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**Your Grammar Guide for the TOEFL® Writing**

*Essential Grammar for a Higher  
TOEFL Writing Score*

# Your Grammar Guide for the TOEFL® Writing:

## Introduction

Most grammar books consist of lists of rules, examples, and practice activities. They contain every single little grammar rule. While it may be helpful to learn the difference between the simple present and present perfect verb tense, it may be less helpful to spend 50 pages trying to construct sentences in the past unreal and present unreal conditional. In other words, grammar books contain *some* useful information and *a lot of* useless information.

This Grammar Guide has been designed specifically for the TOEFL Writing section. It is a collection of grammar rules and activities that addresses many reoccurring issues for TOEFL takers. After years of teaching TOEFL, I have found that **most students do not need a grammar book**. Instead, they need to review a few specific grammar points and build their skills through exercises targeting those weaknesses.

In each section of this guide, you will rediscover an important grammar rule that is often used incorrectly in the TOEFL. You will be exposed to real examples from past students that made these common errors. After that, you will review the rules for each particular grammar point and how you can use it in your writing. The link between the given grammar point and the TOEFL Writing is reiterated throughout each chapter, so you can see how it applies to your writing. After looking at a few examples and reviewing the rules, each section ends with exercises designed to help you implement what you have learned.

Take your time and feel free to jump around. If there is a chapter in this guide you don't need to review, go ahead and skip it. Use this book as a tool for you to learn more about your writing and how to improve it.

# Introduction to Uncountable Nouns

## Common Mistakes

First, let's look at some common mistakes that students make when using uncountable nouns. Can you find the mistake in each of these three sentences?

- 1. In the reading passage, the author discusses the benefits of using an energy from fossil fuels.**
- 2. The professor in the listening argues that progress of the early settlers was due to their navigational skills.**
- 3. When I was a younger, I saw many news on T.V. about the issue of American dependency on automobile travel.**

## Rules for Uncountable Nouns

Uncountable nouns are things that cannot be quantified using numbers and are therefore never used in plural form. On the TOEFL, the most commonly used uncountable nouns are abstract ideas, such as *advice* or *information*. Let's review the grammar rules for uncountable nouns using the sentence above.

### **RULE #1 – Indefinite Articles**

Uncountable nouns never need an indefinite article: *a* / *an*. In the first sentence above, the mistake is "*an energy*" because energy is not something that can be divided up and counted. It is an uncountable noun.

- 1. In the reading passage, the author discusses the benefits of using ~~an~~ energy from fossil fuels.**

Note, on the TOEFL, not all abstract ideas are uncountable, and sometimes a compound noun may include an uncountable. For example, *energy* is an uncountable noun, but *energy-source* is a countable, compound noun because *source* is countable.

### **RULE #2 – Definite Articles**

Uncountable nouns, like countable nouns, need the definite article: *the* if the noun is specific and known. In the second sentence above, *progress* is specific to the early settlers and is known that it was due to their navigational skills. Therefore, the mistake in this sentence is that it should read *the progress*.

- 2. The professor in the listening argues that the progress of the early settlers was due to their navigational skills.**

Remember, any noun, whether countable or uncountable, that is modified by possessive (*my, its, ours, theirs*) or demonstrative (*this, that, these, those*) adjectives, do not require an article.

### **RULE #3 – Many v. Much**

In order to indicate a large quantity of uncountable nouns, we use *much* instead of *many*. *Many* is only used for countable nouns. In the third sentence, *news* is an uncountable noun, and so the sentence should read *much news*.

#### **3. When I was a younger, I saw ~~many~~ much news on T.V. about the issue of American dependency on automobile travel.**

Most of the time, an alternative phrase can be used with both countable and uncountable nouns in place of *many* and *much*, and that is: *a lot of*. Therefore, the third sentence is also correct with *a lot of news*.

#### **3. When I was a younger, I saw ~~many~~ a lot of news on T.V. about the issue of American dependency on automobile travel.**

Note, some uncountable nouns end with *-s*, such as *news* or *economics*. This often confuses students because plural countable nouns often end with *-s*.

### Guiding Principles for Recognizing and Using Uncountable Nouns

Using uncountable nouns on the TOEFL can be tricky, but here are three helpful hacks for how to determine if a noun is countable or not and how to use the noun correctly:

- #1** – If you are writing about an abstract idea that cannot be counted using numbers, then you probably have an uncountable noun so **NEVER** use *a / an* before it.
- #2** – If you are writing about a specific and known noun, regardless if it countable or not, **ALWAYS** use *the* or a possessive or demonstrative adjective before it.
- #3** – If you want to refer to a large quantity of nouns, and you are not sure whether to use *many* or *much*, **INSTEAD** just use the phrase *a lot of* before.

## Practice Using Uncountable Nouns

Now, let's practice using uncountable nouns. Here are 10 TOEFL sample independent writing questions. Write up to three sentences per question using uncountable nouns correctly.

- 1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Success in life only comes through hard work."**

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- 2. Some people prefer to find information through books while others prefer to use the internet, which do you prefer and why?**

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- 3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Your job has a stronger effect on your overall happiness than your social life."**

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- 4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Technology has had a negative effect on relationships between friends and family."**

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- 5. Which of the following choices do you think has the greatest impact on environmental protection: a) governmental regulations, b) environmental awareness groups, c) individual effort.**

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**6. Do you think that nutritional data should be added to restaurant menus? Provide reasons and examples to support your opinion.**

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**7. Do you agree or disagree that it is important for young people to learn some domestic skills like cooking, sewing, and taking care of children?**

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**8. Some people feel that high school students benefit from participating in organized sports, while others feel that sports are a waste of time. Instead, students should focus on studying. Which point of view do you agree with and explain why.**

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**9. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is more important to study math or science than it is to study art and literature."**

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**10. You are going to have a new roommate next semester. Which of the following qualities is most important to you: a) cleanliness b) humorous c) politeness.**

