

Test Success Strategy Guide to the TOEFL iBT



Test Success Strategies Manual

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Welcome to ***Test Success***, New York's premier TOEFL iBT preparation program. Only at *Test Success* will you benefit from expert TOEFL iBT knowledge and experience, personalized attention and feedback, exclusive strategies and the most realistic practice and test-taking simulation available.

Test Success was founded in April of 2007 by Christopher Esquiaqui and Zachary Kelly. Together, they have over 20 years of experience teaching, writing curriculum and training teachers. They have taught in New York, Los Angeles, Bellingham (WA), and abroad in Colombia, Japan and Mexico. Unlike most English teachers who also teach TOEFL, the TOEFL iBT is their specialty. *Test Success* students benefit from this experience by learning valuable test-taking strategies only available here.

The *Test Success* program was designed with the vision of offering very small class sizes to give personalized feedback and to offer complete instruction and practice with personal computer work stations for all students. In doing so, *Test Success* offers intensive practice that simulates the actual test-taking environment. And because of the small class sizes each student receives weekly speaking and writing feedback to improve more quickly. All of these advantages add up to an intensive TOEFL iBT program that will increase your score on test day!

Thank you for choosing ***Test Success*** and we look forward to helping you achieve your educational goals.

Sincerely,

Christopher Esquiaqui
Zachary Kelly
Directors
Test Success

Guide to the Manual

The Test Success Strategies Manual has been designed to be used in conjunction with the Test Success intensive TOEFL iBT preparation program. Inside you will find strategies for all four sections of the test: reading, listening, speaking and writing. You will also find information on ways to improve general skills necessary for the test and beyond, when you become a university student.

Although the strategies in this manual can be applied to any TOEFL iBT practice materials, we recommend the following:

The ETS Official Guide to the TOEFL iBT

Barron's TOEFL iBT

Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test

General Skills

Success on the TOEFL iBT requires: knowledge of the test itself, effective strategies and plenty of practice on test items. Being knowledgeable about the test will ensure that you have no surprises on test day. The application of effective strategies will allow you to answer the questions quickly and accurately. The more practice you have applying these strategies, the better. It will help you to recognize and improve your weak points and guarantee that you are confident when you take the test.

In addition to these requirements, there are four general skills that will greatly improve your success on test day and beyond- in the university classroom. These skills are: academic vocabulary building, paraphrasing, note taking, and typing.

It is crucial that you begin improving your **academic vocabulary** from day one. The vocabulary used on the TOEFL iBT is often more specialized than vocabulary used in everyday speech.

A great place to begin is the “Academic Vocabulary List”. This is a list of the highest frequency words in Academic English.

<http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/download/awlsublists.rtf>

After establishing a strong foundation of general vocabulary, begin organizing vocabulary words by topic. For example, politics and economics, art history, astronomy, etc. A good place to study topical vocabulary lists is <http://www.vocabulary.com/alphalary.html>

In order to truly be able to use your advanced vocabulary, you must focus on *active* learning and constant *reviewing*. When you encounter a new word, looking it up or asking its definition should only be your first step. After learning the definition, be sure to write this information in a vocabulary notebook. This should not be your class notebook but a separate book only for new vocabulary items you encounter. This notebook should be constantly reviewed and you must actively use these new words in both speaking and writing.

The ability to **paraphrase** efficiently will directly improve your score on all four sections of the test. It will improve your reading speed and comprehension and help you on numerous reading section items, most obviously the paraphrase questions. Paraphrasing will also improve your listening score because it

is the foundation of effective note taking. The integrated speaking and writing sections of the test require you to paraphrase in order to convey your ideas effectively while avoiding repetition. So what do we mean when we say paraphrasing? Most simply, paraphrasing is expressing stated information in your own words. When you paraphrase, you should focus on *simplifying* the original language. Use *synonyms* and different *parts of speech* to avoid repetition. Finally, change the sentence *word order*.

One of the most significant differences between the TOEFL iBT and previous versions of the test (paper-based and computer-based TOEFLs) is that for the first time, test takers can **take notes** on all four sections of the test. This is a welcome change because it better simulates what you will be doing after you earn your score- being a university student. As an excellent student, you will undoubtedly be taking lecture notes in all of your classes so it makes sense that you are allowed to take notes on the TOEFL iBT test.

