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**Question 1:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is better to use printed material such as books and articles to do research than it is to use the Internet. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

### **Answer**

It is critically important for students to use the best available resources when they conduct research. In my opinion, it is far better to use printed materials than online sources. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, printed materials such as books and articles are more reliable than websites. This is because websites can be edited by anyone in the world, regardless of whether or not they are qualified academics. As a result of this, even articles in popular online encyclopedias often contain incorrect and biased information. My own experience demonstrates the danger of relying too heavily on web-based sources of information. Two semesters ago, I was assigned a research paper in a freshman history class. I cited data that I found on Wikipedia which later turned out to be completely incorrect. This data was so hopelessly wrong that my professor spotted it immediately, causing me to fail the assignment and receive a fairly low grade in the class at the end of the semester. If I had taken the time to compare what I had read online to a book or a scholarly article I would not have included it, and would not have received such a terrible score in the class.

Secondly, books are superior to online articles because they cover topics in much detail. Textbooks are significantly longer than online articles, so they are more useful to students. Students who use them when doing projects can also look at the detailed indexes which they include to focus on very specific topics. For example, when I wrote an essay last semester in a history class, the very first book that I consulted contained a long description of the both the underlying causes and long-term effects of the historical event I was writing about. In contrast, most of the online articles that I consulted contained little more than superficial facts and dates. I based my research on the book rather than these articles, so I was able to write a very insightful essay.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that printed information is more useful than online resources. This is because books and printed journals are less likely to be biased or contain errors, and because books provide a superior level of detail. (383 words)

**Question 2:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is better to use printed material such as books and articles to do research than it is to use the Internet. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

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In conclusion, I strongly believe that printed information is more useful than online resources. This is because books and printed journals are less likely to be biased or contain errors, and because books provide a superior level of detail. (383 words)



**Question 3:** "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Grades encourage students to learn. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion."

**Answer:**

As modern education continues to develop, the usefulness of grades as a form of assessment has been called into question. Personally, though, I believe that grades do encourage students to learn. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, grades motivate students to approach their studies in a deep and meaningful fashion. When a student feels that his grades are on the line, he will spend more time working on his assignments and will therefore absorb more information and will achieve more comprehension. On the other hand, students who do not have to worry about their grades will achieve merely a superficial understanding of the topics they are studying. My own experience as a student demonstrates convincing evidence of this. During my sophomore year I had to complete a major assignment in a political science class I was taking. According to the course syllabus, the assignment would make up about half of my total grade in the class, so I approached my work with diligence and care. I wrote a compelling speech and spent hours preparing for every possible question my classmates could think of. If the presentation had not been graded, I would not have prepared so much for it. Just like me, students all over the world today are motivated to work hard by the chance to achieve high grades from their professors.

Secondly, grades motivate students because they are a way to determine which people in a group are objectively most intelligent. Grades are assigned in a systematic way, so they clearly demonstrate which students in a class are the best and brightest. For example, in my freshman year I took a literature class where students merely got a "pass" or "fail" grade at the end. Since only a moderate amount of effort was required to pass the class, I completed my assignments and presentations quite half-heartedly. In contrast, when I took a graded class on the same subject in my junior year I spent hours in the library researching my papers so that I could show my professors that I was intellectually superior to my classmates. This may

appear somewhat shallow, but in today's competitive academic environment it is absolutely necessary for students to distinguish themselves.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that grades encourage students to learn. This is because they force students to approach their studies with enthusiasm and diligence, and because they give young learners a way to distinguish themselves from their peers. (419 words)

**Question 4:** "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? People in today's world have become too dependent on automobiles. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer."

**Answer:**

Over the last few decades, as automobiles have become affordable for more and more people, cars have become a very controversial topic of discussion. I am of the opinion that people in the modern world have become far too reliant on automobiles. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, many people have become disinterested in the amount of pollution that their vehicles create. It is a well-known fact that automobiles are one of the biggest sources of deadly greenhouse gases, which are the main cause of global warming. However, it seems that many individuals simply do not care about how much damage they do by driving their cars. For example, my uncle drives an extremely large sport utility vehicle to work every day, even though he commutes alone. This vehicle is not energy efficient, and I think that he ought to take a carpool to his office instead of using it. When I asked him why he continues to drive such a harmful vehicle he responded that even though he is aware of how much fuel it uses, he does not care because of how happy it makes him feel to drive an expensive car. This example demonstrates how neglectful many members of modern society have become as a consequence of their love of automobiles.

