

TOEFL Writing Sample Paper 03

Task 1: Integrated Writing Task

Time: 20 Minutes — Recommended Length: at least 150-225 words

Task Instructions:

- Read the passage below and take notes on the main points.
- Listen (or read the summary) of the lecture provided in the box.
- Write a response explaining how the lecture's points specifically challenge the arguments made in the reading passage.

Reading Passage: (Read for 3 minutes)

The Lead Poisoning Debate of the Franklin Expedition

In 1845, Sir John Franklin's expedition to the Arctic ended in tragedy. While some suggest lead poisoning from canned food killed the crew, there are strong reasons to doubt this.

First, although the cans were sealed with lead, the dosage was strictly controlled during production. Furthermore, the expedition was only at sea for a short time before the disaster occurred. It is unlikely that enough lead could have leached into the food to cause fatal poisoning in such a brief interval.

Second, if the canned food were toxic, every crew member would have shown signs of poisoning. However, historical records and limited remains suggest only a few sailors had high lead levels. It is improbable that the food would affect only a handful of men while the others remained healthy.

Finally, the ships were equipped with a high-tech water purification system. This system was designed to provide clean water for drinking and cooking, which should have protected the men from consuming any external contaminants.

Listening Lecture: (Read for 2 minutes)

Lecture Highlights (Audio Summary)

The professor argues that lead poisoning was a highly likely cause of death:

- **Contact Time:** While the voyage was short, the cans were stored in a way that kept the food in constant contact with the lead solder. Lead dissolves much faster into acidic foods (like the tomatoes and fruits they carried), making even a short time dangerous.
- **Undetected Cases:** The professor notes that most of the crew's remains were never found or tested. Just because only a few cases were "confirmed" doesn't mean the others were healthy. Lead poisoning causes confusion and physical weakness, which likely affected everyone's ability to survive.
- **Faulty Pipes:** The water purification system mentioned in the reading was actually a major part of the problem. The pipes used in the ship's distillation system were made of lead. This meant the "clean" water was being poisoned before the men even drank it.

Question:

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

Task 2: Academic Discussion Task

Time: 10 Minutes — Recommended Length: at least 100 words

Professor Miller: "Today we are discussing educational philosophy. Some people prefer to learn from individuals who have more experience than they do—such as teachers, supervisors, or mentors. Others prefer learning from their peers, like colleagues and classmates. Which approach do you think is more effective for gaining new skills and knowledge?"

Alice: "I believe learning from experts is the best way. Teachers and mentors have already mastered the subject and can provide a clear roadmap. They can identify your mistakes immediately and prevent you from forming bad habits, which saves a lot of time in the long run."

Mark: "I disagree. Learning from peers is often more effective because you are at the same level. A classmate might explain a difficult concept in a simpler way that a professor might overlook. Also, peer learning is more collaborative and less intimidating, which encourages students to ask more questions and experiment."

Question:

Write a response to the professor's question. In your response, you should express and support your personal opinion, contributing to the discussion in your own words.

Solutions-

Task 1: Integrated Writing

The reading passage argues that lead poisoning was likely not the cause of the Franklin Expedition's failure, citing controlled food production, a lack of widespread symptoms, and a water purification system. The professor, however, disputes each of these points, providing evidence that lead was a pervasive threat to the crew.

First, the reading claims that the short duration of the trip prevented lead from leaching into the food. The professor counters this by explaining that the acidity of certain canned foods, such as tomatoes, causes lead to dissolve much more rapidly. Because the food was in constant contact with the lead solder, it became toxic much faster than the reading suggests.

Second, the passage suggests that the lack of confirmed cases among all crew members proves the food was safe. The professor refutes this by pointing out that most of the crew's remains were never recovered or analyzed. Therefore, the few confirmed cases are not representative of the whole group. She suggests that lead-induced confusion likely affected the entire crew's decision-making and survival.

Finally, while the reading mentions a water purification system as a safeguard, the professor explains that this system was actually a source of lead. The distillation pipes were made of lead, meaning the sailors were consuming contaminated water daily. This reinforces the theory that lead poisoning, from both food and water, was the primary cause of the tragedy.

Task 2: Academic Discussion Task

In my opinion, while both experts and peers have value, learning from individuals with more experience is ultimately more effective for serious skill acquisition. I agree with Alice that mentors provide a "roadmap" that peers simply cannot offer. Without the guidance of an expert, peer groups often struggle with the "blind leading the blind," where students may inadvertently reinforce each other's misunderstandings.

However, I think we can combine both views. While a professor provides the foundational truth and structure, as Mark suggested, discussing that information with peers helps to internalize it. But if I had to choose only one, I would choose the expert. For example, when learning a complex skill like surgery or pilot training, the stakes are too high to rely on a classmate's simplified explanation. You need the precision and corrective feedback that only an experienced supervisor can provide. Therefore, for the sake of accuracy and efficiency, experts are the superior source of knowledge.