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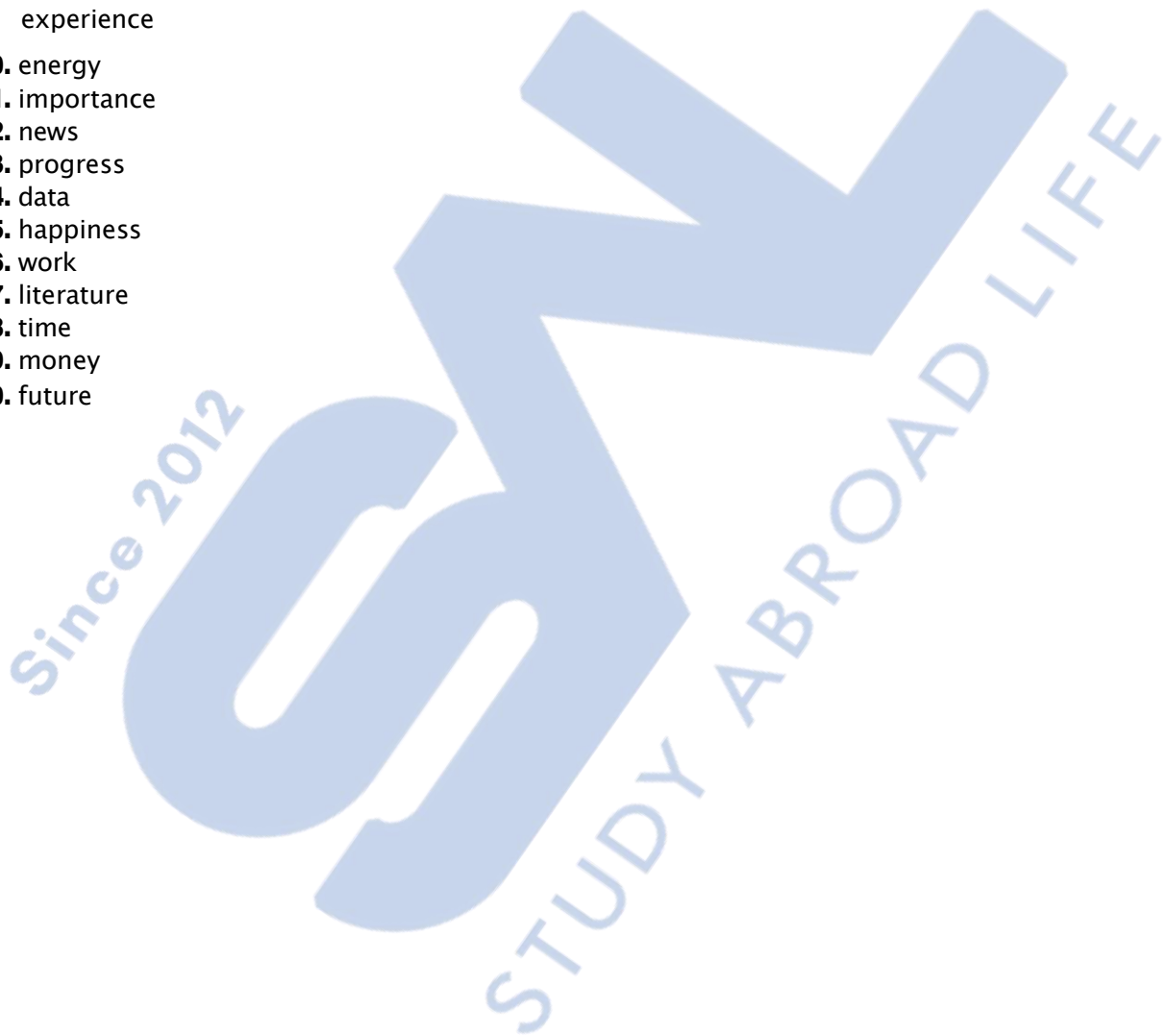
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### List of 20 Popular Uncountable Nouns (on the TOEFL)

1. evidence
2. information
3. technology
4. advice
5. research
6. effort
7. improvement
8. knowledge
9. experience
10. energy
11. importance
12. news
13. progress
14. data
15. happiness
16. work
17. literature
18. time
19. money
20. future



## Introduction to Articles

Common Mistakes First, let's look at some common mistakes that students make when using articles. Can you find the mistake in each of these six sentences?

1. **The speaker explains an evidence that debunks the author's theory about electric cars.**
2. **As a computers become more advanced, people are becoming more dependent on them.**
3. **Society often considers child under ten to be more helpless than they really are.**
4. **The author claims that fire is a most important discovery made in human history**
5. **There are many different types of the sharks around the world.**
6. **There is no shortage of opinion what type of lifestyle is needed to maintain the good health.**

### Rules for Articles

Articles are words that signal a noun, and can be *indefinite* or *definite*. The indefinite articles: *a / an* indicate a single, unspecified noun. The definite article: *the* indicates specific or known nouns. Let's review these grammar rules for articles using the sentences above.

#### **Rules for Indefinite Articles for Unspecified Nouns**

First, the rules differ for uncountable and countable nouns. Uncountable nouns are things that cannot be quantified using numbers or divided up and counted. Uncountable nouns never need an indefinite article (*a / an*). In the first sentence above, the mistake is "*an evidence*" because "*evidence*" is an uncountable noun.

1. **The speaker explains ~~an~~ evidence that debunks the author's theory about electric cars.**

Unlike uncountable nouns, countable nouns are things that can be quantified, and they are referred in either singular or plural form. Plural countable nouns are a group of two or more countable noun. Plural countable nouns never need an indefinite article (*a / an*). In the second sentence above, the mistake is "*a computers*" because "*computers*" is a plural countable noun.



**6. There is no shortage of opinion on what type of lifestyle is needed to maintain the good health.**

Guiding Principles for Recognizing and Using Articles

Using articles on the TOEFL can be tricky, but here are two helpful hacks to remember so you can use the articles correctly:

**#1** – Indefinite articles (*a / an*) are **ONLY** used with *unspecified*, singular countable nouns.

**#2** – Only use the definite article (*the*) when there is **ONE** specific noun or group of nouns.

Remember: “THE” means “ONE.”

**Categories of Definite Nouns Chart**

“The” is commonly used with these classes of nouns. Each of these classes refer to one specific thing.

<b>Public Places</b>	My preference is for <u>the city park</u> to be improved with their extra funds.
<b>Instruments</b>	When I was a child, I practiced <u>the violin</u> and it taught me discipline. She
<b>Inventions and Models</b>	elaborates that the <u>printing press</u> also increased literacy in Europe.
<b>Machine Parts</b>	Additionally, hybrid-electric vehicles still use <u>the conventional fuel engine</u> .
<b>Body Parts</b>	I agree that <u>the brain</u> is our most important bodily organ. There are two
<b>Species of Animals</b>	reasons the tiger has <u>become</u> an endangered species.
<b>Species of Plants</b>	Another surprising feature of <u>the fly trap</u> is its odor.
<b>Time Periods</b>	Home life was drastically changed in <u>the early twentieth century</u> .