Secondly, our current obsession with automobiles has caused public transportation systems to be neglected by government officials. Because people are obsessed with their personal vehicles, governments have felt justified in failing to develop bus and rail networks. My city, Toronto, is a compelling example of this. Despite being the largest city in Canada it has only two subway lines and just a handful of underdeveloped bus routes. While this frustrates me quite a lot, most people simply do not care and, regretfully, the issue is never considered or even studied by our municipal government. If more people were to demand better public transportation, of course the government would snap into action and improve the local system. The fact that this has not happened makes it evident to me

that our current dependence on automobiles has resulted in a lower quality of living for many people in Toronto.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that people today are too dependent on automobiles. This is because our love of driving has contributed to global warming, and because it has resulted in shoddy public transportation systems in major cities. (412 Words).

**Question 5:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In my country, young people have a better life today than their parents enjoyed when they were young. Use reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

The world has changed in innumerable ways since my parents were in their youth. In my opinion, my lifestyle is superior to the one they enjoyed at that time. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, my generation enjoys a lot more leisure time, which makes our lives more fulfilling and enables us to follow our passions. People today take longer vacations and have more paid time off from their jobs than either of my parents did while they were still employed. Similarly, we have much shorter working days than they did. For example, nowadays I receive five weeks off from my job each year. I can schedule these holidays as I wish, and even use all of my vacation days at the same time. As a result, I have been able pursue my love of travel. Unlike earlier generations, I have been able to maintain steady professional employment for my whole life so far, and have also been able to visit every continent on earth. My parents, in contrast, were only able to travel following their retirement. At that time, however, their age and physical conditions limited their range of experiences.

Secondly, society provides many more opportunities for women and minorities these days. In the past, disadvantaged groups had a tough time achieving personal and professional success. While this is still something of a concern, it is now much easier for members of such groups to follow their dreams. My own experience, is a compelling example of this. When I was a young woman I was encouraged to attend university and later enter the workforce. On the other hand, my mother was expected to raise children and be a homemaker. She dreamed of being a business executive and making a lot of money, but her parents and teachers discouraged her from doing that. Unlike me, she was pressured to give up all of her professional aspirations. Her example demonstrates why my life is preferable to the life which she lived when she was young.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that I have an easier and better life than my parents had just a few decades ago. This is because I enjoy much more leisure time than they did, and because women today have many more opportunities than they did in the past. (395 words)

**Question 6:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Movies and television strongly influence the way people behave? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

Most people agree that all forms of entertainment affect every aspect of our society. In my opinion, movies and televisions really do influence the way that individuals behave. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, films and television provide society with a lot of negative role-models, which many people are willing to emulate. These days, the so-called “anti-hero” is a big part of popular culture. This is a type of character who acts badly around other people, ignores the rules of society and is generally misanthropic in nature. Commonly, these characters glorify excessive alcohol consumption and drug use. My own personal experience is a compelling example of this. When I was in high school, a dear friend of mine was a huge fan of characters like this. While he started high school as a straight-A student, he later began to watch a lot of films which gave him the impression that consuming vast quantities of illegal narcotics was amusing and even desirable behavior. As a result, he barely finished high school and is now unemployed and has few job prospects. Had he not watched so many terrible movies, he would not be in such a desperate situation today.

On the other hand, filmed entertainment also provides people with a lot of positive role models. For people who desire to watch wholesome shows, there is a tremendous variety of family-friendly options to choose from. Programs of this type showcase functioning and stable families. They don't just show traditional and conservative families, but caring, loving people from many different backgrounds and with many different beliefs. For instance, my own family often takes inspiration from the parents and children we see on our favorite family drama, “The Bosby Show.” We are not always able to live up to the ideals presented to us, but they positively influence the way we behave every day.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that television and movies influence the way we almost everyone behaves in modern society. This is because some movies cause us to act in detrimental ways, and because other shows inspire us to emulate positive values. (362 words)



**Question 7:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? People communicate with each other less than in the past because of the popularity of television. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

**Answer:**

These days there is a lot of debate about how television has destroyed communication between human beings. However, I strongly believe that the advent of televised entertainment has not had a negative effect on interpersonal communication. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, I contend that television actually helps people to have more meaningful conversations. In the past, people mostly talked about what they had in common. Often, talk of this sort was quite limited because people lived fairly simple lives. These days, in contrast, individuals can enjoy spirited discussions about the wide array of current events and world affairs that they hear about on television every day. For example, I have a regular Friday lunch date with my work colleagues at a local restaurant. We do talk about office affairs, but most of our conversations are about the wide world around us which we learn about from watching television. We talk about everything from political developments in distant countries to sports results from entirely different continents. I strongly believe that without television to supply us with topics, my colleagues and I would talk mainly about banal office gossip.

