for the most part lived out their entire lives fairly close to their birthplace. Lee, on the other hand, moved to a city last year to work in a steel plant and drives almost thirty kilometers from his home to the factory every day. All of his co-workers do the same, which is a pretty significant change compared to the past. I can see no indication that this trend will halt in the future. Indeed, it seems likely that even more people will share Lee’s experience.

          Secondly, incomes are rising all over the world, which means that in the future automobiles will be affordable for even more people. In the past, owning a car was a privilege enjoyed only by those living in the developed world. Now, however, consumers in developing countries like China and India purchase millions of cars every year. My friend’s experience is also typical of this trend. At the moment Lee does not own his own car, but instead gets to work by carpooling with a neighbor. However, he dreams of owning a vehicle of his own. While it might make financial sense for him to continue carpooling or take public transportation, he views car ownership as symbol of affluence. Lee has even indicated to me that someday he hopes to own two automobiles, just like many people in the west.

          In conclusion, I am of the opinion that in the future there will be more vehicles on the road than there are today. This is because the world is rapidly urbanizing, and because rising incomes will open up even more markets for automobile companies.

### Sample Essay 28

          The question of how our leisure time should be spent has been debated for many years. Many people feel that people today spend too much time on personal enjoyment, but I hold the opposite opinion. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          ​First of all, people spend more time working than ever before, which means that broadly speaking, individuals are spending a lot of time doing things that they should be doing. Studies indicate that we spend more time at our offices than ever before, and that smart phones and internet access means that people continue to work even when they are not being paid. My own experience is a compelling example of what I mean. I work for a large investment banking firm where my scheduled workday is from nine o’clock to five o’clock, but I actually average about eight hours of overtime every week. I do not do this because I enjoy it, but because I feel a sense of obligation to provide a service to my company and earn money for my family. Everyone at my firm does the same thing. We often compare ourselves to our parents, who almost never worked overtime nor took weekend calls and e-mails from their bosses. It seems like the present generation emphasizes professional obligations over  personal enjoyment.

          ​Secondly, it seems to me that many popular leisure activities include a self-improvement aspect, which means that even our hobbies fall into the realm of what we should be doing. One of the most popular pasttimes these days seems to be long distance running, an activity which is also incredibly beneficial for our health. Another perfect example is the way I spend most of my free time working out at a local gym. Although this is certainly enjoyable for me, part of why I do it is that it keeps me strong, healthy and fit. This makes me both a better family man and a better employee. I consider all of these to be things that I should be deeply concerned about.

          ​In conclusion, I am of the opinion that people today do not spend an inordinate amount of time doing things that they like to do. This is because people work longer hours than ever before, and because even our personal hobbies tend to involve an aspect of obligation.

### Sample Essay 29

          Many people are nostalgic for the way life was lived in the past because they think that in those days life was easier and more comfortable. I, however, believe that life has never been as enjoyable as it is right now. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          ​First of all, people today work fewer hours than they did when my grandparents were very young, which increases both their leisure time and their overall happiness. Today, almost all workers enjoy time off on the weekend and, overall, work fewer than thirty-six hours per week. People today have a lot of time away from their worplace, so they are able to pursue whatever hobbies and interests make them happy. I feel that my own family’s history is a good example of this contrast. Many years ago, when my grandparents began their careers, they worked six days and about fifty hours each week. In contrast, I work just five days a week, and a legally-mandated thirty-six hours at most. As a result of my lighter workload I have time for the sorts of hobbies that my grandparents were only able to take up following their retirement. I truly believe that an excess of leisure time is the definition of living an “easy life.”

          ​Secondly, advanced kitchen appliances are ubiquitous in the modern era, which makes it easier for people to enjoy fulfilling and interesting daily lives. When my grandparents were young, a typical Canadian kitchen was equipped with no more than a simple stove. Today, in contrast, it is typical to find a whole range of appliances, including microwaves, toaster ovens, blenders, mixers and so on. For example, my own kitchen contains all of these tools. I use them to quickly prepare interesting new foods every night using recipes from countries all over the world. I feel that having culinary adventures increases my wellbeing and overall state of mind. My grandparents ate nutrious and delicious food, but its preparation was often quite time-consuming and arduous because they lacked modern appliances.