## Nouns with No Articles

No article should be used with unspecific, uncountable nouns or unspecific, plural countable nouns. Also, no article should be used when any noun (countable or uncountable) is modified by possessive or demonstrative adjectives.

Tense	Examples
Unspecified Uncountable Nouns	Deforestation is another cause of <u>global warming</u> .
Unspecified Plural Countable Nouns	Another benefit for people to have <u>pets</u> is companionship.
Nouns with Possessive Adjectives	Bullying was a major issue at <u>my school</u> growing up.
Nouns with Demonstrative Adjectives	For <u>these reasons</u> , I disagree sports should be mandatory.

## Practice Articles

Now, let's practice using articles on the integrated and independent writing sections. First, practice answering 5 TOEFL sample independent questions using articles correctly. Then use the words provided to write 5 independent sentences and 5 integrated sentences.

### Independent Questions

Write one sentence answering the question using articles correctly.

**1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "With the popularity of the technology that focuses on entertainment, people read fewer books than before."**

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**2. It's important for kids to maintain a healthy lifestyle. What can parents do to make sure their kids remain healthy.**

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**3. Imagine you have to give your friend some bad news, would you rather do it in a quiet, private room or a loud public place?**

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**4. Is it better to use your extra money to buy some objects like clothes or electronic products, or is it better to use the extra money to increase your experiences like going for a vacation or a concert?**

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**5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Teenagers should work while they go to school, so they can learn how to be more responsible."**

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#### Creating Independent Sentences

Use the words provided to create an independent sentence using articles correctly. For example:

**(In my opinion/think/sharks)**

**In my opinion, I do think that sharks are smarter than other types of sea creatures.**

**1. (To me/agree/children)**

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**2. (Think/importance/sleep)**

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**3. (For me/believe/media)**

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**4. (In my opinion/feel/computers)**

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**5. (Prefer/work/outdoors)**

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## Creating Integrated Sentences

Use the words provided to create an integrated sentence using articles correctly. For example:

**(professor/disagree/research)**

**The professor disagrees with the lecturer because the research does not support the claim.**

**1. (speaker/think/evidence)**

**2. (author/explain/facts)**

**3. (professor/argue/information)**

**4. (lecturer/disagree/experience)**

**5. (writer/claim/progress)**

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## Introduction to Conditional Sentences

**Common Mistakes** First, let's look at some common mistakes that students make when using conditional sentences. Can you find the mistake in each of these three sentences?

1. **If I were ask, I would absolutely agree that it is crucial for young children to study English.**
2. **If I had been in London longer, I would had saw the Royal Wedding.**
3. **If they start to study early, they will benefits from the extra time.**

**Rules for Conditional Sentences** Conditional sentences are sentences that contain two parts: 1) the condition (or *if-clause*) and 2) the result of the condition. On the TOEFL, the most commonly used conditional sentences are the past real, past unreal, and future real conditionals. Let's review the grammar rules for each of these types of conditionals using the sentences above.

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**Rules for Past Real Conditional Sentences** Past real conditionals are the type of conditional sentence you can use in your introduction paragraph on the TOEFL because they express a general truth, in this case, your opinion. These sentences have the following structure:

Condition  
*If I were + simple past form*

Result  
*I would + base-form*

1. **If I were asked, I would absolutely agree that it is crucial for young children to study English.**

In the first sentence above, the mistake is "ask" because the verb tense is not correct. We use the simple past form of the verb in the condition, and only the base form in the result. Note, it is correct and very common, to say "if I *were*" instead of "if I *was*," especially in written English. Also, remember the condition can come before the result, or the result can come before the condition when structuring the conditional sentence. Therefore, it would also be correct to say:

1. **I would absolutely agree that it is crucial for young children to study English if I were asked.**

## Rules for Past Unreal Conditional Sentences

Past unreal conditionals are the type of conditional sentence you can use in your body paragraphs after giving a personal example because they express a situation that didn't happen to you in the past, such as a mistake or regret. These sentences have the following structure:

Condition	Result
<i>If I had + past participle form</i>	<i>I would have + past participle form</i>

In the second sentence above, the mistake is “*had saw*” because the verb tense is not correct. We use the past participle form of the verb followed by *had* in the condition, and the past participle form of the verb followed by *have* in the result.

### 2. If I had been in London longer, I would ~~had~~ have seen the Royal Wedding.

Note, the meaning of the past unreal is negative even though no negative forms are used. The meaning of sentence two is: I was in London, but I did not stay long, so I did not see the Royal Wedding.

## Rules for Future Real Conditional Sentences

Future real conditionals can be used as the second sentence in your body paragraphs to further explain your argument or opinion with a prediction. Future real conditionals express situations that would probably happen in the future. These sentences have the following structure:

Condition	Result
<i>If + subject + present form</i>	<i>subject + will + base-form</i>

In the third sentence above, the mistake is “*are*” because the verb tense is not correct. We use the present form of the verb in the condition, and the base-form of the verb in the result.

### 3. If they start to study early, they will ~~benefits~~ benefit from the extra time.

On the TOEFL, this form is used to further illustrate a position, for instance, that young children should study for the TOEFL early. Therefore, the sentence prior to this example above could be: “Studying for the TOEFL will provide young learners with an edge over their peers.” Note, unlike the previous two types, the subject of this conditional sentence will then depend on the topic of the question.

### Guiding Principles for Conditional Sentences

Using conditional sentences on the TOEFL can be tricky, but here are two helpful hacks for using them correctly:

- #1** – No matter which type of conditional sentence you are writing on the TOEFL, “will” and “would” should **NEVER** appear in the condition (“If”) part of the sentence.
- #2** – If you start your sentence with the condition (“If”), then you **ALWAYS** need a *comma* after the condition and before the result.

### **Practice Using Conditional Sentences**

Now, let’s practice using each of these types of conditional sentences on the corresponding paragraphs of the TOEFL writing section. Here are 15 TOEFL sample independent writing questions. Write a conditional sentence in response to each question.

#### Introduction Paragraph – Past Real Conditional Sentences

Write an introductory sentence using the past real conditional correctly.