Secondly, I am of the opinion that television has mostly replaced solitary activities, rather than replacing interactions with others. It appears that television has mainly taken the place of hobbies like reading and exercising. My own experience is compelling evidence of this. I grew up in a very rural area without access to stable television signals, and as a result I spent most of my free time reading books and magazines. When I started university, however, I moved to a big city and suddenly had access to one hundred channels. Almost immediately, watching shows and movies replaced reading as my primary hobby. I now read almost no books, but as I indicated in the above paragraph I still have meaningful conversations with friends on a regular basis.

In conclusion, I disagree with the idea that the advent of television has harmed communication between friends and family. I feel this way because television supplies us with a variety of topics which we can discuss with our friends, and because television-watching has mostly replaced solitary hobbies rather than social activities.

**Question 8:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “When people succeed, it is entirely because of hard work. Luck has nothing to do with their success.” Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.

**Answer:**

We have all heard stories about people who have achieved success in their life, and we often wonder how they did it. Personally, I believe that success is only the result of hard work and perseverance. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, success is always the result of hard work over a long period of time. Success happens gradually, and only after a series of correct decisions and small victories. A stroke of luck, in contrast, is generally perceived to be a one-time event. The experience of my uncle, a successful entrepreneur, is a compelling example of what I mean. Since 2005, he has run a very profitable technology firm which manufactures and sells a wide range of products. His business started very small when he invested his savings to develop and market a single product and hire his first employee. When that product became popular, my uncle compounded his success by introducing new products and gradually increasing the size of his company. His company later grew from a single employee to include a staff of dozens. While my uncle might have been lucky at one stage of his company’s growth, the long-term success of his firm cannot simply be the result of good fortune.

Secondly, success is usually the result of careful planning, research and education, all of which require a lot of work to achieve. For instance, some people said that my uncle was lucky when his initial product offering was successful. However, he was confident that his product would be a hit even before he started manufacturing it. This is because he spent thousands of dollars on market research and focus groups. It was this investment of time and money, not luck, which assured the early success of his business. Likewise, when his small firm merged with another firm just before that company rose to prominence some called him lucky. However, my uncle had spent weeks interviewing the research and development team at that company and predicted their success based on what they told him. Had he

not been confident of their potential, he would not have completed the merger. Again, this victory was the result of diligence rather than luck, despite what some observers say about it.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that success comes as a result of hard work. This is because success takes a lot of time to achieve, and it also required very careful planning. (423 words)

**Question 9:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Human activity is making the earth a worse place to live. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

The world is changing at a rapid pace nowadays due to the actions of human populations. I am of the opinion that humanity has had a mostly negative effect on the planet. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, industrial development has caused major air pollution, which has a terrible effect on our health. Every week we can hear news reports about how horrible air quality is in major cities all over the world. Additionally, it is often reported that chronic lung diseases are on the rise and that there is a connection between these two trends. I am reminded of the years I spent living in Beijing, which is home to many massive factories. After having spent most of my life living in the Canadian countryside where the air is mostly clean, I immediately noticed the smog and pollution of urban China. Within months I began suffering from a variety of respiratory illnesses and had difficulty breathing. As a result, I spent quite a few afternoons at a local hospital being treated for various throat and lung infections. A majority of the population of the Earth now resides in cities, and they often suffer from similar consequences of industrial development.

Secondly, human development has led to a massive accumulation of trash, which spoils the natural beauty of the planet. While in the past products were often made of biodegradable materials like paper and wood, today most manufactured goods are made of plastic that never breaks down. Such materials sometimes find their way into permanent landfills, but often they just end up as litter. When I traveled to the island of Borneo last summer I was impressed by the beauty of the place, but I also noticed that the natural environment was marred by an accumulation of plastic bags and water bottles that were strewn everywhere. Had I visited the island a century ago I would not have found it tainted in such a way.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that human activity has made the planet a less pleasant place to live. This is because people are more likely

to suffer from the effects of pollution than in the past, and because humans create garbage which has destroyed the natural beauty of our world. (386 words)

**Question 10:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "In twenty years there will be fewer cars in use than there are today."