Improving your note taking ability will make you a better test-taker and a better student. When you practice, you should focus on catching key words or '*triggers*' that remind you of main points from the listening. It is important that you *paraphrase* to save time. Familiarize yourself with some common note taking *abbreviations*- or make up your own. Here are some suggestions:

<http://www.english-zone.com/study/symbols.html>

The most important aspect of note taking is *consistency*; get in the habit of always using the same note taking structure and abbreviations so that you can interpret your notes efficiently.

One great way to get note taking practice is to download podcasts to your computer. A recommended site is www.npr.org. Several universities also have podcasts available.

Some students worry about the writing section for one simple reason; they are slow at **typing**. For this, we need to be very direct; if you are slow or lack confidence when typing, you will not achieve a high score on the writing section of the test. This is a very bad reason to get a score below your potential. If you are weak at typing, start improving this skill today. Not only will you earn a higher score on the TOEFL test, you will need this skill in university and beyond.

There are two steps to increasing your typing skills: passive and active.

Passive skill building means increasing your coordination and muscle memory. Your fingers need to develop dexterity and familiarity with the keyboard. To increase this skill, simply practice typing out reading passages. The material is not important. You can pick up any book, magazine or newspaper. Read the information and copy it working to improve both your speed and accuracy.

After improving your coordination, it is time to begin the active process: thinking and typing simultaneously. This may be challenging at first, but in order to succeed on the TOEFL, and at university, you must build confidence in your ability to type your ideas efficiently. Emailing, posting on a blog (in English of course!) and keeping a computer-based diary are all great fun ways to practice. You may also consider summarizing short newspaper articles or writing movie reviews. When you are ready to focus on TOEFL material, download the list of TOEFL writing topics at www.ets.org/Media/Tests/TOEFL/pdf/989563wt.pdf and begin typing responses to the prompts.

Test Overview

Here is a look at the TOEFL iBT test. You should also go to the official TOEFL web site at www.ets.org for more detailed information about the test as well as authentic sample questions. This is also where you must go to register for the test. Please note that testing centers fill up quickly so register early, check back often and allow plenty of time to receive your score (15 working days; or three weeks).

Internet-based Test Content

The TOEFL® Internet-based test emphasizes integrated skills and measures all four language skills, including speaking. The content on the test is authentic, and the language is consistent with that used in everyday, real academic settings.

The test has four sections

- **Reading** measures the ability to understand academic reading matter.
- **Listening** measures the ability to understand English as it is used in colleges and universities.
- **Speaking** measures the ability to speak English.
- **Writing** measures the ability to write in a way that is appropriate for college and university course work.

Section	Time Limit	No. of Questions
Reading	60-100 minutes	3 or 5 passages, 36-70 questions
Listening	60-90 minutes	2 or 3 conversations + 4 or 6 lectures, 34-51 questions
Break	10 minutes	
Speaking	20 minutes	6 tasks
Writing	50 minutes	2 tasks

Test content is based on a "corpus," or database, of spoken and written language that currently contains more than 2.7 million words, collected from educational institutions throughout the United States.

The spoken language in the database was collected from

- lectures and interactive classes
- labs
- office hours
- study groups
- everyday service interactions (for example, at the bookstore or registrar's office)

The written language was collected from sources, such as textbooks and course materials. Listening and reading texts in the test conform to the characteristics of the language in the database.

Reading Section

The first section of the TOEFL iBT is reading. There are three or five reading passages on the test¹. Each passage is followed by 12-14 questions. All questions are worth one point except the final question which is worth two to four points. You will have 20 minutes to read each passage and answer the accompanying questions. You will be tested on your ability to understand main ideas and essay organization, scan for specific details, understand the author's purpose, directly or implied, as well as on your vocabulary knowledge.

When you begin the reading section, you will see the passage on the right side of the computer screen. In order to begin answering the questions, you must "scroll down" to the bottom of the passage. After scrolling down, press "next" and the first question will appear. For all but the final question, you can view the passage and the questions simultaneously. On the reading section of the test, it is possible to skip questions and return to them later. At the top of the screen there are function icons marked "review" and "help". "Review" is a very efficient way to check which questions you have already answered and which ones you have not yet answered. "Help" looks nice, but it is a waste of time. It only presents detailed directions on how to answer the questions. You already know how to answer the questions from your course at Test Success! There is also a timer clock so you can monitor your time.