- 1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “The best way to learn a foreign language is to speak it with native speakers.”**

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- 2. Some people like to relax when they go on vacation, while others like to go sightseeing and do a lot of activities. Which do you prefer and why?**

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- 3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Video games offer benefits to children.”**

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- 4. Your local government has decided to improve their community. Do you think they should:**  
**a) build a public park, b) build a public library, c) build a public pool.**

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- 5. Would you prefer to live in the mountains, or on the beach? Provide reasons and examples to support your response.**

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Body Paragraph – Past Unreal Conditional Sentences

Think of a specific example you would give in your answer to each question in one of the body paragraphs. Write the sentence that would follow your specific example using the past unreal conditional correctly.

- 1. It's important for kids to maintain a healthy lifestyle. What can parents do to make sure their kids remain healthy?**

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- 2. Some people prefer that their children have cell phones. Other parents think it's a bad idea for their children to have a cellular phone. Which do you prefer?**

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- 3. Do you agree or disagree that it is important for children to learn to draw or paint?**

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- 4. If you had to volunteer, would you prefer to: a) read to seniors, b) work in an animal shelter, c) feed the homeless.**

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**5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Parents should read their children's text messages."**

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Body Paragraph – Future Real Conditional Sentences

Think of one argument you would use in one of the body paragraphs to support your answer to the question. Write a sentence that would further illustrate your argument using the future real conditional correctly.

**1. Do you think scientists should be given the freedom to test and experiment however they please, or should they be limited in their experiments?**

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**2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "With the popularity of the technology that focuses on entertainment, people read fewer books than before."**

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**3. People do many different things to stay healthy. What do you think is the best way to stay in good health? Use specific reasons and examples to support your essay.**

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**4. If you had to work on a project for school would you rather: a) work alone, b) work with classmates, c) work with a tutor.**

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**5. Your degree requires that you should choose a history course. Which of the following courses would you prefer: a) Art history, b) Twentieth-century world history, c) Science history.**

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## Introduction to Compound Sentences

**Common Mistakes** First, let's look at some common mistakes that students make when using compound sentences. Can you find the mistake in each of these sentences?

- 1. First, great leaders should lead by example. Secondly, they should be good communicators.**
- 2. Because of how geographically spread out the land is, North Americans have become too**

**dependent on automobiles for travel, and Europeans have better developed their public transportation systems, such as trains and buses, throughout history.**

- 3. The author believes yeast was first used to make bread, additionally the lecturer disagrees.**
- 4. The professor explains that the Mayans were skilled mathematicians, whereas they did not**

**have a proficient written language.**

- 5. Going on trips with friends is more cost effective and more fun, since I prefer traveling with**
- 6. companions.**

**The lecturer effectively casted doubt on the author's position. He was able to rebut each of the author's arguments.**

**Rules for Conjunctions in Compound Sentences** Compound sentences are sentences that contain two related clauses combined with a conjunction. On the TOEFL, students can increase their score by using conjunctions to create compound sentences on the writing section, but it is important to know when to use them and how to use them correctly. Let's review the grammar rules for three types of conjunctions: addition, contrast, and cause and effect, using the sentences above.

### **Rules for Using Conjunctions to Express Addition**

Compound sentences using addition conjunctions are a combination of two independent clauses meaning that these two sentences could stand alone on their own. Let's look at the first sentence above. While not grammatically incorrect, it would flow better, and score higher, using an addition conjunction to combine the two sentences.

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**1. First, great leaders should lead by example, and secondly, they should be good communicators**

Remember, compound sentences are sentences that contain two *related* clauses combined with a conjunction. Additional conjunctions should not be used if the two clauses are *unrelated*. Let's look at the second sentence above. This sentence is too long, and the two independent clauses are not related to one another. They should be two separate sentences.

**2. Because of how geographically spread out the land is, North Americans have become too dependent on automobiles for travel. and Europeans have better developed their public transportation systems, such as trains and buses, throughout history.**

Note, there are other addition conjunctions besides "*and*." When writing a compound sentence to show addition, consider these other conjunctions:

- and
- also
- in addition
- both... and
- and... as well
- not only... but also

Any of these conjunctions can be used instead of "*and*" and will show a more advanced level of English on the TOEFL. Let's look at the first above sentence again. Here is how the sentence could be written in a more advanced way:

**Rules for Using Conjunctions to Express Contrast**

Compound sentences using contrast conjunctions are a combination of two independent clauses that have a contrasting relationship. Here are some common contrast conjunctions:

**1. First, great leaders should not only lead by example, but also be good communicators.**

- but
- yet
- whereas
- even though
- nevertheless
- on the other hand
- although
- however

If you look at the third example sentence above, you can see that it is a compound sentence of two independent clauses that are in contrast with one another, so "*additionally*" is not correct. Note that not all contrasting conjunctions have the same meaning. It is important to understand and know the meaning of the conjunction before using it. For instance, "*yet*," is used in negative sentences to show a

**3. The author believes yeast was first used to make bread, but the lecturer disagrees.**

contrast. In the fourth sentence from above, “*whereas*” does not work because the second clause is a negative contrast.

**4. The professor explains that the Mayans were skilled mathematicians, *yet* they did not have a proficient written language.**

### Rules for Using Conjunctions to Express Cause and Effect

Compound sentences using cause and effect conjunctions are a combination of two independent clauses that have a causation or result relationship. For cause, we use:

- because
- as

- since
- so that

For effect, we use:

- so
- therefore
- thus

- consequently
- as a result
- hence

In the fifth sentence, “*since*” is the mistake because the first clause is the effect of the second. Therefore, an effect conjunction, like “*so*,” should be used instead.

**5. Going on trips with friends is more cost effective and more fun, *so* I prefer traveling with companions.**

In the sixth sentence, while not grammatically incorrect, these two sentences have a cause and effect relationship. Therefore, it would flow better, and result in a higher score, to combine these sentences with a cause and effect conjunction. One correct way to combine these sentences with a cause/effect conjunction is:

**6. The lecturer effectively casted doubt on the author’s position, *since* he was able to rebut each of the author’s arguments.**

### Guiding Principles for Conjunctions

Using conjunctions on the TOEFL can be tricky, but here are two helpful hacks for using them correctly:

**#1** – Conjunctions should only be used to make compound sentences with two RELATED clauses. Therefore, **NEVER** use “*and*” to combine two UNRELATED independent clauses.

