

TOEFL Writing Sample Paper 05

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 Case for Computerized Voting Systems

Critics of traditional paper-based voting in the United States argue that the current systems are inefficient and lead to inaccurate counts. To ensure trust in democracy, traditional systems should be replaced by computerized voting.

One major source of inaccuracy is the physical ballot itself. On a large sheet of paper with many names, voters with poor eyesight often mark the wrong candidate. Computerized touch-screens can magnify names, ensuring that every voter records their intent accurately.

Furthermore, traditional systems rely on humans to count ballots one by one. Inevitably, tired officials make mistakes when handling thousands of papers. Computerized systems remove human error entirely, as votes are tabulated automatically and instantaneously.

Finally, some fear technology is too risky for elections. However, we already trust complex computer systems for our most sensitive needs. Every day, billions of dollars are moved through banking transactions and sensitive information is communicated online without error. Voting technology is simply an extension of this existing trust.

Listening Lecture: (Read for 2 minutes)

Lecture Highlights (Audio Summary)

The professor argues that computerized voting may actually be more dangerous than traditional methods:

- **Programmer Error:** Computers are programmed by humans. While a human counter might miscount a few ballots, a single error in a computer program can miscount or delete thousands of votes simultaneously across an entire district.
- **Lack of Audit Trail:** Unlike paper ballots, many computerized systems have no physical record of the vote. If an error is suspected, a recount is essentially impossible because there is no "hard copy" to verify against the digital total.
- **The Trust Gap:** The comparison to banking is flawed. Banking and communication systems are used daily and heavily, allowing them to be constantly tested and improved. Voting systems are used only once every few years, providing insufficient opportunities to develop the same level of reliability.

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: "This week, we are discussing the role of government in early childhood development. Many countries are debating whether the government should provide free preschool education (for children aged 3-5) at no cost to families. Some argue this is an essential public service, while others believe it is a financial burden that should remain a private family responsibility. What are your thoughts on universal free preschool?"

Alice: "I strongly support free preschool. Early education is the foundation for all future learning. By providing it for free, we ensure that children from low-income families have the same starting point as those from wealthy families. It reduces the achievement gap and is a smart long-term investment for society."

Mark: "I'm not so sure. High-quality preschool is extremely expensive to fund through taxes. Many parents might prefer to keep their children at home or use a private center that aligns with their specific values. I think the government should focus its limited budget on improving primary and secondary schools rather than adding a new, costly entitlement."

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 computerized voting systems are superior to traditional paper ballots because they eliminate human error and increase accuracy. However, the professor in the lecture challenges these claims, suggesting that technology introduces new, more significant risks to the electoral process.

First, the reading states that touch-screens help voters avoid mistakes caused by poor eyesight or confusing paper ballots. The professor counters this by focusing on a different type of error: programming flaws. She explains that while a human official might miscount a handful of ballots, a single bug in a computer program could result in the loss or miscalculation of thousands of votes, making the scale of computer error far more damaging.

Second, the passage claims that automated counting is more reliable than human counting. The professor disputes this by pointing out the lack of a physical audit trail. In traditional systems, paper ballots provide a permanent record for recounts. In contrast, many digital systems have no physical record, making it impossible to verify the results if the software is suspected of malfunctioning.

Finally, the reading compares voting technology to the trusted systems used in banking. The professor refutes this analogy by noting that banking systems are used and refined daily. Voting systems, however, are used only once every few years. This lack of frequent use means they cannot be tested or improved with the same rigors as financial systems, rendering the comparison invalid.

Task 2: Academic Discussion Task

In my opinion, providing free, universal preschool is a vital responsibility of a modern government. While I understand Mark's concern regarding the financial burden on taxpayers, the long-term economic benefits far outweigh the initial costs.

As Alice mentioned, early education is crucial for leveling the playing field. Research consistently shows that children who attend preschool are more likely to graduate high school and find stable employment. By funding this at the government level, we treat education as a right rather than a luxury. Furthermore, I would like to add that free preschool supports the economy in another way: it allows parents, especially mothers, to return to the workforce sooner without the crushing weight of childcare costs. While Mark suggests focusing on K-12 education, the reality is that many learning gaps are already established by age five. Therefore, intervening early through a public preschool system is the most efficient way to ensure a productive and equitable society.