General Strategy Overview

1. Read the title
2. Read 1-L
3. Skip to the final question
4. Answer questions
 - a. From easy to difficult
 - b. In sequential order (1,2,3,etc.)

All passages are titled. Take a couple seconds to think about what the title means. This will help you read more actively and focus your vocabulary set.

Don't waste time reading the entire passage, read 1-L instead. 1-L means 'first' and 'last'. The most important points in academic essays, the main ideas, are located in the first and last sentences of each paragraph. The main idea of the essay is called the *thesis statement*. This will be in the first or last sentence of the first paragraph, the *introduction*.

Each *body* paragraph will begin with a *topic sentence* which states the main idea of that paragraph. The final paragraph, the *conclusion*, will *restate the thesis*. Therefore, you should begin by reading the first and last sentence of the introduction, the first sentence of each body paragraph and the first and last sentence of the conclusion. This is a very efficient way to understand the topic, the main points and the organization of the essay. Reading the whole essay before answering the questions is a waste of time and often very confusing for test takers. Remember that a good test taker will be able to answer all of the reading questions quickly and accurately *without* reading the entire passage!

¹ Did you know that every test includes "dummy questions" on the reading or listening section? These are questions that ETS is trying out for future tests. They are unscored. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know which questions are real and which are "dummies" so you should answer all questions to the best of your ability. On the reading section, you will always be scored on three passages. This means if you have five passages, two of them are unscored "dummies". If you have only three passages, all of them are scored and you will have "dummies" in the listening section of the test.

The final question for each reading passage will always be a ‘drag and drop’ question. This is a table that must be completed by ‘dragging’ sentences or phrases and ‘dropping’ them in the correct sections of a table. There are two types of ‘drag and drop’ questions: ‘summary’ and ‘fill in the table’. Summary questions focus on the main ideas of the passage. Fill in the table questions focus on details. “Drag and drop” questions are worth multiple points (two to four) and partial credit is possible. We recommend that you complete this question first so that you don’t run out of time and give away two to four points. If the ‘drag and drop’ question is a summary table, it will be especially easy to complete after reading 1-L because the main ideas of the passage will be fresh in your mind. So, skip to the final question, complete the table and remember you can always come back and double-check at the end, but never leave the final question unanswered, you will only be throwing away points!

There are two basic strategies for answering the reading questions. We will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The first strategy is to answer the easy questions first and then come back and answer more difficult questions later. Which are the easy questions? With practice you will be able to answer this question for yourself but for most test takers, ‘vocabulary’ and ‘pronoun’ questions are the easiest whereas ‘inference’ and ‘author’s purpose’ questions are more difficult. The advantage to this strategy is that since all questions are worth the same point value, you can focus your energy on picking up all of the easy points and not waste too much time on a very difficult question that is still only worth one point. If you like this strategy, remember that the ‘review’ function allows you to quickly check which questions you have and have not yet answered. The disadvantage to this strategy is that it does use some extra time to read a question, decide whether or not to answer it, and skip back and forth between questions. Also, we have heard reports that the computers used at some test centers are slow causing a delay in loading between questions, using even more time.

The second strategy is to answer questions in sequential order. This simply means question one, question two, question three, etc. The first advantage to this strategy is it is straightforward and efficient. A more significant advantage is that the reading questions tend to follow the same order as the passage. For example, questions one, two and three are related to paragraph one, questions four and five are related to paragraph two, questions six and seven are related to paragraph three and so on. This means you can focus your time on answering all relevant questions to a paragraph and then move forward.

The disadvantage to this strategy is that test takers may spend too much time focusing on a difficult question when they could be using their time to first pick up the easy points.

At Test Success, we feel a ‘hybrid strategy’ is the best. That means a mixture of the two strategies presented above. Basically, you will answer questions in sequential order but when you recognize a question is especially tricky or time-consuming, skip it and return to it later using the ‘review’ function to efficiently check which questions you have not yet answered.

Tip: You can also record answered/unanswered questions on scratch paper.