**#2** – When using conjunctions to combine two related, independent clauses, **ALWAYS** use a comma (“,”) after the first clause and before the conjunction.

### Practice Using Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Now, let's practice using each of these types of compound sentences on three parts of the TOEFL writing section. There are a few ideal places where students will usually be able to insert a conjunction: 1) when giving their opinion in the introduction of the independent question, 2) when explaining the reason why the author or lecturer holds a certain view on the integrated question, and 3) when wrapping up the speaker's or their own opinion in the conclusion of either writing question. Here are 15 TOEFL sample questions. Write at least one compound sentence answering the questions from each ideal place. Introduction Paragraph – Independent Question The first ideal place to insert a conjunction is when giving your opinion in the introduction of the independent question. For example:

Everyone can be considered one of these two types of people: an “early bird” or a “night owl.” Early birds are those who prefer to wake up early and immediately start on their work. Night owls are those who would rather stay up late and work throughout the night. I considered myself to be an early bird, *because* I prefer getting up early to start my day.

Write a compound sentence using at least one addition, contrast, or cause and effect conjunction to answer the independent questions.

1. What holiday in your culture do you believe is most important and why?

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2. I Imagine you have just been given \$10,000. Would you a) spend it, b) save it, or c) invest it?

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3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Teenagers should work while they go to school, so they can learn how to be more responsible."

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4. Is the Internet a good or bad thing for the music industry?

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**5. Some people believe old people should not take risks and participate in adventurous events as young people. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?**

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Body Paragraph – Integrated Questions

The second ideal place to insert a conjunction is when explaining the reason why the author or lecturer holds a certain view in the body paragraphs on the integrated question. For example:

**The author also claims that tissue cells taken from a frozen woolly mammoth found in Siberia could be used to resurrect this ancient creature from extinction. The speaker, however, disagrees. He says that this animal is tens of thousands of years old, so the genetic tissues could not have survived long enough to be used for cloning today.**

Write a compound sentence using at least one addition, contrast, or cause and effect conjunction on the integrated questions. Use the information provided.

- 1. Professor: “Even though there has been notable progress in solar panels, they still lack the effectiveness and stretch to replace fossil fuels. For one, solar energy is not reliable because they depend on sunlight. Also, the equipment required for installing solar panels is expensive.” Summarize the beliefs of the professor.**

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- 2. Author: “Statistics show that 40 to 50% of marriages in America end in divorce. One cause of the high divorce rate is the growing awareness of gender inequality. As women become more active in professional settings, they no longer need to rely on a husband for financial support.” Summarize the opinion of the author.**

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- 3. Writer: “The expanding population will have terrible effects on life in the future. For one, the population problem will cause the extinction of hundreds of species in freshwater sources. There is a limited amount of drinkable water, and the growing population will outpace the amount of time it takes to replenish the water sources.” Summarize the opinion of the writer.**

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**4. Lecturer: “Even though the author points out some short-term benefits, deforestation has some serious long-term consequences. First of all, deforestation displaces all the animals, insects, and plants living in the forested area. And, more importantly, 28% of the world’s oxygen is produced from rainforest ecosystems.” Summarize the argument of the lecturer.**

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**5. Speaker: “The information in the reading about performance-enhancing drugs is misleading. First of all, all medication has side effects and the side effects of performance-enhancing drugs, such as acne or mood swings, are incredibly rare.” Summarize the argument of the speaker.**

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#### Conclusion Paragraph – Independent and Integrated Questions

The final ideal place to insert a conjunction is when wrapping up the speaker’s or your own opinion in the conclusion of the integrated or independent questions. For example:

**To sum up, I believe that researchers should have limitations to their experiments and tests. This is because human and animal life is more important than freedom, and also because public safety is more valuable than freedom.**

Write a compound sentence using at least one addition, contrast, or cause and effect conjunction to conclude your personal opinion to the independent question or to wrap up the speaker’s opinion from the integrated question provided.

**1. Some people prefer to buy new books while some people would like to buy used books, what is your opinion?**

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**2. Professor: “Regardless of the author’s theories, the process of bringing animals back from extinction is actually plagued with serious problems.”**

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3. Do you agree or disagree that a celebrity should set a good example for young people?

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4. If you had to live in one area for the rest of your life, would you prefer to live in a) the city, b) the suburbs, or c) the countryside.

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5. Lecturer: "While the Turtle Excluder Devices sounds like a great idea they need drastic improvement regardless of what the author in the reading may believe."

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### Extra Practice Using Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Some conjunctions are more difficult to use than others but using these conjunctions can show a more advanced understand of grammatical form and help increase your score. Create two TOEFL-like sentences using one of these complex conjunctions:

- yet
- both...and
- not only...but also
- either ...or

- in fact
- on the other hand
- even though

1.

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2.

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**Common Mistakes** First, let's look at some common mistakes that students make when using subject-verb agreement. Can you find the mistake in each of these four sentences?

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1. **However, the lecturer completely disagree with the author's point of view in the reading.**
2. **In my opinion, students should really studies math and science over music and art.**
3. **Invasion from colonists which spread diseases are the main cause of the fall of the Inca Empire.**
4. **When I was younger, everyone were frustrated with me because I didn't listen.**

**Rules for Subject-Verb Agreement** In every sentence, there is a subject and a verb. Subject-verb agreement means that the form of the subject must match the form of the verb. Singular subjects have singular verbs; plural subjects must have plural verbs. On the TOEFL, students will need to know how to correctly match the forms of the subjects and verbs on the entire writing section. Let's review the grammar rules for subject-verb agreement using the sentences above.

**Rule #1 – Integrated Question Subjects** In the integrated writing section, there are some common subjects that students will use on the TOEFL. These are: *“author, writer, lecturer, speaker, professor, the reading passage, and the listening passage.”* All of these subjects are third-person singular (he/she/it). This means that the verb used must also be third-person singular. In the first sentence above, *“disagree”* is the mistake because *“lecturer”* is the third-person singular subject, but *“disagree”* is not the third-person singular form of the verb.

1. **However, the lecturer completely disagrees with the author's point of view in the reading.**

Remember, the third-person singular verb form almost always adds an “-s” to the verb in the present simple form.