          ​In conclusion, I am of the opinion that I enjoy a much more comfortable and easy life than my grandparents did when they were young. This is because I work fewer hours, and because I have access to a range of modern devices which make meal preparation easier than ever before.

### Sample Essay 30

          There are a lot of people who feel strongly that we can learn more from people at our own level than from people at a higher level. While this may be true in limited circumstances, I feel that for the most part it is people above us, like our teachers and our bosses, who can teach us most in life. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          First of all, real-world experience is one of the most valuable sources of learning, and it is something that people above us have plenty of. Young people like myself are full of bright ideas and plans for the future, but our ideas are all hypothetical or based on assumptions instead of hard facts. My own experience is a compelling example of this. Following my graduation from university, I drew up plans to start a small software development firm. My plans were exceptionally detailed, and I was confident that my business would be a success. However, when I consulted with one of my former professors, his advice opened my eyes to the fact that my plan was missing key points. I had concentrated on all of the most exciting aspects of starting a business, but I had not given much thought to the more mundane details I would have to sort out, like how to rent office space or how to pay my taxes. His years of real world experience opened my eyes to such topics.

          Moreover, people who are above us are more likely to actually be trained as educators, which means they can more effectively and efficiently convey lessons and instructions. A young person who is very bright and a master of his particular field of expertise may be unable to teach others about it if he lacks the knowledge of how to convey information to beginners. For example, several years ago I shared an introductory physics class with Philip, a good friend of mine. Philip excelled in all of his classes, and achieved particularly impressive grades in the sciences. One week when I was struggling in the class Philip offered to tutor me, so that I could keep up. Our tutoring sessions did not go well – try as he might, Phil was unable to help me understand even the most basic topics. In desperation, I visited our professor to seek assistance. To my surprise, she was able to correct my misunderstandings after only half an hour of conversation. It was not her depth of knowledge of the topic that permitted her to achieve this, but her training as an educator.

          In conclusion, I strongly believe that we can learn more from individuals who are above us than we can from people on our own level. This is because older people tend to have more experience than younger people, and because they are more likely to have training in education and instruction.

### Sample Essay 31

          ​Some people prefer to make all of their critical decisions without first consulting with others. I, on the other hand, feel that we should never make important decisions on our own. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          ​First of all, while we might think our lives are unique, there is always someone close to us that has been faced with the same decision. By consulting someone who has made a similar decision in the past, we can more carefully weigh our options. For example, when I graduated from high school five years ago I was forced to choose between enrolling in either a trade school or a university. I knew that a trade school would lead to more reliable employment in the future, but I also knew that a university would provide a more stimulating intellectual environment. I did not think that my old-fashioned and practical-minded parents would have struggled with such a dilemma in their youth, but when I talked it out with my father I found out that despite his tendencies towards conservatism and practical ways, as a young man he had given consideration to studying the liberal arts. As we talked about his motivations, and some of the regrets associated with his ultimate cho, I was able to more fully consider all of my own options.          ​

          ​Secondly, I feel that when we make decisions alone, we are more likely to make rash and impulsive moves. Talking about a problem with another person takes time, and thus our decision making process is slowed down. For example, when I decided to buy a new car last year I made purchase the very same day that the idea popped into my head. It seemed like a good idea at the time because gas prices were low and there was plenty of parking available on campus. However, when I told one of my classmates about my purchase she reminded me that gas prices always shoot up when we least expect them to, and that parking was easy only to find at that time because it was summer vacation and fewer students were on campus. Had I talked about these issues before buying the car I might have reconsidered whether or not it was a good idea.

          ​In conclusion, I strongly believe that it is never a smart idea to make decisions without first talking to someone about them. This is because there is always someone in our life who has had to deal with a similar situation, and because talking about issues prevents us from acting impulsively.