Reading Question Types and Strategies

1. Vocabulary
2. Pronoun

Step one: Read the original sentence (and previous sentence if necessary) for context

Step two: Predict the meaning of the highlighted word before checking answer choices

Step three: Quickly eliminate obviously wrong answer choices

Step four: Answer and insert to check

3. Detail
4. Negative

Step one: Scan for key words in question and answer choices

Step two: Scan the appropriate section(s) of the passage

Step three: Be careful of answer choices that are contradictory or partially true

Step four: Eliminate obviously wrong answer choices

Step four: Answer and check

5. Inference

Step one: Scan for key words in question and answer choices

Step two: Be careful of answer choices that are contradictory or partially true

Step three: Eliminate obviously wrong answer choices

Step four: Answer and check

6. Author's Purpose

Step one: Scan for key words in question and answer choices

Step two: Read the original sentence (and previous sentence if necessary) for context

Step three: Quickly eliminate obviously wrong answer choices

Step Four: Answer and check

7. Paraphrase

Step one: Read the highlighted sentence

Step two: Paraphrase in your words

Step three: Check answer choices. Be careful of answer choices that change the relationship (time order, cause/effect)

Step four: Quickly eliminate obviously wrong answer choices

Step five: Answer and check

8. Insertion

Step one: Read the sentence to be inserted

Step two: Ask yourself: is this sentence a topic sentence or supporting detail?

Topic sentences should be placed at the beginning of a paragraph.

Supporting details will not be at the beginning of a paragraph. When you look at supporting details, keep in mind that in a paragraph they will be organized from general to specific. So, general sentences should be placed near the beginning of a paragraph.

Step three: Locate the key words in the sentence to be inserted (pronouns, transitionals, articles)

Step four: Insert and check for logic and cohesion

9. Drag and Drop Summary

Step one: Read the introductory sentence first

Step two: Determine the controlling ideas of the introductory sentence

Step three: Read the answer choices and eliminate the obviously wrong ones and choose the ones that most closely relate to the introductory sentence

10. Drag and Drop Fill in the Table

Step one: Read the categories first

Step two: Read the answer choices and choose the ones that are obviously correct and eliminate the ones that are obviously wrong

Step three: For the answer choices that are not so obvious, locate the key words and go back to the passage and read the sentences which contains the key words

Step four: Answer and check

Listening Section

There are two types of listening passages: conversations and lectures. You will be able to take notes throughout the test. The notes that you take will not be graded and will be destroyed after you leave the test center. There is a time limit for each set of questions. Ten minutes for one conversation and two lectures. The time does not run while you are listening to the conversations and lectures, only when you are answering the questions. Manage your time wisely.

There are two or three **conversations** per test. The conversations are from two to four minutes long, involve two people (usually a man and a woman) and can be about an academic topic or a campus situation. Conversations are between a student and a professor or a student and some other campus employee (registrar, librarian, security officer, resident advisor, etc.)

You will answer five questions for every conversation.

You should organize your notes by folding your paper in half. Use one half of the paper to focus on the student and the other half of the paper to focus on the authority figure (professor or campus employee). The first question you receive will most likely be about the purpose of the conversation.

For example;

“Why did the student go and see his professor?”

In order to answer this question effectively, refer to your notes. The answer to the question above should be located near the top of your notes. Questions are asked in the order in which they appear in the listening passage. So, the answer for the first question should be located at the beginning of your notes.

The conversation will have some type of instruction from the authority figure. Make sure to grasp the gist of the conversation and listen carefully for informal suggestions.

For example;

“Why don’t you try...?”

“How about going to...?”

“You could try...?”

Do not try to write down everything you hear. It will be impossible for you to do so. Write down words, phrases or symbols that will help to activate your memory, in other words, write **triggers**. Numbers and names are usually helpful in remembering information from the listening.

When you are answering a question, make sure to look over your notes and eliminate the obviously wrong answer choices. Doing this will greatly increase the possibility of getting the correct answer.

The last question is usually an inference question asking you to predict what the person will likely do next. For this type of question, focus on the last part of your notes. Remember that the questions are asked in order in which they appear in the conversation.

The **lectures** are from three to five and a half minutes long. There will be four or six lectures per test and each lecture is followed by six questions. The lectures are always based on academic material. You will listen to part of a lecture by a university professor. The professor can be speaking to the class without any interruptions or there can be interaction between the professor and several of his/her students. The first question will be a main idea question like this:

“What is the lecture mainly about?”

“What is the class mainly discussing?”

The answer to these types of questions can be found towards the beginning of the lecture.

The other questions will be detail or inference questions that can be answered by using information from the lecture. Do not worry if the topic of the lecture deals with something you know nothing about. All the information you need in order to answer the questions can be found in the lecture itself. You do not need background information about the subject matter in order to be successful on the TOEFL iBT.

