



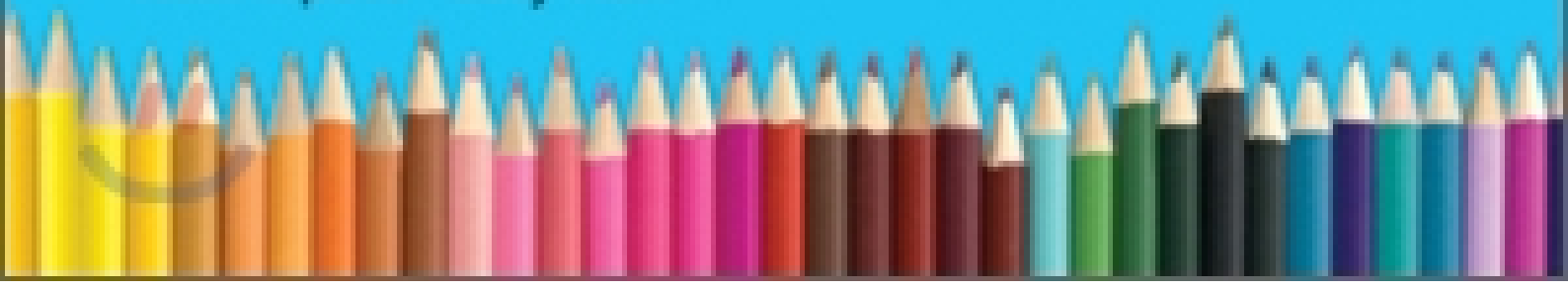
TOEFL® iBT

Essay Writing for Beginners


2

Independent Writing

Kelli Ripatti · Lucy Han



TOEFL® iBT

Essay 
Writing
for Beginners

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2

Independent
Writing

Essay Writing for Beginners

Book 2 Independent Writing

Kelli Ripatti · Lucy Han

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Independent Writing Questions (Prompts)

Type	Topic
Art, History & Culture (Defend an Opinion)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It has been said, “Not everything that is learned is contained in books.” Do you gain knowledge from experience or gain knowledge from books? In your opinion, which source is more important? Why? (Knowledge from experience/Knowledge from books...) 2. If you could travel back in time to meet a famous person from history, what person would you like to meet? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice. (A famous person from history I would like to meet...)
Lifestyle & Education (Agree or Disagree)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Playing games teaches us about life. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. (Playing games teaches us about life...) 4. Some people think that children should begin their formal education at a very early age and should spend most of their time on school studies. Others believe that young children should spend most of their time playing. Compare these two views. Which view do you agree with? Why? (A suitable time for children to start their formal education)
Careers (Explain the Importance)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. We all work or will work at our jobs with many different kinds of people. What characteristic makes people the most successful? Use reasons and specific examples to explain why this characteristic is important. (A characteristic that makes people successful...)
Physical Education (Defend an Opinion)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Many parents like for their children to learn sports at an early age. In your opinion, what is the best sport for young children to learn? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.
Lifestyle & Society (Agree or Disagree)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Reading books and stories is more enjoyable than watching movies. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. 8. Governments should tear down the older parts of big cities to build new apartments and office spaces. Use specific reasons to support your answer. 9. When people move to another country, it is better for them to follow the customs of the new country rather than to follow the customs of their own country. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
Technology in Education (Explain the Importance)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. More and more schools are buying computers for classrooms. Why is it important for schools to teach children through lessons or projects using computers? Use reasons and specific examples to explain why computers are important in today’s schools.

suggestions for Building Writing Skills

1. Practice writing about familiar topics. Try to write within a 30 minute time limit.

TOEFL® iBT Independent Writing Process

- (1) Read the question carefully and understand the task.
- (2) Make a mind map or an outline.
- (3) Study your mind map or outline and decide on a thesis statement.
- (4) Make sure that the topic sentences for the body paragraphs support the thesis statement.
- (5) Make sure that all supporting ideas relate to the topic.
- (6) Add more details if necessary.