## Rule #2 – Indefinite Plural Noun Subjects

In both the independent and integrated sections, students will be expected to write about indefinite nouns. When the noun is countable, it takes the plural form and does not require the indefinite article (a/an). For example: “*people, sharks, children, pets, arguments and citizens*” are all indefinite, countable, plural nouns. As the subject, all of these kinds of nouns are third-person plural (they). This means the verb must also be third-person plural.

In the second sentence above, “*studies*” is the mistake because “*students*” is the third-person plural subject, but “*studies*” is not the third-person plural form of the verb.

### 2. In my opinion, students should really study math and science over music and art.

Remember, the third-person plural subject form usually adds an “-s” to the subject in the present simple form, so the verb does not end in “-s.”

## Rule #3 – Uncountable Noun Subjects

When the noun is uncountable, it does not take the plural form, and it does not require the indefinite article (a/an). For example: “*rice, news, water, research, and information*” are all uncountable nouns. As the subject, these kinds of nouns are third-person singular (he/she/it). This means the verb must be third-person singular.

In the third sentence above, “*are*” is the mistake because “*invasion*” is the third-person singular subject, but “*are*” is not the third-person singular form of the verb.

### 3. Invasion from colonists which spread diseases ~~are~~ is the main cause of the fall of the Inca Empire.

Remember, the third-person singular form of the verb “*to be*” in the present simple form is “*is*.”

Note, modifiers can come between the subject and the verb, like in the sentence above “*from colonists and disease,*” however, the modifiers never change the tense of the verb.

## Rule #4 - Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

On both the independent and integrated sections, students will be expected to write about indefinite pronouns. Most commonly on the TOEFL, these are: “*everybody, everyone, everything, anyone, anything, someone, something, nobody, and neither.*” All of these subjects are third-person singular (he/she/it). This means that the verb used must also be third-person singular.

In the fourth sentence above, “*were*” is the mistake because “*everyone*” is the third-person singular subject, but “*were*” is not the third-person singular form of the verb.

**4. When I was younger, everyone ~~were~~ was frustrated with me because I didn't listen.**

Remember, the third-person singular form of the verb “to be” in the simple past form is “was.”

Guiding Principles for Subject-Verb Agreement

Using the proper verb form on the TOEFL can be tricky, but here are three helpful hacks for using them correctly:

- #1** – On the integrated writing, **ALWAYS** use the third-person singular verb form (add “-s” to the verb) when the subject is the *author*, *lecturer*, *the reading passage*, or *the listening passage*.
- #2** – Do **NOT** add an “s” to indefinite plural nouns.
- #3** – When the subject of a sentence, uncountable nouns and indefinite pronouns are usually singular (add an “s”)

**Practice Using Subject-Verb Agreement**

Now, let's practice using subject-verb agreement. Here are 15 TOEFL sample writing questions. Write at least one sentence using subject-verb agreement correctly.

Integrated Questions

Use the information provided to write one sentence using subject-verb agreement correctly.

- 1. Author: “There is a lot of evidence to suggest that animals were much larger in the ‘early earth period’ than they are today.”**

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- 2. Professor: “A recent study has called into question the idea that buying a business franchise is a good idea, as the author in the reading passage suggests.”**

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- 3. Writer: “It is extremely dangerous and harmful for the environment to allow forest fires to spread. Therefore, they should be deliberately suppressed.”**

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- 4. Lecturer: "Wave farms would not be an advantageous alternative to fossil fuel for many reasons. For one, the convertors used at these farms can be as harmful to the environment as fossil fuels."**

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- 5. Reading passage: "One benefit of smart cars is that they will save lives by preventing accidents from occurring."**

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Independent Questions

Write one sentence answering the question using the subject-verb agreement correctly.

- 1. Do you think the government should legislate laws to fine people who use cell phones when crossing roads and intersections?**

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- 2. Besides getting an education, what are some other reasons people attend university?**

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- 3. Would you prefer to work at one job your entire life or to switch jobs every five years?**

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- 4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Co-workers make the best friends."**

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- 5. Which of the following functions of smartphones are most beneficial to students: a) taking photos, b) listening to music, or c) recording lectures.**

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**6. In your opinion, what kind of behavior do people do in public that you find most inconsiderate?**

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**7. Do you agree or disagree that governments should forbid violence and bad language in TV programs?**

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**8. Some people believe that with the development of technology and the Internet, libraries will disappear, while others think libraries are always necessary. Which opinion do you agree with?**

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**9. Some people prefer sending messages while others prefer making phone calls directly. Which do you prefer?**

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**10. Three kinds of activities will be offered on a speak day organized by the International Student office. Which one do you prefer: a) international food fair, b) international music festival, or c) international film festival.**

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## Introduction to Verb Tenses

**Common Mistakes** First, let's look at some common mistakes that students make when using verb tenses sentences. Can you find the mistake in each of these six sentences?

- 1. The professor believed that the author's arguments lack sufficient evidence.**
- 2. According to the lecture, the Vikings are not able to conquer Rome.**
- 3. Another cause of global warming was the deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest.**
- 4. For me, I agree that grades encourage students to learn because they caused students to work harder.**
- 5. When I was child, I first learn the meaning of a good role model from my soccer coach.**
- 6. If I had worked harder on my school project that year, I have would been the top student in the class.**

### Rules for Verb Tenses

On the TOEFL, students need to know how to correctly use the right verb tense in the right context. Let's review the grammar rules for verb tenses on the integrated and independent writing sections using the sentences above.

#### Rules for Using Verb Tenses on the Integrated Question

In the integrated writing section, there are some common mistakes students make using the simple present and the simple past.

First, when talking about the author's and lecturer's opinions, and the reasons for their opinions, students should always use the simple present. In the first sentence above, "*believed*" is the mistake because it is in the past tense.

#### 1. The professor ~~believed~~s that the author's arguments lack sufficient evidence.

Remember, the author and lecturer are third-person singular subjects, so the third-person singular verb form must be used. The third-person singular verb form almost always adds an "-s" to the verb in the present simple form.

Second, when talking about and speculating in the past, students should always use the simple past. In the second sentence above, “are” is the mistake because it is in the present tense.

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**2. According to the lecture, the Vikings were not able to conquer Rome.**

Remember, the simple past verb form for regular verbs adds an “-ed.” The simple past verb form for the verb “to be” is “was” and “were.”

Finally, when talking about details from the passage, students should use the simple present for contemporary issues, but the simple past for events in the past. In the third sentence above, “was” is the mistake because it is in the past tense.