### Sample Essay 32

    The opening of something as simple as a restaurant can bring about a lot of changes to a community.  In my opinion, the opening of such a business would be beneficial for my town, and I would support it.  I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

    First of all, businesses like restaurants provide valuable job opportunities for young people who live nearby.  Positions at a restaurant do not require much prior experience, so they can be held by college students and even teenagers who are still in high school.  Working part time can help young people pay for things like college tuition which they might not be able to afford otherwise.  My cousin’s experience is a compelling example of what I mean.  My cousin began university soon after he graduated from high school.  At first, he did not have enough money to pay for his tuition, so he took out a big student loan to cover it.  However, during his first semester a McDonald’s franchise opened close to his home.  My brother applied for a position there and was fortunate enough to be hired.  Thanks to the salary that he earned working there during evenings and weekends, he did not need to get a loan for the remainder of his time as a student.  He graduated with only a small debt, and he says this is because of his job at the restaurant.

    Secondly, a new restaurant can introduce us to aspects of a culture we are not familiar with.  These days, many popular restaurants serve ethnic foods, so by eating in them we can learn about a culture that is unfamiliar to use. For example, a few years ago an Ethiopian diner opened in my home town.  I had never eaten Ethiopian food at that time, but I ordered a plate of food there during its first week of operations.  Everything about the meal was new to me, from the ingredients to the seasonings and even the fact that Ethiopian food is usually eaten using our hands rather than a fork and knife.  This was an eye-opening experience for me, and I was actually inspired to someday visit Ethiopia so I could learn more about the country.  I am not sure when this trip will occur, but I am determined to make it happen before I finish university.

    In conclusion, I am totally in support of a new restaurant opening in my town.  This is because it would provide more employment opportunities for young people, and because it would possibly introduce me to a new culture and cuisine.

### Sample Independent Essay: 33

(Note that this question came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071766588/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0071766588&linkCode=as2&tag=tore0e4-20&linkId=RQMXZ7XCZA7AS76W), which is a really great book)

          Maintaining healthy relationships can be very difficult in today’s world, and there are many aspects of our interactions with others that we need to worry about.  In my opinion, there are times when it is better to not tell the truth to others.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

          First of all, telling small lies can sometimes motivate the people we care about. Humans are very competitive and want to be the best at whatever task they are completing.  Whether they are involved in an athletic event or taking a test at school, they feel more motivation if they think it is possible that they will achieve an impressive result.  In cases like these, sometimes lying about their potential can encourage them to perform well.  My own experience is a compelling example of this.  Last year, my husband signed up for a marathon in our city. I knew that he would struggle to even finish the event, but I wanted him to feel confident in his ability.  Accordingly, when he asked me about my opinion, I lied and said that he had a chance of finishing in the top ten. This gave him a lot of confidence and he dedicated himself to training for the marathon.  Even though he did not win the race my small lie was enough to maintain his motivation both before and during the race.

          Secondly, being honest all of the time can lead to high levels of anxiety. If we tell unpleasant truths, we may spend days or hours worrying about the possible consequences of what he have revealed.  For instance, last week a colleague asked me what I thought of her new hairstyle.  I was honest, and said that I thought it looked terrible. Though she did not express any anger at my remarks, I could see that she was really hurt by what I said. As a result of this, I spent the rest of the day worrying that I had jeopardized our relationship. My emotional state greatly reduced my productivity that day, and I am still a bit nervous that my colleague will hold a grudge against me.  Had I simply said that her hair looked wonderful I could have avoided all of these feelings.

          In conclusion, I believe that there are times when it is best to not tell the truth to others.  This is because lies can motivate people to perform well, and because always being honest can sometimes cause personal turmoil.