2. State an opinion or preference, and then support it with evidence and/or details. Your evidence and details should be given in a coherent way.

3. As practice, ask yourself questions such as:

- Did I complete the task?
- Did I write clearly?
- Did I make any grammatical errors?
- Did I use words correctly?
- Did I organize my ideas clearly and coherently?
- Did I use the time effectively?

4. Study model essays.

5. Study the principles and/or useful language of the essay types.

6. Monitor the progress of your writing practice. One way to do this is to ask for feedback from friends, tutors, or teachers. Teachers can use the TOEFL® iBT Writing Scoring Guide to evaluate your practice.

7. Practice your writing skills on various on-line writing practice.

8. Write cohesively and concisely.

9. Use sentence structures and vocabulary you know to be correct.

10. Check your grammar.

How to use this book

Step 1

This step includes the basic skills as well as the essential key points required in the new TOEFL® iBT Writing. Students will come to understand the necessary techniques by going through them in the form of quizzes.

The process of Independent Essay Writing, and question related to the basic structure of an essay, will be shown as follows.

TOEFL® iBT
Independent Writing Questions (1–14)

Choose the right answer.

1 Choose the word that correctly completes the diagram of the Independent Writing Process.

(1) Conclusion
(2) Outlining/Planning
(3) Brainstorming
(4) Summarizing

2 Choose the essay format that is in the correct order.

(1) Introduction Conclusion Body	(2) Introduction Body Conclusion	(3) Conclusion Introduction Body
--	--	--

Step 1 Getting to know TOEFL® iBT Independent Writing

14 What is the topic sentence in the following paragraph?

Fall is the most beautiful season of the year. Brightly colored leaves decorate the trees and cover the ground. The sky is bright blue and the air is crisp and refreshing. The mountain tops are lightly dusted with the first snowfall.

(1) Fall is the most beautiful season of the year.
(2) Brightly colored leaves decorate the trees and cover the ground.
(3) The sky is bright blue and the air is crisp and refreshing.
(4) The mountain tops are lightly dusted with the first snowfall.

15 The first step in the writing process is _____.

(1) Writing a Draft (2) Editing
(3) Outlining (4) Brainstorming

16 Read the following paragraph and underline the sentences that does not give supporting details for the main idea.

Living in a small town is better than living in a big city because the environment is much cleaner. There are fewer people, cars, and factories that create pollution. People do not litter as much because they take pride in keeping their community clean. _____ per scores. And best of all, you can see the blue sky and _____ every day!

Review

Complete each sentence using a word or phrase from the box.

- The correct order for an essay format is introduction, body, and _____.
- An _____ prompt states an opinion and asks you to explain why you are for or against it.
- An _____ prompt asks you to explain the importance of a development, invention, or phenomenon.
- A _____ prompt states two options and requires you to take a side and defend your position.
- The _____ includes a repetition of the prompt and a thesis statement.
- The _____ includes supporting details, reason, and examples.
- Repeating the question is not a good example of an _____ sentence.
- The _____ gives the main idea of the essay.
- A _____ expresses the main idea of a paragraph.
- _____ give additional information to support the paragraph's main idea.
- _____ and brainstorming are the first steps in the Independent Writing Process.
- Listing, free-writing, asking why-questions, and clustering are all forms of _____.

brainstorming	conclusion	introduction
body	thesis statement	defend an opinion
explain or describe	agree or disagree	topic sentence
supporting details	attention grabber	understanding the question/prompt

Step 2

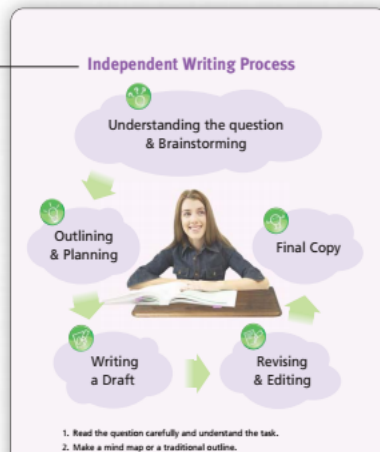
In Step 2, the following will be developed in the same manner through 5 different essay questions.