Speaking Section

There are six tasks in the Speaking Section of the TOEFL iBT: two independent tasks and four integrated tasks. You are assessed on your topic development, language use and delivery.

Topic development includes organization and appropriate use of details to provide support. Language use includes accurate vocabulary and grammar. Delivery encompasses pronunciation, intonation, volume, tone and pacing.

Speaking Tasks 1 and 2:

The two independent tasks each consist of a question about a familiar topic.

**Speaking Task #1 will ask you about a personal experience and
Speaking Task #2 will ask you about a preference.**

The ideas in your responses come from your personal knowledge and experience rather than from material that is given to you.

Make sure you understand the question and answer it exactly as it is asked.

What is the most important animal in your country? Give specific details and examples to support your answer.

You will receive 15 seconds to prepare your response and 45 seconds to speak.

Clearly organize your response.

Start with a clear thesis statement that directly answers the question. Include two controlling ideas in the thesis statement. The controlling ideas organize your response, making it easy for the graders to follow. They also provide the reasons and details necessary to support your answer.

The most important animal in my country is the horse because people in my country use horses for transportation and horses are a powerful symbol.

Understanding exactly what the question is asking and having clear organization are the most important aspects in achieving a high score.

Use language you are comfortable with.

A simple, clear, well-organized response with accurate grammar and use of vocabulary will receive a strong score.

Smoothly transition to your controlling ideas.

Horses have been used for many centuries in my country as the most reliable way to get from one point to

another.

Use synonyms or paraphrase whenever possible.

Note in the examples the use of paraphrasing: *transportation = get from one point to another.*

Continue with at least one supporting detail.

The people who live in mountainous regions of my country need horses on a daily basis in order to navigate the difficult terrain. Motorized vehicles cannot get around in these areas, so the people turn to horses.

You really don't need more than one supporting detail. The graders understand that your time is limited and you probably won't be able to express all of your ideas in 45 seconds.

Maintain a consistent volume and speed.

Speak clearly, don't rush. Clear pronunciation is important; you must be understood but you won't lose points for having an accent. If you make a mistake in pronunciation or grammar, you can correct yourself and you won't be penalized for it.

Manage your time wisely.

There shouldn't be any long pauses. You might lose points for finishing too early. You will not lose points for getting cut off as long as you have answered the question.

One last tip:

The graders are not going to check the accuracy of your statements. They are only interested in how you organize and deliver your response. So, you can say something that is not actually true.

In my response I said:

The beaches of Thailand are the most beautiful place I've ever been.

In reality, I've never been to Thailand.

Your Speaking should be organized the following way:

Speaking Option One

Thesis statement: controlling idea one and controlling idea two

Topic sentence one: controlling idea one

Supporting detail

Topic sentence two: controlling idea two

Supporting detail

Restatement of the thesis statement: controlling idea one and controlling idea two

Final opinion, suggestion or prediction.

Speaking Option Two

Topic sentence one: controlling idea one

Supporting detail

Topic sentence two: controlling idea two

Supporting detail

Speaking Task 3:

In Speaking Task 3 you will read a campus announcement in 45 seconds. You should NOT take notes while reading.

Then, you will listen to a 1 to 2 minute conversation between two people who are reacting to the announcement. One person will express a strong opinion about the announcement. You SHOULD take notes for this section. The task will require you to focus on the information in the listening.

After the listening, you'll have a task that will ask you to state one person's opinion and what the reasons are for holding that opinion.

You will receive 30 seconds to prepare your response.

You will then have 60 seconds for your speaking response.

When you answer, you should focus on only one person. For example:

The woman doesn't like the new policy on campus because she says that it will be unfair to some students who don't have enough time to...

Make sure to answer the question clearly and thoroughly by focusing on the information found in the listening. You will *not* have to refer back to the reading passage.

If you have trouble starting the speaking, you can try this template:

The man/woman states/says/thinks that _____ (person's opinion) _____
because _____ (reason 1) _____, _____ (reason 2) _____ and _____ (reason 3) _____.

Speaking Task 4:

In Speaking Task 4, you will first have 45 seconds to read a passage about an academic topic and you will not be able to see it again. Take notes (if you wish to do so). Then, you will listen to a 1 to 2 minute lecture about the same topic. You SHOULD take notes on the listening.