**Answer:**

Most people agree that cars will always be an important part of society.. In my opinion, in the near future there will be many more vehicles in use that there are nowadays. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, the developing world is rapidly urbanizing, which means that in the future more people will need to drive to their workplace. In the past, most people in developing nations engaged in agricultural labor near their homes. In contrast, today people are more likely to live in apartment buildings far from the businesses and industries where they work. My friend Simon is a compelling example of this. His parents and grandparents worked on farms in northern China. Occasionally, they traveled short distances on foot, but lived out their entire lives fairly close to their birthplace. Simon, on the other hand, moved to a city last year to work in a steel plant and drives almost thirty kilometers from his home to the plant every day. All of his co-workers do the same, which is a pretty significant change compared to the past. I can see no indication that this trend will halt in the future. In fact, it seems likely that even more people will experience this.

Secondly, incomes are rising all over the world, which means that in the future automobiles will be affordable for even more people. In the past, owning a car was a privilege enjoyed only by those living in the developed world. Now, however, consumers in developing countries like China and India purchase millions of cars every year. Simon's experience is also typical of this trend. At the moment he does not own his own car, but instead gets to work by carpooling with a neighbor. However, he dreams of owning a vehicle of his own. While it might make financial sense for him to continue carpooling or take public transportation, he views car ownership as a symbol of affluence. Simon has even indicated to me that someday he hopes to own two automobiles, just like many people in the west.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that in the future there will be more vehicles on the road than there are today. This is because the world is rapidly

urbanizing, and because rising incomes will open up even more markets for automobile companies to sell more cars. (403 words)



**Question 11:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It is better for children to grow up in the countryside than in a large city. Use specific reasons and examples to develop your essay.

**Answer:**

It is critically important that all children be raised in a supportive and healthy environment. In my opinion, it is more advantageous to raise young people in major city, than to raise them in a rural area. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, cities include a vast number of academic and cultural facilities, all of which help the intellectual development of children. A child who visits such places on a regular basis will undoubtedly become extremely interested in some of them. My own experience is a compelling example of this. When I was young I lived in a major urban area, so my parents could easily take me to a cultural event almost every weekend. We attended book readings at the local library, art openings at many of the galleries throughout the city, and literary festivals during the summer. As a result of attending these outings I developed a strong interest in artistic expression, and decided to major in music at university. Now I enjoy a successful career as a recording artist. Had I not visited so many stimulating places as a youngster, I would not be thriving like I am today.

Secondly, children who live in cities are exposed to people from many walks of life, while those in the countryside communicate with only one type of person. Cities are usually magnets for new immigrants to my country, and are populated by individuals from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I think it is useful for children to have friends who come from different walks of life. For instance, my young cousin is growing up in New York, which is the largest city in my country. By the time she was ten years old, she had made friends from five different continents. Although she is still just a college student, she is comfortable interacting with people who speak a variety of languages and who have religious beliefs that are different from her own. Moreover, she recently mentioned that she was able to find employment at a company looking for workers with an international perspective. Accordingly, I think that people who live in cities can enjoy a variety of beneficial interactions.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that it is better for children to grow up cities than in rural areas. This is because cities are home to a variety of educational venues, and because they have very diverse and cosmopolitan populations. (415 words)

**Question 12:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? People today spend too much time on personal enjoyment, and not enough time on more serious duties and obligations. Use details and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

The question of how we should spend our leisure time has been debated for many years. Personally, I feel that people today do not spend too much of their time on personal enjoyment. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, people today spend more time working than ever before, which means that they are spending a lot of time fulfilling serious obligations. Studies indicate that we spend more time at our offices than ever before, and that smart phones and internet access force people to continue working even when we are at home. My own experience is a compelling example of what I mean. I work for a large investment banking firm where my scheduled workday is from nine o'clock to five o'clock, but I actually average about eight hours of overtime every week. I do not do this because I enjoy it, but because I feel obligated to serve my company and earn money for my family. Moreover, almost everyone else at my firm does the same thing. We often compare ourselves to our parents, who almost never worked overtime nor received calls from their bosses on the weekend. For this reason, I think that the present generation emphasizes professional obligations over personal enjoyment.