Firstly, this step will help students understand the given essay question, gather their ideas, and rewrite those ideas into an overall Outline in relation to the Sample Response.

Secondly, through the acquired knowledge, students will be able to organize their ideas into an Idea Web and create their own Outline which expands the ideas.

Independent Writing Process

This picture shows the step-by-step process of Independent Essay Writing in which the following learning course will take form.



Brainstorming

This section helps with deciding "What to write about, and how to write it." By looking at the Sample Idea Web, students will understand how the ideas are arranged, and this will prepare them with pulling out their own ideas later on.

The image shows a sample writing prompt and an idea web. The prompt is titled "Art, History, & Culture" and "Defend an Opinion". The writing question asks: "It has been said 'Not everything that is learned is contained in books.' Do you gain knowledge from experience or gain knowledge from books? In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?" The idea web is a mind map with a central node "Knowledge from experience" and three main branches: "My Position", "Topic Sentence 1", and "Topic Sentence 2". Each branch has sub-nodes with related ideas and phrases.

Writing Question (Prompt)

The topics chosen are the ones that appear frequently in Independent Essay Writing, which are also easily approachable for beginners. Questions are evenly chosen among the fields of Art, History, Culture, Lifestyle & Living Environment, Education, and Career.)

This section helps with building up an effective writing plan considering the type of the given question. One of the things that students have difficulty with is understanding the question itself properly, and this section can be of assistance.

Outline

This section assists the understanding of how the ideas obtained from Sample Brainstorming are arranged into an Outline. Creating an effective Outline plays an important part in the coherent and consistent flow of the essay. Ultimately, the purpose of this section is to help students be able to build a plan for their essay by organizing their Idea Web into an Outline.

C Outline

The ideas within the outline below are based on the Brainstorming Activity. Complete the outline. Use the examples from the box.

Outline

Thesis Statement:
Life experiences _____

Topic Sentence 1:
The knowledge I gain from _____
Example:
When I do an experiment with my own hands, I can see exactly how it works.

Topic Sentence 2:
Most life experiences are _____
Example:
When traveling, it is very interesting to see the people of a country and listen to them speak their language.

Conclusion:
_____ because personal experiences can be easier to understand, more memorable, and life changing.

- rarely forgotten
- can teach me more
- experience is easier to understand
- knowledge gained from experience is more important

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U First Draft

Look at the sample outline and complete the first draft. Use the sentences from the box.

"Knowledge is the key to success." We can get knowledge from our experiences and books. The knowledge gained from each source is important in different ways. However, _____

First, _____, it is more difficult to understand if I just read words and look at pictures in a book. For example, I can read about a science experiment, but I may not understand it. However, _____ When I see or do something with my own eyes and hands, I am more likely to grasp the idea or task. If I make a mistake in the experiment, I can learn how to correct it the next time. Experiences help me understand my failures and accomplishments.

Secondly, _____ For example, I studied about Thailand in school. It was interesting, but after the test, I forgot everything that I learned from the book. Then, my family took a vacation to Thailand. I got to see how different everything was from my country.

_____ I learned a lot about their culture like what they wear, what they eat, and how they live. It was an experience I will never forget. I can stay at home and read about the world, or I can go out and experience it. Both experiences and books are important sources of knowledge. However, _____

- most life experiences are rarely forgotten
- I think knowledge gained from experience is more important than knowledge gained from books because personal experiences can be easier to understand, more memorable, and life changing
- it was very interesting to see the people and listen to them speak their language
- I think life experiences can teach me more than anything I can learn from books
- the knowledge I gain from experience is easier to understand than the knowledge I gain from reading information in a book
- if I perform the experiment with my own hands, I can see exactly how it works