The reading always defines an academic concept or term broadly (in general terms). The listening expands on the definition with a specific illustration.

You will be given 30 seconds to prepare your response and 60 seconds to speak. You may choose to organize your response in the following way:

Block Format

Describe the **Reading**
by giving the main
idea.

Describe the
Listening in detail.

Main Idea + Specific
points

The task will require you to focus more on the listening than on the reading. Make sure to answer the question first. It is the most important part of the task. To begin your speaking, you may consider one of the following templates:

1. The reading introduces the idea that main idea of the reading . The listening continues the topic by ...
 - a) giving examples of the information found in the reading passage
 - b) giving specific detail in support of the arguments found in the reading
 - c) explaining the information found in the reading with more detail.

2. The reading states that main idea of the reading . The listening says that main idea of the listening . Therefore the listening continues the ideas found in the reading by...
 - d) Giving specific examples.
 - e) explaining the information found in the reading with more specific detail.

3. In the reading we learn that s+v (main idea of the reading). In the listening we hear from the professor that s+v (main idea of the listening). Therefore, the listening and reading show **similar** ideas.

Speaking Task 5:

In this integrated speaking task you will first listen to a conversation between two people who are talking about a problem and some possible solutions. When you take notes, you should focus on the problem and the possible solutions to that problem. You will then see a question on the computer screen asking you to summarize the problem and the possible solutions and then to state your own preference for one of the possible solutions found in the listening.

You will receive 20 seconds to prepare your answer and then 60 seconds to speak.

You should organize your speaking response the following way:

1. Summarize the problem. (What is the problem?)
2. Describe the possible solutions. (What are the possible solutions to the problem?)
3. State your opinion. (What would you do?)
4. Support your opinion. (Why would you do that?)

If you have completed all four steps and you find that you have more time to fill, then you should expand on your supporting detail (Step 4), or add your own possible solution to the problem. If you add your own solution to the problem expressed in the listening, make sure to have first completed at least the first three steps.

Speaking Task 6:

In the sixth and final speaking task, you will first listen to part of a lecture on an academic topic. The lecturer will speak about an academic concept and give two different definitions of that concept. The lecture lasts for about 2 minutes, and you **SHOULD** be taking notes the entire time.

After the lecture, you will be asked to summarize the points made in the lecture. Each lecture is unique. However, **ALL** lectures are about an academic topic and are structured in the same way as a TOEFL essay: with an introduction, main points and supporting details/examples. Keeping this in mind will help you to follow what is being said as well as help guide you in your note-taking.

You will have 20 seconds to prepare your response, at which time you should be reviewing your notes, and getting ready for what you will say. Then, you will have 60 seconds in which to give your answer.

Remember that this task is asking you to SUMMARIZE, so don't get lost in details! Only a few can and should be given in the time allotted.

As usual, having an organized response is very important. Try following the template below if you feel unsure about what to say and how to say it:

“The professor talks about _____ . Firstly, he/she states that _____ . Secondly, he/she goes on to describe/mention/define _____ . Finally, he/she says _____ .”

Writing Section

On the TOEFL there are two writing tasks which take approximately 50 minutes to complete. The first of these tasks is the **integrated writing** task.

First, you will see a reading passage about an academic subject. You will have 3 minutes to read the 300-word passage. The passage will introduce an academic subject and have three specific points. You should try taking notes on the main idea and the three specific points mentioned in the reading. The passage will disappear after three minutes, but don't worry; you will see it again when you are doing the writing. Then, you will listen to a 2 minute segment of a lecture about the same topic. The lecture will either support or contrast the reading. According to ETS, the listening contradicts the reading about 80% of the time. The listening will have three specific points just like the reading. You should take notes on the main idea and the three specific points mentioned in the lecture.

So, after you have finished both the reading and listening passages your notes should look like this:

Reading
Main Idea
Specific point 1
Specific point 2
Specific point 3

Listening
Main Idea
Specific point 1
Specific point 2
Specific point 3

After the listening you will see a prompt which asks you to state the relationship between the reading passage and the lecture.

Some example prompts:

- *Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they cast doubt on specific points made in the reading passage.*
- *Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to specifically explain how they strengthen specific points made in the reading passage.*

You will not have any preparation time for this task. You will have 20 minutes to write your response to the question.

There are many ways in which you can organize your response. Here are two examples:

Explain how the **Reading** and **Listening** are related.

Describe the **Reading** in detail.