Secondly, many popular leisure activities include a degree of self-improvement, which means that even our hobbies fall into the realm of duties and obligations. People these days seem to be really into endurance sports like long distance running, which are incredibly beneficial for our health. For instance, I spend most of my free time working out at a local gym. Although this is certainly enjoyable for me, part of why I do it is that it keeps me strong, healthy and fit. This makes me both a better parent to my children and a better employee for my boss. I consider these two aspects of my life that I should be deeply concerned about.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that people today do not spend an inordinate amount of time focusing on things that they like to do. This is because people work longer hours than ever before, and because even our personal hobbies are often centered on self-improvement. (378 words)

**Question 13:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? My lifestyle is easier and more comfortable than the one my grandparents experienced when they were young. Use specific details and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

Many people are nostalgic for the way life was lived in the past because they think that in those days life was more enjoyable. Personally, however, I believe that life has never been as easy as it is right now. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, people today work fewer hours than they did when my grandparents were very young. This increases both our leisure time and our overall happiness. Today, almost all workers enjoy time off on the weekend and, usually, work no more than thirty-six hours per week. This means that people today are able to easily pursue whatever hobbies and interests make them happy. I feel that my own family's history is a good example of this contrast. Many years ago, when my grandparents began their careers, they worked six days per week for a total of about fifty hours. In contrast, I work just five days a week and still receive a full-time salary. My light workloads means that I have time for the sorts of hobbies that my grandparents were only able to take up following their retirement. This makes my life extremely comfortable.

Secondly, advanced home appliances are ubiquitous in the modern era, which makes it easier for people to enjoy fulfilling and interesting daily lives. When my grandparents were young, their kitchen was equipped with no more than a simple stove. Today, in contrast, our kitchens contain a wide range of appliances, including microwaves, toaster ovens, blenders, mixers, and so on. For instance, my own kitchen contains all of these tools. I use them to quickly prepare interesting new foods every night using recipes from countries all over the world. I feel that having culinary adventures increases my well being and overall state of mind. My grandparents ate nutritious and delicious food, but it was really time-consuming and arduous for them to prepare meals because they lacked modern appliances.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that I enjoy a much more comfortable and easy life than my grandparents did when they were young. This is because I work fewer hours, and because I have access to a range of modern devices which make meal preparation easier than ever before. (379 words)

**Question 14:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Sometimes it is better to be dishonest. Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

**Answer:**

(Note that this question came from the Official Guide to the TOEFL, which is a really great book)

Maintaining healthy relationships can be very difficult in today's world, and there are many aspects of our interactions with others that we need to worry about. In my opinion, there are times when it is better to not tell the truth to others. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, telling small lies can sometimes motivate the people we care about to excel. Humans are very competitive and want to be the best at whatever task they have been assigned. Whether they are involved in an athletic event or taking a test at school, they feel more motivated if they think it is possible that they will achieve an impressive result. In cases like these, sometimes lying about their potential can encourage them to perform well. My own experience is a compelling example of this. Last year, my husband signed up for a marathon in our city. I knew that he would struggle to even finish the event, but I wanted him to feel confident about his ability. Accordingly, when he asked me for my opinion, I lied and said that he had a chance of finishing in the top ten. This gave him a lot of confidence and he dedicated himself to training for the marathon. Even though he did not win the race, my small lie was enough to maintain his motivation both before and during the race. Had I told him what I really thought, he might have given up altogether.

Secondly, being honest all of the time can lead to high levels of anxiety. If we tell unpleasant truths, we may spend days or hours worrying about the possible consequences of what we have revealed. For instance, last week a colleague asked me what I thought of her new hairstyle. I was honest, and said that I thought it looked terrible. Though she did not express any anger at my remarks, I could see that she was really hurt by what I said. As a result of this, I spent the rest of the day worrying that I had jeopardized

our friendship. My emotional state greatly reduced my productivity that day, and I am still a bit nervous that my colleague will hold a grudge against me. Had I simply said that her hair looked wonderful, I could have avoided all of these feelings.

In conclusion, I believe that there are times when it is best to not tell the truth to others. This is because lies can motivate people to perform well, and because always being honest can sometimes cause personal turmoil. (438 words)



**Question 15:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Parents are the best teachers. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

(the question used here came from the Official Guide to the TOEFL)

These days, homeschooling is becoming a more and more popular alternative to traditional learning methods and many parents believe that they can do a better job than professional educators. Personally, though, I do not feel that parents are the best teachers. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, parents are biased when it comes to their own children. To be specific, most parents think that their children are the smartest kids in the world. As a result, they often teach them at an inappropriately quick pace, and mistakenly assume that they will be able to keep up. Over the course of an entire school year this can have serious consequences. An old friend of mine is a compelling example of this. Rather than attending his local public school, my friend was taught at home by his mother. His mother had good intentions, but she failed completely at teaching him math. She made the assumption that her son was able to grasp basic concepts right away and moved on immediately to advanced lessons that were above what he would have been learning at the public school. When it came time for my friend to take the annual state-mandated competency tests, he was wholly unprepared and he shocked his mom by earning a failing grade. This example demonstrates that parents are not always the best teachers.