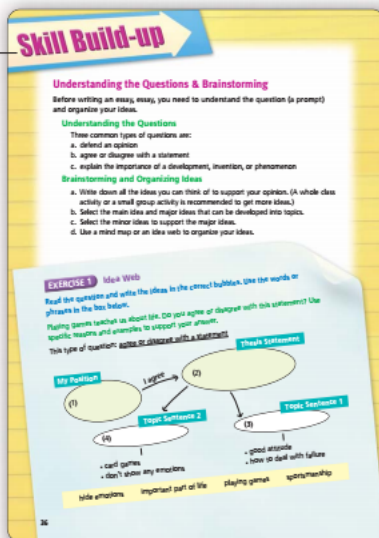
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First Draft

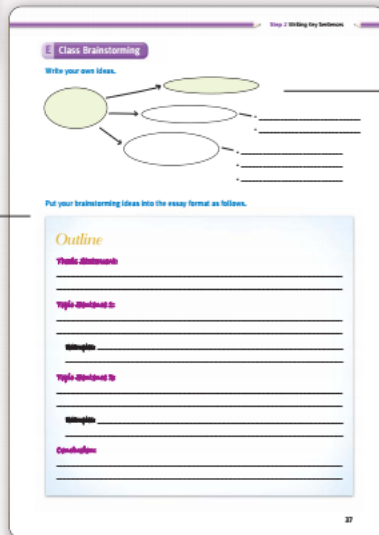
In this section, students can see how the Outline in section C is utilized and developed in an actual essay writing task. They will be asked to complete the whole Sample Response on the basis of the Outline. In other words, students can understand and experience the entire writing process by going through the exercises given in sections from A to D. This process will enable them to complete essay writing tasks on their own.

Skill Build-up

This additional section will assist students in developing their writing skills. The main information is explained and then put into practice exercises. New information and activities are introduced here. For best results, the activities should be attempted once the instructor has explained them, or the students have fully understood them on their own. By repeating this practice, students will be able to find solutions to the problems that they face during an Essay Writing task.



Class Brainstorming



This is the first step for students in writing an essay on their own. The way the whole class brainstorming is carried out is as follows, and this will assist the beginners in terms of thinking of their own ideas and verbalizing them.

1. The instructor will write on the board all the ideas given by students regarding the question.
2. Students will be given a minute or two to think. Then they will be asked to write their thoughts or the ones from the board that match their own onto the Idea Web.

This is the process where students expand their Idea Web by applying the skills learned through Sample Outlining in Activity C. This important stage guides the students to write an essay that flows in a consistent and coherent manner. The students can try writing on their own, or the task can be completed as a whole class activity according to the level of students. For further exercise, they can be asked to redo the task by investing more time into it. (A separate essay writing note must be prepared in advance.)

Step 3

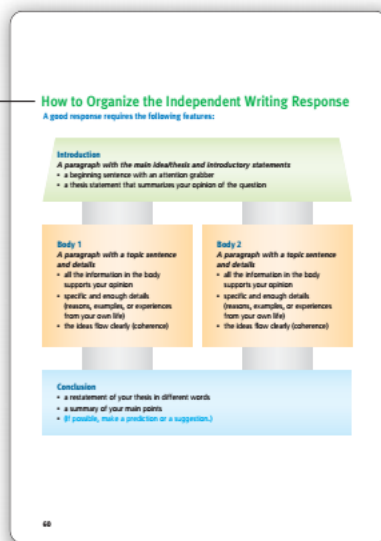
In relation to Step 2, the following will be developed through 5 different essay questions in Step 3.

Firstly, by looking at the completed Sample Outline in Step 2, students will understand how to write the Introduction, Body and Conclusion of an essay.

Secondly, with the acquired knowledge, this step-by-step guide will enable students to write their own Introduction, Body and Conclusion.

How to Organize the Independent Writing Response

This diagram, in the form of a house, shows how the process of Independent Essay Writing as it must unfold, as well as the main elements required in the Introduction, Body, and Conclusion. It assists the students in understanding how different parts of the essay should be written in Step 3.



Skill Build-up

Draft (First Copy)
When you write the first draft, you might write an introductory paragraph first. An introductory paragraph has two parts, a **general statement** and a **thesis statement**.

