

TOEFL Writing Sample Paper 09

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)

Growth First, Environment Later

During the Industrial Age, many nations operated under the philosophy that economic development must be prioritized above all else. This "growth first" approach suggests that environmental protection is a luxury that only wealthy nations can afford.

First, proponents argue that rapid industrialization creates the jobs and wealth necessary to lift a population out of poverty. Strict environmental regulations are seen as barriers to business that slow down this essential progress. Once a country becomes wealthy, it will then have the resources to address pollution.

Second, history suggests that environmental damage is a temporary byproduct of progress. For example, many cities that were heavily polluted during the 19th century are now clean and green. This implies that technology, funded by economic success, eventually provides the solutions to the very problems growth creates.

Finally, economic growth is essential for national security. A strong economy allows a nation to fund its military and infrastructure. In a competitive global market, pausing growth to protect the environment could leave a nation vulnerable to its rivals.

Listening Lecture: (Read for 2 minutes)

Lecture Highlights (Audio Summary)

The professor argues that the "growth first" mentality is a dangerous fallacy in the modern world:

- **Permanent Damage:** Unlike the 19th century, modern environmental damage is often irreversible. The loss of biodiversity and the contamination of groundwater cannot simply be "fixed" later with money, as extinct species and poisoned aquifers are gone forever.
- **Hidden Economic Costs:** Pollution is not "free." The professor points out that industrial pollution leads to massive healthcare costs due to respiratory diseases and lost labor productivity. These costs often drain the economy more than regulations would have slowed it.
- **The Green Opportunity:** The idea that you must choose between the economy and the environment is outdated. Today, "Green Technology" is one of the fastest-growing sectors. Nations that prioritize the environment early actually gain a competitive advantage in the new global market.

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 looking at consumer behavior. Recent statistics show that people are spending more money than ever before on their pets—on luxury food, specialized healthcare, and even clothing. Some believe this is a positive sign of a compassionate society, while others argue that this money could be put to much better use, such as helping people in need. What is your take on this trend?"

Alice: "I think it's wonderful that people treat their pets like family. Pets provide unconditional love and significant mental health benefits, especially for the elderly or those living alone. If someone earns their money, they should have the right to spend it on the companions that bring them joy without feeling guilty about it."

Mark: "I have to disagree. While I like animals, the amount of money spent on 'designer' dog clothes or gourmet cat treats is hard to justify when there are millions of people without basic food or shelter. I think as a society, we've lost our sense of priority. We should be encouraged to donate a portion of that luxury spending to human-centered charities instead."

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 economic growth should take priority over environmental protection, suggesting that environmental issues can be resolved once a nation becomes wealthy. The professor, however, refutes this "growth first" approach, arguing that it is based on outdated logic and ignores the permanent nature of modern environmental damage.

First, while the reading claims that wealth provides the resources to fix pollution later, the professor points out that many types of modern damage are irreversible. She mentions that species extinction and the contamination of deep groundwater are permanent losses that no amount of future wealth can restore. This contradicts the passage's idea that environmental byproducts are only temporary.

Second, the passage suggests that regulations are a burden on the economy. The professor counters this by highlighting the hidden economic costs of pollution. She explains that poor environmental standards lead to increased healthcare spending and decreased worker productivity due to illness. Therefore, the "savings" from lack of regulation are actually lost through medical expenses and labor inefficiency.

Finally, the professor challenges the idea that environmental focus weakens a nation's global standing. She argues that the transition to green technology is actually a major economic opportunity. Instead of being a barrier to growth, prioritizing the environment allows a nation to lead in the sustainable technology market, providing a different kind of national security and economic advantage than the one described in the reading.

Task 2: Academic Discussion Task

In my opinion, the trend of high spending on pets is a reflection of the deep emotional value they provide in an increasingly isolated world. While I understand Mark's point that there are urgent human needs that require funding, I do not believe that spending on pets and helping people are mutually exclusive.

As Alice mentioned, pets are often essential for mental well-being. For many people, a pet is their primary source of social support, which can reduce the burden on public mental health services. Furthermore, the "pet economy" creates millions of jobs in veterinary science, manufacturing, and retail, which in turn generates tax revenue that governments can use to help the homeless or those in poverty. Instead of criticizing how individuals spend their discretionary income, we should focus on why our social systems are failing to provide for humans. A compassionate society is one that values all life, and caring for a pet often teaches people the empathy necessary to care for their fellow humans as well. Therefore, I see this trend as a positive development rather than a misplaced priority.