

TOEFL Writing Sample Paper 06

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 High-Speed Rail

As global populations grow, the demand for efficient transportation is increasing. Many governments are considering investing in High-Speed Rail (HSR) as a replacement for short-haul flights. Proponents argue that HSR is the superior choice for several reasons.

First, HSR is far more environmentally friendly than air travel. Airplanes emit massive amounts of greenhouse gases directly into the upper atmosphere. In contrast, high-speed trains run on electricity, which can be generated from renewable sources, significantly reducing the carbon footprint of a journey.

Second, HSR is actually faster for medium-distance trips. While a plane flies faster than a train, airports are usually located far outside city centers. When you factor in the time spent commuting to the airport, passing through intense security, and waiting to board, a train that departs from a central city station is much more time-efficient.

Finally, HSR provides a better experience for passengers. Trains offer more legroom, the ability to walk around freely, and constant internet connectivity. This allows travelers to remain productive or relaxed throughout their journey, unlike the cramped and restrictive environment of an airplane cabin.

Listening Lecture: (Read for 2 minutes)

Lecture Highlights (Audio Summary)

The professor argues that the benefits of High-Speed Rail are often overestimated:

- **Construction Impact:** While trains are "clean" while running, building the tracks is environmentally devastating. HSR requires perfectly straight, flat tracks, which means cutting through forests, destroying habitats, and using massive amounts of concrete and steel—both of which have high carbon costs.
- **Total Travel Time:** The time-saving argument only works if the destination is a major city center. Most people do not live or work exactly at the central station. For those in suburban or rural areas, getting to a train station can be just as time-consuming as getting to an airport.
- **Economic Viability:** HSR is incredibly expensive to maintain. Unlike airplanes, which use the "free" sky to travel, trains require the upkeep of thousands of miles of specialized track. This usually results in high ticket prices, making HSR a luxury that most average travelers cannot afford.

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 child-rearing and development. There is a long-standing debate about how much autonomy children should have. Some believe that parents should make all major decisions for their children—such as what they eat, what hobbies they pursue, and how they spend their time—to ensure they stay on the right path. Others argue that children should be allowed to make these decisions themselves from a young age. What is your view on this?"

Alice: "I believe parents should make the most important decisions. Children simply do not have the life experience or the brain development to understand the long-term consequences of their actions. If left to themselves, most children would choose to eat junk food and play video games all day. It is a parent's duty to provide the structure and discipline that leads to a successful future."

Mark: "I have a different perspective. I think allowing children to make their own choices is the best way to build confidence and independence. Even if they make a 'bad' choice, they learn a valuable lesson from the mistake. If parents make every decision, children grow into adults who are indecisive and overly dependent on others for guidance."

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 High-Speed Rail (HSR) is a more efficient, environmentally friendly, and comfortable alternative to air travel. However, the professor in the lecture challenges these points, arguing that the true environmental and economic costs of rail travel make it less ideal than the passage suggests.

First, while the reading claims HSR is better for the environment because it runs on electricity, the professor points out the hidden environmental cost of construction. Building thousands of miles of specialized, flat tracks requires clearing vast areas of land and using materials like concrete and steel, which have a massive carbon footprint. Therefore, the "green" benefits of the train are offset by the damage caused during its creation.

Second, the passage suggests that HSR is faster for medium-distance trips because stations are located in city centers. The professor counters this by noting that this benefit only applies to people living in city centers. For the many people who live in suburban or rural areas, traveling to a central train station is no more convenient or faster than traveling to an airport, thus negating the supposed time advantage.

Finally, the reading highlights the comfort and productivity of train travel. The professor refutes this by focusing on the economic reality. Because HSR infrastructure is so expensive to maintain, ticket prices are often very high. This makes the comfortable experience described in the reading a luxury that is inaccessible to the general public, whereas air travel often remains a more affordable option for the average traveler.

Task 2: Academic Discussion Task

In my opinion, the most effective approach to child development is a gradual increase in autonomy, rather than the two extremes presented by Alice and Mark. While I understand Alice's concern about a lack of discipline, I believe that shielding children from all decisions is ultimately harmful.

I agree with Mark that making choices is essential for building independence. However, I would like to add that these choices should be "age-appropriate." For example, a young child should not decide their own medical care, but they should be allowed to choose their own extracurricular activities or how they manage their allowance. This "supervised freedom" allows them to practice decision-making within a safe environment. If parents follow Alice's rigid model, they risk creating a "rebound effect" where children go to extremes once they finally leave home and gain freedom. By allowing children to make small decisions early on, parents help them develop the critical thinking skills they will need to handle major life choices later. Therefore, the goal should be to guide children toward independence rather than simply deciding for them.