Introduction

- **General Statement:**
 - introduces the general topic of the essay
 - captures the reader's interest – attention grabber

Three Types of Attention Grabbers

1. an intriguing example
2. a thought-provoking question
3. a puzzling scenario

Thesis Statement:

- states the specific topic
- states your opinion or preference
- is usually the last sentence

EXERCISE 1 Introduction
Read the prompt and the sample responses below. Which one is the best thesis statement?

Build the prompt and the sample responses below: Which one is the best thesis statement?

1. **Question (prompt)**
Some people think that children should begin their formal education at a very early age and should spend most of their time on school studies. Others believe that young children should spend most of their time playing. Compare these two views. Which view do you agree with more?

(1) I believe that it is more important for young children to spend more of their time playing rather than studying.

(2) It is important for children to get a good education. However, it is also important for them to play and have fun.

2. **Question (prompt)**
We all work or will work at our jobs with many different kinds of people. What characteristic makes people the most successful? Use reasons and specific examples to explain why this characteristic is important.

(1) Everyone seems to be successful, but what characteristic makes us successful?

(2) However, I think, ambition is the characteristic that is the most responsible for success.

(3) There are many characteristics, like hard work and motivation, which help us reach our goals and dreams.

Skill Build-up

This additional section will assist students in developing their writing skills. The main information is explained and then put into practice exercises. New information and activities are introduced here. For best results, the activities should be attempted once the instructor has explained them, or the students have fully understood them on their own. By repeating this practice, students will be able to find solutions to the problems that they face during an essay writing task.

The following will be expanded on the basis of the Essay Question introduced in Step 2.

The purpose of this section is to reaffirm the elements required in the Introduction, which act as the roof of the house.

Introduction

The screenshot shows a digital writing interface. At the top, it says 'Step 2 Writing Prompts'. Below that is a 'Writing Question (Prompt) 1' with the text: 'It has been said, "Not everything that is learned is contained in books." Do you gain knowledge from experience or gain knowledge from books? In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?'. Underneath is an 'Introduction' section with a sample paragraph: 'A paragraph with the main idea/thesis and introductory statements' followed by bullet points: '• a beginning sentence with an attention grabber' and '• a thesis statement that summarizes your opinion of the prompt'. Below this is an 'Outline' section with a sample introduction: 'Topic Attention Grabber: Learning is not only from books. It also comes from our own experiences.' followed by two numbered sections: '1. Attention Grabber' with options (1) 'Knowledge is the key to success. We can get knowledge from experience as well as books.' and (2) 'As Aristotle once said, "All men by nature desire knowledge."' and '2. Thesis Statement' with options (1) 'However, I think life experiences can teach me more than anything I can learn from books.' and (2) 'Your own thesis statement:'. The page number '63' is visible at the bottom right.

This shows only the Introduction from the Sample Outline completed in Step 2. Students can refer to how a Sample Introduction is addressed.

The sample paragraph expanded according to the Outline above is shown separately, and then students are asked to write their own Introduction. Students can try writing on their own, before sharing their ideas and expression methods through a whole class activity. Otherwise, it can be done in pairs or a group, then shared with the whole class according to the level of students.

Body

The purpose of this section is to reaffirm the elements required in the Body, which act as the pillars of the house.

The screenshot shows a digital writing interface. At the top, it says 'Step 2 Writing Prompts'. Below that is a 'Writing Question (Prompt) 1' with the text: 'It has been said, "Not everything that is learned is contained in books." Do you gain knowledge from experience or gain knowledge from books? In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?'. Underneath is a 'Body 1' section with a sample paragraph: 'A paragraph with a topic sentence and details' followed by bullet points: '• all the information in the body supports your opinion', '• specific and enough details (examples, examples, or experiences from your own life)', and '• the ideas flow clearly (coherence)'. Below this is an 'Outline' section with a sample body paragraph: 'Topic Sentence: The knowledge I gain from experience is often more valuable.' followed by two numbered sections: '1. Topic Sentence' with options (1) 'First, the knowledge I gain from experience is easier to understand than information I can read in books.' and (2) 'Your own topic sentence:'. Below that is '2. Specific and Enough Details' with options (1) 'For example, I can read about a science experiment, but I may not understand it. However, if I perform the experiment with my own hands, I can see exactly how it works. When I see or do something with my own eyes and hands, I am more likely to grasp the idea or task. If I make a mistake in the experiment, I can learn how to correct it the next time.' and (2) 'Your own details:'. The page number '64' is visible at the bottom right.