### Sample Essay 34

(the question used here is from the latest edition of the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

               My life is very different than the life that my parents led and, likewise, my children will have very different experiences than I have had.  In my opinion, future generations would be better off with a lifestyle similar to my own rather than one similar to that of my parents.  I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, my generation enjoys a lot of leisure time, which makes our lives more fulfilling and enables us to pursue our passions.  I take longer vacations and have more paid holidays from my job than either of my parents did while they were still employed.  Similarly, I have much shorter working days than they did.  For example, I receive five weeks off from my job each year.  I can choose when to take those weeks, and I can even use them all at the same time.  This  has enabled me to pursue my love of travel.  Unlike earlier generations, I have been able to maintain steady professional employment and have also been able to see the entire world over the past decade.  My parents, in contrast, were only able to travel following their retirement.  At that time, because of their age and financial status, they were not able to have the same experiences as I do now.

               Moreover, modern society provides many more opportunities for women and minorities.  In the past, disadvantaged groups had a tough time achieving personal and professional success.  While this is still something of a concern, it is now much easier for members of such groups to live their dreams.  My own experience, when compared to that of my mother, is a compelling example of this.  While as a young woman I was encouraged to attend university and later enter the workforce, my mother was expected to raise children and be a homemaker.  She dreamed of being a business executive and making a lot of money, but these dreams were not encouraged by her parents, by her teachers or even by her husband.  Unlike me, she was pressured to give up all of her professional aspirations.  Her example demonstrates why my life is preferable to the life which my parents lived.

               In conclusion, I strongly believe that future generations should enjoy a life similar to my own, rather than one similar to that of my parents.  This is because I enjoy much more leisure time than they did, and because women and minorities today have many more opportunities than in the past.

### Example Essay 35

               Without a doubt, people are living longer these days than ever before.  While there are many explanations for this phenomenon, I believe that the two most important are advances in science and the fact that people today enjoy manageable working lives.  I will explore why I feel this way in the following essay.

               First of all, developments in science and technology have done a lot to extend our natural lives.  Newly discovered pharmaceuticals and medical devices assist doctors in a wide range of ways.  They help in the prevention of illness, in the diagnosis of disease, during treatment and even in the provision of follow-up care.   For example, several years ago I was diagnosed with skin cancer.  Fortunately, my cancer was discovered at a very early stage of the disease and my treatment was provided very quickly and without any unexpected side-effects.  My diagnosis was completed very quickly in a modern lab at a high-tech hospital near my home.  As a result of this, I made a rapid and complete recovery.  In contrast, several decades ago my grandfather passed away as a result of prostate cancer.  He was eventually diagnosed with cancer, but it did not occur quickly enough to save his life. This was because there was simply no technology available to make the diagnosis.  Last month, however, I read that because of recent scientific advances his form of cancer now has a ninety-percent survival rate.

               Secondly, people today have much more manageable working lives than people in the past experienced.  Workers today enjoy both long vacation periods every year and fewer hours at work each day so they have much less stress which can damage their health.  I, for example, work just thirty-five hours each week and am given five weeks of time off each year by my employer.  My example is not an outlier, as most of my friends and colleagues have a similar benefit package as I do.   These perks help me to live a stress-free life and maintain a healthy body.  My uncle, who is much older than I, worked more than forty-five hours each week during his career.  Moreover, he enjoyed just a one week holiday each winter.  His work was physically demanding and he developed a lot of health problems as he aged.  The toll his work took on his body was a major cause of his early death, in my opinion.  The comparison of myself and my uncle demonstrate how today’s working lives contribute to longer life spans.

               In conclusion, I strongly believe that there are two main reasons why people today live longer than earlier generations.  Those reasons are advances in science and technology, and gentler working conditions.

### Sample Essay 36

               Money concerns are a major cause of stress in the modern world as people struggle to decide if they should spend their money to satisfy immediate needs or if they should save it for unknown future concerns.  In my opinion, it is a much better idea to save money for the future.  I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, people with a lot of maturity and life experience are able to make better financial decisions than youngsters.  Young people, who have very little worldliness, are prone to spending their money on products  that are mostly useless and which they soon tire of.  Older people, on the other hand, know which purchases will result in long-term happiness and satisfaction.  My own experience is a compelling example of this.  When I was young, I spent a tremendous amount of money on video games  and comic books which I soon tired of.  When I later enrolled in university, I did not have much money left to pay for my tuition, and was forced to take out a significant number of student loans.  Even today, several years after graduation, I regret not saving much money as a teenager.  These days I am much more conservative in my spending, and carefully consider all of my expenses.