**3. Another cause of global warming is the deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest.**

Here, “global warming” is an ongoing problem, so the present tense should be used.

**Rules for Using Verb Tenses on the Independent Question**

In the independent writing section, there are some common mistakes students make using the simple present, the simple past, and conditionals.

First, when talking about your opinions, or the reasons for your opinions, you should always use the simple present. In the fourth sentence above, “caused” is the mistake because it is in the past tense.

**4. For me, I agree that grades encourage students to learn because they caused students to work harder.**

Second, when talking about personal examples, students should always use the simple past. In the fifth sentence above, “learn” is the mistake because it is in the past tense.

**5. When I was a child, I first learned the meaning of a good role model from my soccer coach.**

Finally, when talking about an imaginary situation, students should use conditionals. Conditionals contain two parts: 1) the condition and 2) the result of the condition. They are used on the TOEFL when the result is possible and likely, or when the result is hypothetical.

Conditionals can be used in the introduction paragraph to express your opinion (past real), in the body paragraph after a personal example to express a mistake or regret (past unreal), or as the second sentence in your body paragraph to further explain your argument or opinion with a prediction (future unreal). In the sixth sentence above, the mistake is “have would been” because “would” comes before “have” + past participle form “been.”

6. If I had worked harder on my school project that year, I would have ~~would been~~ the top student in the class.

Note, no matter which type of conditional sentence you use, “will” and “would” is always in the result part of the sentence, not the condition (“If”) part.

### Verb Tense Chart

Tense	Examples
<b>Simple Present</b>	The author <u>explains</u> that African lions hunt in packs.
<b>Present Progressive</b>	Even now, scientists <u>are searching</u> for a cure for cancer.
<b>Present Perfect</b>	I <u>have considered</u> this question before.
<b>Present Perfect Progressive</b>	People <u>have been wondering</u> who discovered America for a long time.
<b>Simple Past</b>	The early settlers <u>looked</u> everywhere for food.
<b>Past Progressive</b>	During my childhood, I <u>was studying</u> English in Canada.
<b>Past Perfect</b>	He <u>had found</u> an article on the news.
<b>Past Perfect Progressive</b>	Research <u>had been reading</u> the ancient language for decades.
<b>Simple Future</b>	I <u>will learn</u> more about the history of my country.
<b>Future Progressive</b>	Everyone <u>will be trying</u> to understand it for years to come.
<b>Future Perfect</b>	They <u>will have visited</u> every state by next year.
<b>Future Perfect Progressive</b>	My friend <u>will have been working</u> for five years next Saturday.



## Time Markers Chart

Present	Past	Future
today	yesterday	tomorrow
at present	in the past	in the future
now	ago	from now
usually	formerly	next week/month/year
every time	in the 1990s	by 2030
the current period	in the former period	in the coming period
currently	during the earlier century	during the next decade

## Practice Verb Tenses

Now, let's practice using verb tenses on the integrated and independent sections. Here are 15 TOEFL sample writing questions. Write at least one sentence using the correct verb tenses.

### Integrated Questions

Use the information provided to write one sentence using the correct simple present or past tenses.

- 1. Writer: "There are a few competing theories as to why the Rapa Nui civilization disappeared. One claim is that the destruction of the forest lead to mass famine"**

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- 2. Lecturer: "Like all alternative methods of education, the Montessori method has some drawbacks. For one, hardly anyone speaks about the cost of redesigning one's classroom."**

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- 3. Author: "Eco-certified wood products are more environmentally friendly, but American wood companies will not adopt this practice."**

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4. Speaker: "There is not enough evidence to suggest that the Anasazi people suffered from malnutrition, as the writer suggests."

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5. Reading passage: "There is sufficient evidence to suggest that dinosaurs were endotherms."

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6. Listening: "Each of the author's theories are unfounded, and in fact, the purpose of the great houses of Chaco Canyon is still a mystery."

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#### Independent Questions

Write one sentence answering the question using the correct simple present or past tenses.

1. Your degree requires that you should choose a history course. Which of the following courses would you prefer: a) art history, b) twentieth-century world history, or c) science history?

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2. Is the Internet a good or bad thing for the music industry?

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3. Do you agree or disagree that it is important for children to learn to draw or paint?

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4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Celebrities should set a good example for young people."

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**5. Which of the following technological developments has made the greatest impact on students' lives: a) electric books, b) online classes, or c) smartphones.**

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**6. Some universities expect the students to choose a major field of study when they enter the school; while other universities wait until the second or the third year before the students decide to choose a major field of study. Which do you prefer? Why or why not?**

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### Conditional Sentences

Write an introductory sentence using the past real conditional correctly.

**1. If you are going to choose a position in the school community during summer vacation, which one will you choose: a) library front desk/receptionist, b) technician, c) paint a wall in the community.**

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Think of a specific example you would give in your answer to the question in one of the body paragraphs. Write the sentence that would follow your specific example using the past unreal conditional correctly.

**2. Some people prefer to give their opinions immediately. Others prefer to wait and listen to others' opinions before giving their own. Which one do you think is better?**

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Think of one argument you would use in one of the body paragraphs to support your answer to the question. Write a sentence that would further illustrate your argument using the future real conditional correctly.

**3. Do you agree or disagree with the statement that experienced doctors are better than young doctors?**

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## Introduction to Parallelism

### Common Mistakes

First, let's look at some common mistakes that students make when using parallel structures. Can you find the mistake in each of these three sentences?

1. **To be successful, a nation needs a stable government and strong economy, and a successful nation needs socialized medicine.**
2. **Elementary courses in art and music are more valuable than science and math.**
3. **I prefer to be more active on vacation, but my friend prefers relaxing on the beach.**

**Rules for Parallelism** Parallelism is the use of words, phrases, or clauses according to a specific grammar structure or semantic pattern. On the TOEFL, students can show a more advanced level of writing, and increase their score, by using parallel structures correctly. Let's review the general rules for parallelism using the sentences above.

**RULE # 1 – Lists and Series** Lists, or series, are two or more words or phrases joined by a conjunction (*and*, *or*, or *but*). Lists should always have a parallel structure.