This shows only the Body 1 from the Sample Outline completed in Step 2. Students can refer to how a Sample Body is addressed.

The sample paragraph expanded according to the Outline above is shown separately, and then students are asked to write their own Introduction. Students can try writing on their own, before sharing their ideas and expression methods through a whole class activity. Otherwise, it can be done in pairs or a group, then shared with the whole class according to the level of students.

The purpose of this section is to reaffirm the elements required in the Conclusion, which act as the foundation of the house.

This shows only the Conclusion from the Sample Outline completed in Step 2. Students can refer to how a Sample Conclusion is addressed.

The sample paragraph expanded according to the Outline above is shown separately, and then students are asked to write their own Conclusion. Students can try writing on their own, before sharing their ideas and expression methods through a whole class activity. Otherwise, it can be done in pairs or a group, then shared with the whole class according to the level of students.

Conclusion

Conclusion

- a restatement of your thesis in different words
- a summary of your main points
- (if possible, make a prediction or a suggestion.)

Look at the outline from step 2. Based on the outline, write your own conclusion. Sample sentences are provided to help give you ideas.

Outline

Conclusion
 Knowledge gained from experience is more important than knowledge gained from books because personal experiences can be easier to understand, more memorable, and life changing.

1. Restatement of Your Thesis

(1) I can either stay at home and read about the world, or I can go out and experience it. Both experiences and books are important sources of knowledge.

(2) Your own restatement of your thesis: _____

2. Summary of Your Main Points

(1) However, I think knowledge gained from experience is more important than knowledge gained from books because personal experiences can be easier to understand, more memorable, and life changing.

(2) Your own summary of your main points: _____

Final Response

Final Response

Write your own essay.

It has been said, "Not everything that is learned is contained in books." Do you gain knowledge from experience or gain knowledge from books? In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?

Peer Checklist

	Needs to be Revised	Clear	Excellent
Introduction			
Body			
Conclusion			

This checklist will help students improve the quality of their 2nd draft by sharing their 1st with the peers. They can check whether their draft contains the key elements that satisfy a good Introduction/Body/Conclusion.

Students are asked to rewrite the draft that was developed through the activities from A to D, in order to complete a more organized essay draft. This section can be done as an assignment. It is recommended that students complete the 2nd draft after a peer check according to the checklist below.

Sample Responses

Sample Responses

It has been said, "Not everything that is learned is contained in books." Do you gain knowledge from experience or gain knowledge from books? In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?

The following sample response is an example of an essay that would receive a score of 5.

"Knowledge is the key to success." We can get knowledge from our experiences and from books. The knowledge gained from each source is important in different ways. However, I think life experiences can teach me more than anything I can learn from books.

First, the knowledge I gain from experience is easier to understand than information I can read in books. It is more difficult to understand if I just read words and look at pictures in a book. For example, I can read about a science experiment, but I may not understand it. However, if I perform the experiment with my own hands, I can see exactly how it works. When I see or do something with my own eyes and hands, I am more likely to grasp the idea or task. If I make a mistake in the experiment, I can learn how to correct it the next time. Experiences help me understand my failures and accomplishments.

Second, it is easy to remember life experiences. For example, I studied about Thailand in school. It was interesting, but after the test, I forgot everything that I learned from the book. Then, my family took a vacation to Thailand. I got to see how different everything was from my country. It was very interesting to see the people and listen to them speak their language. I learned a lot about their culture like what they wear, what they eat, and how they live. It was an experience I will never forget.