               Moreover, life is full of unexpected emergencies which often take a significant financial toll on people.  I recently read a newspaper article which pointed out that seventy-five percent of all bankruptcies in the United States are the result of medical expenses. I am well aware that it is humiliating to lose our financial independence.  For example, last year my uncle suffered a major heart attack which required him to undergo very expensive bypass surgery.  He avoided bankruptcy, but did have to ask his elderly parents for a loan to pay his bills.  They were able to help him because they resisted the urge to spend and saved money through their entire lives.  He felt extremely embarrassed about begging his parents for assistance, especially as he could have avoided the situation by emulating their frugal behavior.

               In conclusion, I believe that it is better to save money for the future rather than spend it right away.  I feel this way because we gain the ability to make financial decisions as we mature, and because saving money helps us avoid the humiliating effects of unexpected financial emergencies.

### The Sample Essay 37

(the question used here came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

              There are a plethora of reasons why students choose to attend university nowadays.  In my opinion, the single most important reason is to achieve financial security in the future. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               First of all, a university degree is required in order to be hired at even the most basic jobs these days.  Individuals in possession of only a high school diploma are employed solely in very low paying and low-skilled fields.  This fact is evident to young people all over the world right now, and I believe it makes them feel quite a lot of urgency regarding their educational qualifications.  This is demonstrated by the fact that in the past, when people with just a high school education could get satisfying jobs, enrollment at universities was much lower than today.  Moreover, my friends and I have noticed that recently it has even become necessary to have a graduate degree in order to begin a career; no longer is it possible to achieve professional success with just an undergraduate degree.  It seems that this trend will not reverse any time soon, and as a result students will continue to consider their financial future when making decisions about what to do when they finish their secondary education.

               Moreover, universities provide wonderful opportunities for networking which help young people find high-paying jobs following their graduation.  The unemployment rate has been quite high for most of the past decade, and it is very difficult for even well-educated people to find employment.  Many experts argue that the people we meet in university play a large role in our long-term professional success.  For example, my brother recently founded a lucrative online business which has provided him with a substantial income.  He co-founded the business in a partnership with two like-minded students whom he met in a freshman computer science class.  My brother often points out that the partnership which he formed with his students was even more valuable than the degree that he was awarded four years later.  In contrast to my brother’s success, many of my friends who chose not to attend university have a limited set of contacts as their social circles have expanded very little since childhood.

               In conclusion, I believe that young people choose to enroll in post-secondary education mostly in order to secure their financial future.  This is because a university degree is a prerequisite for employment in the modern era, and because universities provide students with valuable opportunities to meet new people.

### Example Independent Essay 38

(this question came from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL, 4th Edition](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0071766588/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0071766588&linkCode=as2&tag=tore0e4-20&linkId=RQMXZ7XCZA7AS76W))

               Ever since the invention of film, movies and television have exerted a major influence on the way people behave.  In my opinion, the most noticeable way that such entertainment influences us is by providing role-models. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               First of all, films and television provide society with a lot of negative role-models, which too many people are willing to emulate.  These days, the so-called “anti-hero” is a big part of popular culture.  This is a type of character who acts badly towards other people, ignores the rules of society and is generally misanthropic in nature.  It is quite common for these characters to glorify excessive alcohol consumption and drug use.  For example, an old friend of mine from high school is a huge fan of characters like this.  While he started high school as a straight-A student, he later began to watch a lot of movies which gave him the impression that consuming vast quantities of illegal narcotics was amusing and desirable behavior.  My friend barely finished high school and is now unemployed and has few job prospects

               On the other hand, filmed entertainment also provides people with a lot of positive role-models.  For people who desire to watch it, there is a tremendous amount of wholesome family entertainment being broadcast.  Programs like this showcase functioning, stable families.  They are not just traditional conservative families, but caring, loving people from many different backgrounds and beliefs.  My own family often takes inspiration from the parents and children we see on television in shows of this genre.  We are not always able to live up to the ideals presented to us, but they offer a positive influence on the way we behave every day.

