

Side- By- Side Comparison of ETS's Official 3 Prompts for TOEFL iBT Writing, Academic Discussion

Set #1	Set #2	Set #3
Section 1: Test Instructions		
<p>Your professor is teaching a class on sociology. Write a post responding to the professor's question. In your response you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • express and support your opinion • make a contribution to the discussion <p>An effective response will contain at least 100 words.</p>	<p>Your professor is teaching a class on business. Write a post responding to the professor's question. In your response you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • express and support your personal opinion • make a contribution to the discussion in your own words <p>An effective response will contain at least 100 words.</p>	<p>Your professor is teaching a class on political science. Write a post responding to the professor's question. In your response you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • express and support your opinion • make a contribution to the discussion <p>An effective response will contain at least 100 words.</p>
Section 2: The Professor's Assignment (Context + Question)		
<p>48 words of context / intro</p> <p>Over the next few weeks, we are going to look at lots of different materials about the role of television programs and television watching in people's lives. But first, I want to know what you think about this topic. So here's a question for the class discussion board:</p> <p>23 words – 2 questions</p> <p>What do you think is the most significant effect that watching television has on people? Why do you think television has this effect?</p>	<p>39 words of context / intro</p> <p>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:</p> <p>30 words with 1 very specific YES/NO question</p> <p>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?</p>	<p>56 words of context / intro</p> <p>As I mentioned in class, governments make public policies to describe their responses to various problems that affect a community. Part of this process involves setting and defending priorities about which issues deserve the most attention and resources. For example, governments need to decide whether they should spend more money on education or on environmental protections.</p> <p>19 words – 2 questions</p> <p>If you were a policy maker, which issue would you argue is more important—education or environmental protections? Why?</p>

Section #3: Student #1's Response		
(47 words) I know that one way that television influences people's behavior is that when you are watching television, you are not moving around or exercising. This is especially true for children. When children spend a lot of time watching television, they have a greater tendency to be overweight.	(39 words) 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.	(59 words) We all live on planet Earth, and it is the only planet we have. Therefore, we must take care of it. Clearly, protecting the environment should be the government's priority over education. I think the REAL question is, which approach to protecting the environment—restricting pollution, regulating population, promoting clean energy, or something else—should be the government's priority.
Section #4: Student #2's Response		
(53 words) I think the main effect that television has on people is to broaden their experience. There are so many programs devoted to nature and travel. Think of all the different places in the world you can experience through television! Last night I watched a program about life in Antarctica, and it was fascinating!	(57 words) 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.	(59 words) I disagree with Kelly that the environment is more important than education. Education is actually the best way to protect the environment. Educated people can see how their decisions affect the world around them. Also, with better science and technology education, we can develop solutions to environmental problems. Therefore, I think the government should spend more money on education.
Total Word Count		
171 words total	165 words total	193 words total

Compiled by Jaime Miller in April, 2023
For questions or comments, contact info@JaimeMiller.com


Screenshots of ETS' s 3 Academic Discussion Prompts

Set #1

1 Your professor is teaching a class on sociology. Write a post responding to the professor's question.
In your response you should:

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


An effective response will contain at least 100 words.



Dr. Diaz


2 Over the next few weeks, we are going to look at lots of different materials about the role of television programs and television watching in people's lives. But first, I want to know what you think about this topic. So here's a question for the class discussion board:

What do you think is the most significant effect that watching television has on people? Why do you think television has this effect?




Kelly

3 I know that one way that television influences people's behavior is that when you are watching television, you are not moving around or exercising. This is especially true for children. When children spend a lot of time watching television, they have a greater tendency to be overweight.



Paul

4 I think the main effect that television has on people is to broaden their experience. There are so many programs devoted to nature and travel. Think of all the different places in the world you can experience through television! Last night I watched a program about life in Antarctica, and it was fascinating!



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Set #2

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 in your own words

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 one year, from 2018 to 2019, the number of computers, tablets and 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.

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Set #3

Your professor is teaching a class on political science. Write a post responding to the professor's question.

In your response you should:

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

An effective response will contain at least 100 words. You will have 10 minutes to write it.

Dr. Gupta

As I mentioned in class, governments make public policies to describe their responses to various problems that affect a community. Part of this process involves setting and defending priorities about which issues deserve the most attention and resources. For example, governments need to decide whether they should spend more money on education or on environmental protections. If you were a policy maker, which issue would you argue is more important—education or environmental protections? Why?

Kelly

We all live on planet Earth, and it is the only planet we have. Therefore, we must take care of it. Clearly, protecting the environment should be the government's priority over education. I think the REAL question is, which approach to protecting the environment—restricting pollution, regulating population, promoting clean energy, or something else—should be the government's priority.

Andrew

I disagree with Kelly that that the environment is more important than education. Education is actually the best way to protect the environment. Educated people can see how their decisions affect the world around them. Also, with better science and technology education, we can develop solutions to environmental problems. Therefore, I think the government should spend more money on education.