Describe the **Listening** in detail

Explain how the **Reading** and **Listening** are related.

One point from the reading passage
vs.
One point from the listening passage

One point from the reading passage
vs.
One point from the listening passage

One point from the reading passage
vs.
One point from the listening passage

The most important thing to do in this task is to demonstrate that you understood both the reading and listening passages. You could start your responses in the following ways:

For contrasting ideas:

*In the reading we learn that s+v (main idea of the reading). In the listening we hear from the professor that s+v (main idea of the listening). Therefore, the listening and reading show **opposite** ideas.*

For parallel ideas:

*In the reading we learn that s+v (main idea of the reading). In the listening we hear from the professor that s+v (main idea of the listening). Therefore, the listening and reading show **similar** ideas.*

Stating the relationship first gives you a strong advantage because you demonstrate to the rater that you understood both the reading and listening texts very well.

After you have described the relationship, focus on your notes to write about the specific details found in both the reading and listening passages with an emphasis on the listening.

Independent writing

This is the final task on the test. You will write an essay to a prompt which will ask you to describe something you are familiar with or to state your preference about something.

Here are some sample prompts:

1. People attend school for many different reasons (for example, expanded knowledge, societal awareness, and enhanced interpersonal relationships). Why do you think people decide to go to school? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Coaches are the best teachers. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
3. Nowadays, with the invention of the microwave and with the popularity of fast food restaurants, food has become easier to prepare than ever. Do you think microwave ovens and fast food restaurants are beneficial to society? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
4. It has been said, "Not all learning takes place in the classroom." Compare and contrast knowledge gained from personal experience with knowledge gained from classroom instruction. In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?

For a complete list of writing topics, visit www.ets.org/Media/Tests/TOEFL/pdf/989563wt.pdf.

You will have 30 minutes to write 300 or more words. We recommend that you organize your essay into four paragraphs: One introduction, two body paragraphs and a final conclusion.

In order to manage your time more efficiently and improve your score by having perfect organization, we recommend a very specific writing process for completing the independent writing.

Step One: Essay Skeleton (Thesis, Topic Sentence #1, Topic Sentence #2, Restatement of Thesis)

10 min.

Step Two: Support

10 min.

Step Three: Introduction/ Conclusion

5 min.

Step Four: Self Check

5 min.

When responding to the prompt, be sure to directly answer the question and think of two distinct reasons you have for holding that opinion (these are called your controlling ideas). This is your thesis statement. It contains the most important information in the essay- the topic, your position, and two controlling ideas. This should be the last sentence of paragraph one.

Next, write topic sentence number one. This will be the first sentence of paragraph two. The idea must be the same as controlling idea number one.

Next, write topic sentence number two. This will be the first sentence of paragraph three. The idea must be the same as controlling idea number two.

Finally, write the restatement of thesis. This will be the first sentence of the final paragraph. Don't forget to use paraphrasing, synonyms, different parts of speech and different word order to avoid repetition.

You should finish the essay skeleton in ten minutes.

Next, return to paragraph number two and provide support for this topic sentence. Use personal examples or create a statistic. It's important that your information is specific and relevant to the idea introduced in the topic.

Then, return to paragraph number three and provide specific support for this topic sentence. Follow the same guidelines as above. Your goal should be to write three to five supporting sentences per body paragraph. You should finish providing support in ten minutes.