               In conclusion, I am of the opinion that television and movies influence the way we behave by providing role-models.  The type of role-models we might emulate, though, depends on what programs we choose to consume, as both positive and negative messages are being shown all the time.

### Example Essay 39

(question from [the Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

               There is no shortage of things that could be changed in my hometown.  However, if I had to make one major improvement, I would choose to create more parks and green spaces.  I feel this way for two major reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               First of all, parks help people to relax and find serenity, two things which are both in short supply in today’s hectic world.  Here in my hometown we live in a typical “concrete jungle” of high rise apartments, long commutes, traffic jams and crowded sidewalks.  These sorts of problems make the people who live here very anxious.  In many cases, our anxiety gets so extreme that it causes health problems and even death.  I strongly believe that building parks could offer a permanent solution.  My father is a compelling example of what I mean.  For thirty years, he lived and worked in the same city that I do now, but several years ago he was forced into early retirement following a minor heart attack brought about by high blood pressure and workplace stress.  However, after his retirement he moved to a more rural location, surrounded by trees, rivers and wildlife.  In a short period of time, his stress was alleviated and he began to live a happier and healthier life.  I am certain that by building some parks in the city where I live, my neighbors and I could enjoy similar benefits.

               Secondly, the construction of parks will not just benefit our mental health, but will also encourage physical fitness among the population.  Not everyone is able to afford a gym membership, and our crowded sidewalks and streets are not suited for jogging or bicycling.  The construction of parks would provide children with a place to run around and adults with a location to practice simple team sports.  When my father moved to the countryside, it was not only his worries that went away.  He also lost a considerable amount of weight because he made the decision to begin each morning with a brisk walk in the forest.  Even if I wanted to follow his example, doing so would be impossible where I live, as the streets are too crowded for casual walking.  For this reason, I am desperate for some added green space in my hometown.

               In conclusion, if I could change one thing about my hometown I would choose to convert some of our concrete and steel surroundings to beautiful parks and green spaces.  This is because such spaces would benefit both the mental and physical health of me and my neighbors.

### The Example Essay 40

(question taken from the [Official Guide to the TOEFL](http://amzn.to/1FJH2pJ))

               These days there is a lot of debate about how television has destroyed communication between human beings.  However, I strongly believe that the advent of televised entertainment has not had a negative effect on interpersonal communication.  I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

               To begin with, I contend that television actually helps people to have more meaningful conversations.  In the past, people mostly talked about what they had in common.  Often, talk of this sort was quite limited because people lived fairly simple lives.  These days, in contrast, individuals can enjoy spirited discussions about the wide array of current events and world affairs that they hear about on television every day.  For example, I have a regular Friday lunch date with my work colleagues at a local restaurant.  We do talk about office affairs, but most of our conversations are about the wide world around us which we learn about from watching television.  We talk about everything from political developments in distant countries to sports results from entirely different continents.  I strongly believe that without television to supply us with topics, my colleagues and I would talk mainly about banal office gossip.

               Secondly, I am of the opinion that television has mostly replaced solitary activities, rather than replacing interactions with others.  It appears that television has mainly replaced hobbies like reading and exercising.  My own experience is compelling evidence of this.  I grew up in a very rural area without access to stable television signals and as a result, I spent most of my free time reading books and magazines.  When I started university, however, I moved to a big city and suddenly had access to one hundred channels.  Almost immediately, watching shows and movies replaced reading as my primary hobby.  I now read almost no books, but as I indicated in the above paragraph I still have meaningful conversations with friends on a regular basis.

               In conclusion, I disagree with the idea that the advent of television has harmed communication between friends and family.  I feel this way because television supplies us with a variety of topics which we can discuss with our friends, and because television-watching has mostly replaced solitary hobbies  rather than social activities.