

## TOEFL IBT: Writing Task 2 – “Writing for an Academic Discussion”


Question 2 in the Writing Section of the TOEFL is called, “Writing for an Academic Discussion” task.

Here is what the task will look like.

**Instructions:** Your professor is teaching a class on business. Write a post responding to the professor’s question. In your response you should:

- express and support your personal opinion
- make a contribution to the discussion


An effective response will contain at least 100 words.



Dr. Diaz


We are all exposed to a lot of advertising, especially on the internet. And of course businesses spend a lot of money to create and distribute advertising. Before next class, I would like for you to discuss this question:

Is advertising just a way of manipulating people to buy things they do not need, or is it an important source of information that helps people make informed consumer decisions?



Karen

I don’t think most people consider ads to be valuable. I read that in just one year, from 2018 to 2019, the number of computers, tablets and mobile phones using ad blockers increased from 142 million to 615 million.



Brad

People can find out a lot about products from advertising. There’s plenty of evidence that people usually begin the process of making a big purchase by looking at ads and reviews. I have to go to another class right now, but I’m going to post later about an advertisement that gave me a lot of useful information.

Cut Paste Undo Redo Hide Word Count 0

At the top of the page, you will see information about the context, and how many words you should write.

Below the instructions, you will see the task set by your professor. On the right of the screen, you will responses from other students in the class.

This example, provided by Education Testing Services, is from a business class in which the students are discussing advertising. When you respond to the question, you should answer the professor’s question in your own words, while also noting other students’ contributions to the discussion.

Here are a few tips to help you respond to the Writing in an Academic Discussion question.

1. The instructions at the opening of the page will always be the same. You should give your personal opinion and you will need to write at least 100 words.
2. Now look at the question provided by the professor. Summarize it in your own words. Be sure to note if the professor wants you to take only one position, or if you can speak to more than one position.

In this example, the professor wants you to:

**Discuss your opinion about advertising: Is it just manipulation of people or is it useful in some way?**

**Your professor does not limit you to one opinion.**

3. Before you begin writing, also take note of other students' comments. Quickly summarize the main point so that you can refer to it later. My summary is below:

**Karen:** Ads are of no value. Use of ad blockers is growing.

**Brad:** Finds some ads useful. Especially for large purchases.

4. Think about what you want to say. Do you agree or disagree with your classmates' opinions? A rubric can help you structure your answer. You can say if you agree or disagree with each student, and then build upon their ideas to state your own point of view.

**Agree:** I agree/strongly agree with the point raised by \_\_\_\_\_, that (summarize in your own words). Add a similar idea or elaborate with your own ideas.

**Disagree:** Student name made a relevant point about \_\_\_\_\_. But he/she didn't mention, consider.... Explain why you are challenging the idea.

**Conclude:** Overall, I'd say..... state your idea.

**Here is an example answer. It is 164 words.**

I strongly agree with Karen's point that many people do not value ads. Though many may block ads because pop-ups are simply irritating, I believe consumers are also becoming more aware of the insidious ability of ads to make you want things you don't need. A growing number of streaming services and apps let you opt for a higher no-add fee, and consumers are taking the plunge. Despite the ability of ads to manipulate and irritate, Brad's point that ads can be useful is also relevant. Indeed, my mother recently used ads to create a shortlist of yoga apps for me to consider. Her use of ads saved me a lot of time. Overall, I'd say that, though manipulative, ads can be useful when the consumer is in control. It's important to determine which ads you want to see, when you want to see them, and how you will use them. In this way, you can avoid advertiser traps and make better decisions.

**How is my writing scored?**

The Rubric used to score your writing follows.

# TOEFL iBT®

## Writing for an Academic Discussion Rubric

| SCORE | DESCRIPTION  |
|-------|--|
| 5     | <p><b>A fully successful response</b></p> <p>The response is a relevant and very clearly expressed contribution to the online discussion, and it demonstrates consistent facility in the use of language.</p> <p>A typical response displays the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant and well-elaborated explanations, exemplifications, and/or details</li> <li>• Effective use of a variety of syntactic structures and precise, idiomatic word choice</li> <li>• Almost no lexical or grammatical errors other than those expected from a competent writer writing under timed conditions (e.g., common typos or common misspellings or substitutions like there/their)</li> </ul> |
| 4     | <p><b>A generally successful response</b></p> <p>The response is a relevant contribution to the online discussion, and facility in the use of language allows the writer's ideas to be easily understood.</p> <p>A typical response displays the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant and adequately elaborated explanations, exemplifications, and/or details</li> <li>• A variety of syntactic structures and appropriate word choice</li> <li>• Few lexical or grammatical errors</li> </ul>  |
| 3     | <p><b>A partially successful response</b></p> <p>The response is a mostly relevant and mostly understandable contribution to the online discussion, and there is some facility in the use of language.</p> <p>A typical response displays the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaboration in which part of an explanation, example, or detail may be missing, unclear, or irrelevant</li> <li>• Some variety in syntactic structures and a range of vocabulary</li> <li>• Some noticeable lexical and grammatical errors in sentence structure, word form, or use of idiomatic language</li> </ul>   |
| 2     | <p><b>A mostly unsuccessful response</b></p> <p>The response reflects an attempt to contribute to the online discussion, but limitations in the use of language may make ideas hard to follow.</p> <p>A typical response displays the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas that may be poorly elaborated or only partially relevant</li> <li>• A limited range of syntactic structures and vocabulary</li> <li>• An accumulation of errors in sentence structure, word forms, or use</li> </ul>   |
| 1     | <p><b>An unsuccessful response</b></p> <p>The response reflects an ineffective attempt to contribute to the online discussion, and limitations in the use of language may prevent the expression of ideas.</p> <p>A typical response may display the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Words and phrases that indicate an attempt to address the task but with few or no coherent ideas</li> <li>• Severely limited range of syntactic structures and vocabulary</li> <li>• Serious and frequent errors in the use of language</li> <li>• Minimal original language; any coherent language is mostly borrowed from the stimulus</li> </ul>   |
| 0     | <p><b>The response is blank, rejects the topic, is not in English, is entirely copied from the prompt, is entirely unconnected to the prompt, or consists of arbitrary keystrokes.</b></p>   |

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