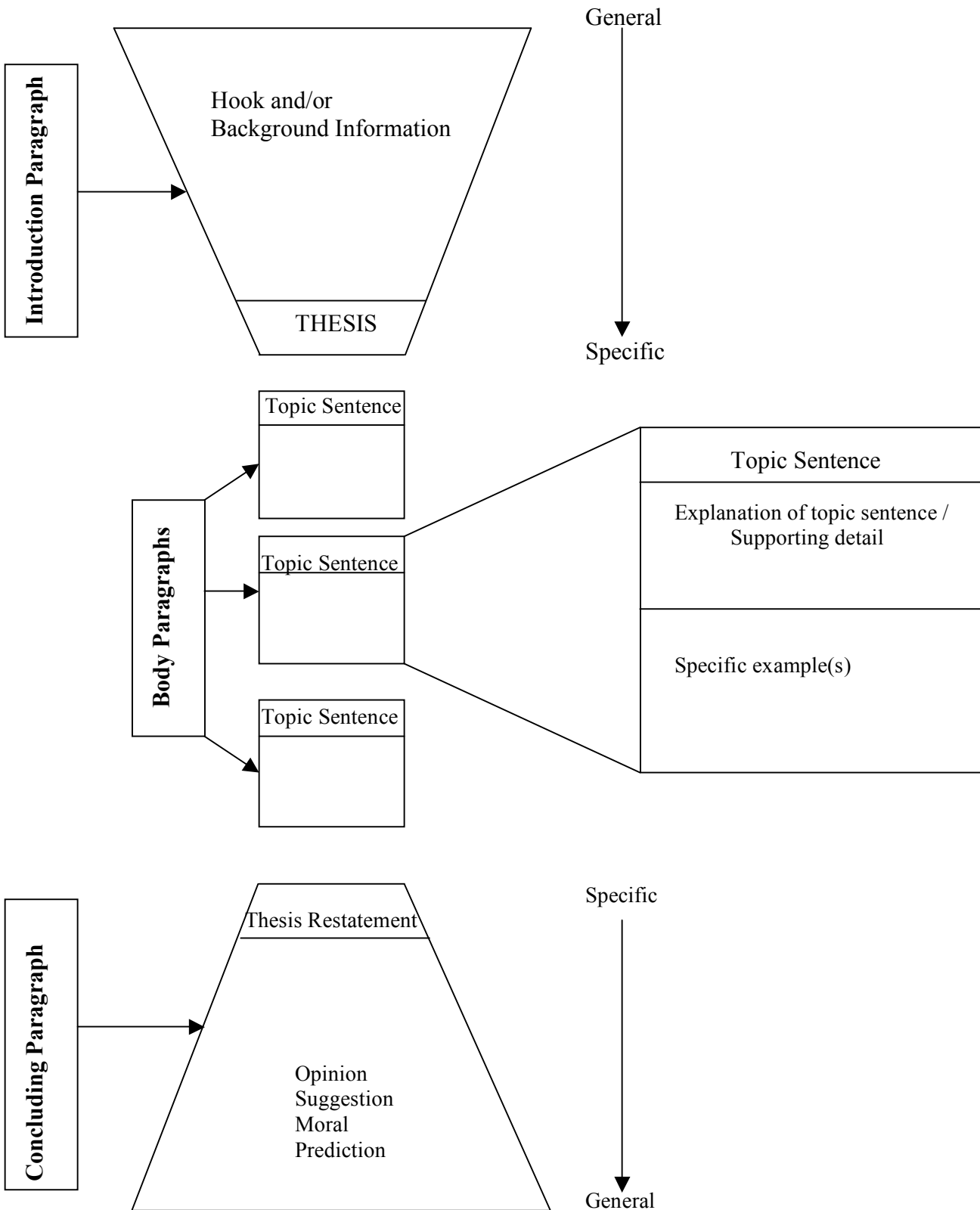
Step three is to return to the very top of the essay to write one or two general statements as an introduction. Follow this by going to the final paragraph and ending the essay with one or two sentences for the conclusion. These can be a general prediction for the future. You should finish this step in five minutes.

The final step is the self check. Try to allow yourself five minutes to review your writing and check for grammatical and spelling errors. Specifically, focus on these four points: subject/verb agreement, appropriate verb tense, article use and pronouns (don't overuse them).

10 Quick Tips for Independent Writing:

1. Directly answer the question and make a clear choice; there is not enough time to write about the relative merits of both (all) sides.
2. A good four-paragraph essay is better than a weak five-paragraph one. Make sure to include an introduction, body (2-3 paragraphs) and conclusion.
3. Don't waste time with the 'hook' and unnecessary background information. Focus instead on writing a strong thesis statement.
4. The thesis statement should include two controlling ideas. These ideas will be repeated in the topic sentences of the body paragraphs.
5. Each body paragraph should consist of 3-6 sentences which directly support the topic sentence. They should explain, provide examples and be specific.
6. Use at least one personal example. It's fine, even necessary, to write in the first person.
7. The conclusion can be as short as one sentence which restates the thesis.
8. Avoid repetition by paraphrasing, changing word order and using synonyms.
9. Allow some time to edit. Especially for: subject/verb agreement, verb tense, article use and overuse of pronouns.
10. It's OK to lie!

Alice S. Lee
 Pictorial Representation of an Essay



Adapted from Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. New York: Cambridge University Press.