Structure	Examples
<b>Nouns</b>	Small <u>trees</u> , <u>shrubs</u> , <u>and grasses</u> are the only plants that can grow in the desert.
<b>Infinitives</b>	My mother had to choose <u>to continue</u> her career <i>or</i> <u>to stay</u> at home with my sister.
<b>Gerunds</b>	<u>Traveling</u> abroad <i>and</i> <u>experiencing</u> other cultures are two benefits to a gap year.
<b>Verb Phrases</b>	That is how Gandhi <u>became infamous</u> <i>and</i> <u>inspired</u> millions worldwide.
<b>Adjectives</b>	The author describes African lions as <u>fierce</u> , <u>strong</u> , <i>and</i> <u>fast</u> wild cats.
<b>Adverbs</b>	My team and I worked <u>carefully</u> <i>but</i> <u>quickly</u> to finish the project on time.

While not grammatically incorrect, the first sentence above lacks parallelism. The nouns “a stable government,” “strong economy,” and “social services” are all characteristics of a successful nation. Therefore, “a successful nation needs” does not need to be repeated. The sentence should be written like this:

**1. To be successful, a nation needs a stable government, ~~and strong economy, and a successful nation needs~~ socialized medicine.**

## **RULE #2 – Comparative Structures**

When two structures are being compared using equative or comparative expressions, they should always be parallel. Equative and comparative expressions include:

- as...as
- more...than
- -er than
- less...than

The second sentence above is not parallel, because “*elementary courses in art and music*” is not parallel to “*science and math*.” The sentence should be written like this:

**2. Elementary courses in art and music are more valuable than elementary courses in science and math.**

Note, demonstrative pronouns can be used in order to avoid the repetition of certain words. For example, “*those*” can be used in place of “*elementary courses*,” and still maintain parallelism. Such as:

**2. Elementary courses in art and music are more valuable than those in science and math.**

## **RULE # 3 – Phrases and Clauses**

Independent clauses and phrases should always have a parallel structure. In the third sentence above, the clauses are not parallel. The phrase “*to be more active*” is in the infinitive verb form and the phrase “*relaxing on the beach*” is in the gerund form. The sentence should be written like this:

**3. I prefer to be more active on vacation, but my friend prefers to relax on the beach.**

### Guiding Principles for Using Parallel Structures

Using parallel structures on the TOEFL can be tricky, but here are two helpful hacks to remember so you can use parallelism correctly:

- #1** – On the independent writing question, remember to **CORRECTLY** use parallel lists to sum up the reasons for your opinion.
- #2** – On the integrated writing question, remember to **ALWAYS** use the simple present when referencing the author/speaker's position. That way, when making comparatives, your phrases and clauses will be parallel.

### **Practice Parallelism**

Now, let's practice using parallelism in the integrated and independent writing sections. First, practice answering 5 TOEFL sample independent questions using parallel structures correctly. Then practice summarizing the stance of the professor or writer on the integrated question using parallel lists. Finally, practice answering 5 TOEFL sample questions using parallel comparative structures.

#### Independent Questions

Write your opinion and two supporting reasons for answering these independent questions.

**1. Would you prefer to work at one job your entire life or to switch jobs every five years?**

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**2. Some people believe that university students should be required to attend classes, other believe that going to classes should be optional for students. Which do you agree with?**

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**3. Some people prefer to live in a small town. Others prefer to live in a big city. Which place would you prefer to live in?**

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4. If you had to volunteer, would you prefer to a) read to seniors, b) work in an animal shelter, or c) feed the homeless?

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5. Is the Internet a good or bad thing for the music industry? Provide reasons to support your response.

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### Integrated Questions

Summarize the professor/writer's stance and their supporting reasons using parallel lists. For example:

**Writer - It is good for university professors to make television appearances.**

**Reason 1 - Audiences can be broadened**

**Reason 2 - Increase university publicity**

**The writer explains that television appearances are worthwhile for university professors because their audience can be broadened and the university's publicity can be increased.**

**1. Professor - The Sacsayhuaman was a fortress that wasn't built for defensive purposes.**

**Reason 1 - The walls were not solid. Reason 2 - No wells have been found behind the walls.**

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**2. Writer - There are advantages to wave farms as an alternative energy source.**

**Reason 1 - Waves are constant and predictable. Reason 2 - Wave farms don't harm the environment.**

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**3. Professor - The memoir of Chevalier de Seingalt is not a reliable record.**

**Reason 1 - It claims he was rich but he often borrowed money. Reason 2 - It details his prison break which was not possible.**

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**4. Writer - Animals were larger in the early earth period than they are today.**

**Reason 1 - They had a greater supply of oxygen.**

**Reason 2 - There were more plants for them to eat.**

**Reason 3 - The climate was warmer.**

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**5. Professor - None of the author's explanations for transient lunar phenomena are plausible.**

**Reason 1 - It is just a coincidence that the color changes are seen near craters.**

**Reason 2 - There is no evidence of dust clouds on the moon.**

**Reason 3 - The dates of the observations do not match the dates of the solar flares.**

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#### Comparative Structure Questions

Write one sentence using a parallel comparative structure to answer the questions. For example:

**Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Life today is easier and more comfortable than it was when your grandparents were children."**

**In my opinion, life today is more difficult and less comfortable than it was when my grandparents were children.**

**1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "If you want to succeed in business, being outgoing and friendly is very important."**

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**2. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Sometimes it is better not to tell the truth."**

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**3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "In twenty years, there will be fewer cars on the road than there are today."**

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4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We can learn more from people at a higher level than us (like teachers) than from people who are at the same level as us."

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5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "A person should never make an important decision alone."

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### Extra Practice With Parallel Correlative Conjunctions

When two structures are being compared using paired, or correlative, expressions, they should always be parallel. Correlative expressions include:

- And...as well as
- Both...and
- Either...or
- Neither...nor
- Not...but
- Not only...but also

For example:

1. I would prefer *neither* a swimming pool *nor* a public park built by the city committee.

2. Computers *not only* make our lives easier *but also* provide us with entertainment.

Let's practice using correlative conjunctions. Write one sentence using parallel correlative conjunctions correctly. For example:

**Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is better for children to grow up in the countryside than in a big city."**

**~~In my opinion, children get to experience other people and cultures as well as get a better education growing up in a big city.~~**

- 1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Sometimes it is better not to tell the truth."**

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- 2. Some people prefer to eat at restaurants. Others prefer to eat at home. Which do you prefer?**

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- 3. Imagine you have just been given \$10,000. Would you a) spend it, b) save it, or c) invest it?**

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