I can stay at home and read about the world, or I can go out and experience it. Both experience and books are important sources of knowledge. However, I think knowledge gained from experience is more important than knowledge gained from books because personal experiences can be easier to understand, more memorable, and life changing.

EXERCISE

Write three reasons why this essay would receive a score of 5. Look at the Independent Writing Rubrics on page 159.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

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The following sample response is an example of an essay that would receive a score of 4.

It is true that not everything I learn is contained in books. However, I like to learn from reading books rather than through experiences. The main reason why I prefer books over experience are because reading is faster and cheaper.

First, reading information in a book is faster than experience. I am a very fast reader who can remember information that I read easily. So it is faster for me to read about something than to go out and do something. Furthermore, the information contained in books would help me understand more about the subject I am interested in learning about.

In addition, it is cheaper to read a book about something than it is to go experience that same thing. I can go to the library and read or check out books on the subject that I am interested in, for free. However, experiences can be expensive. For example, if I want to learn about Africa, I can read a book for free or buy a book at the bookstore. That would cost a lot less than taking a trip to Africa, and I would still learn a lot about the people and places there. It would cost a lot of money to fly on an airplane to Africa.

It is important to keep gaining knowledge as we get older. Reading books and having experiences help us gain knowledge. But for me, reading books is much better because it is quicker and inexpensive.

EXERCISE

Write three ways this essay could be improved to receive a score of 5. Look at the Independent Writing Rubrics on page 159.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

The following sample response is an example of an essay that would receive a score of 3.

Everybody has a different way to learn. Some people learn by reading. Other people learn more by doing. In my opinion, experience is better because I like to do things with my hands and experiences are easier for me to learn from.

To begin with, I like experiences more than books because it is more fun to use my hands and go places. When I have experience, I am able to see, hear, and do things myself. I can pay attention better when I do something or go to different countries. When I read a book, I learn information about other persons experiences or how to do something from other people's experiences. That is not fun for me so I have a hard time intent on what I am reading. I want to learn my own experiences and not reading about other persons experiences.

Secondly, experiences are easier to learn. If I read about how to making photos, I can get puzzled and angry with the words and steps because I can't see how it works. It would be faster and easier for me to learn how to making photos by getting in a photo room and doing. It would help me understand good and I remember more how to do it in the future. I learn more by doing.

Both books and experiences are good for learn. However, experience is what I like to do because it is faster and interesting, and it is easier to learn when I see, hear, and do things for my part.

EXERCISE

Write three ways this essay could be improved to receive a score of 5. Look at the Independent Writing Rubrics on page 159.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

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The following sample response is an example of an essay that would receive a score of 2.

Not all I learn is in book. But I think read books is better than have experience. Two causes for why I'm like books are because I like to reading and is more safer than have a experience.

I like to reading. It is my best like hobby and I can do where on earth. Reading is what I like and I do at house, school, or even on. I like so much reading books. I want be teach something, and I go to book house and reading of it. And I for have experience, I have go somewhere and make calendar for it. I'm not like that make calendar and go to somewhere for have experience. I can read where on earth and when on earth. So I like it so much.

Reading is safer than have experience. I sit in my bedroom and reading of the world. I'm have no danger of get in traffic accident or get a money theory. I am a safe to reading in the house or school. I can do reading of North Korea. But if I go North Korea, I am get hurt on go there or I am there and I am get hurt. Read in house is more safer so I want do that. I think is good I stay in house and read than danger of my life to have experience.

I like to reading and is safe like of attack to learn things. I have a experience is danger to my existence, and I don't want danger of my life to learned something.

EXERCISE

Write three ways this essay could be improved to receive a score of 5. Look at the Independent Writing Rubrics on page 159.

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

Sample responses to the same essay question that would receive scores of 5,4,3,2 are shown. Through a group activity using the TOEFL® iBT Writing Rubrics attached to the appendix, students can figure out how these scores came about. This process will ultimately teach them various structures and forms of expressions in writing an essay.