Secondly, parents are not aware of modern teaching methods, and therefore use antiquated and ineffective methods to educate their children. Parents have children at increasingly advanced ages nowadays and when it comes time to teach them, they have been out of school for ten or twenty years. Professional teachers, in contrast, have time for professional development every year of their careers, and work in a collaborative environment where older teachers are kept up to date by their younger colleagues. This means that trained teachers excel at teaching

youngsters of all backgrounds, while parents struggle to educate even their own children. While my friend's mother eventually overcame her difficulty teaching math to her son, the next year she had a lot of trouble motivating him to keep up with his language lessons. She was proactive, though, and sought help from her local school board. The officials at the board put her in touch with a young teacher from a nearby elementary school. He showed her how to use the Internet to help her son find foreign-language resources more suited to his specific interests. Until she got help from that young teacher, she had no idea that the Internet included a wealth of videos, music and games that she could utilize with her son.

In conclusion, I strongly disagree with the idea that parents are the best teachers. This is because parents are biased when it comes to their kids, and because professional teachers benefit from modern techniques and training.

**Question 16:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The knowledge we gain from personal experiences is more valuable than the experience we gain from books. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer. Do not use memorized examples.

**Answer:**

Nowadays, there are many ways for people to learn about the world. In my opinion, the knowledge which we gain from our personal experiences is more important than that which we gain from printed sources. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, books are not always accurate and often contradict what we can find in the real world. This is a result of the fact that books are often written by unqualified authors, but also because even respected and trained academics are subject to their own biases and personal shortcomings. Even if a diligent professor writes a book with the best of intentions and tries to avoid factual errors, his research might be faulty as a result of major shifts in world affairs. My own experience visiting the the Republic of Sokovia several years is a good example of this. Before I took my trip, I read a great number of textbooks, articles and guide books about the region. All of these informed me that Sokovia was a very conservative place, and suggested that the people there might be unwelcoming. However, when I actually got on the ground, I found a very welcoming, progressive culture. Through the books I consulted were only a few years old, they were wholly out of date and did not match my personal experience. This example demonstrates some of the problems with depending too much on books for our knowledge.

Secondly, the knowledge which we gain from personal experiences stays with us longer than that which we gain from reading. Books are often put away and forgotten about shortly after we read them. For example, I was a university student for four years and I read hundreds of books during that time. However, it is now a decade since my graduation and I can only remember just a few of those books. The rest of them all blend together and the knowledge I gained at the time is lost to me now. In contrast, I still have

very vivid memories of the aforementioned trip to Europe. What I learned there about culture, people and society is burned into my memory and I will never forget it. This is because I had a personal connection to my trip, while I had only a temporary academic connection to my university studies.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that knowledge gained from experiences is more important than knowledge gained from reading books. This is because books are sometimes inaccurate, and because our personal memories stay with us longer than the facts we read about in print.

**Question 17:** Neighbors are the people who live near us. In your opinion, what type of neighbor is the best to have?

- someone who is quiet
- someone who we are similar to
- someone who is supportive

Use specific details and examples in your answer.

**Answer:**

Our lives can certainly be affected by the people in our neighborhood, even if we do not interact with them on a daily basis. In my opinion, it is critically important to have neighbors that are very supportive of us. I will explore the reasons why I feel this way in the following essay.

First of all, our lives are full of unplanned emergencies and supportive people in our neighborhood help us most when they occur. Oftentimes, the people living close to us are the only ones who can provide essential assistance when things go terribly wrong. For instance, my family experienced a major house fire several years ago. It was a traumatic experience that happened in the middle of the night, and we lost many of our personal belongings. No one was injured, but we suffered an extreme amount of emotional trauma. However, the damage was reduced thanks to the quick thinking of a compassionate neighbor who immediately called the fire department when he saw what was happening, and who also provided us with clean clothes, food and a place to stay for the night. This example demonstrates how important it is to have kind and supportive neighbors when a crisis happens.

Secondly, it is a lot easier to raise a family in today's hectic society if our neighbors are willing to lend a hand. In addition to unexpected disasters, today we often have to face unplanned professional requests. My own experience demonstrates this reality. Five years ago, I was living with my wife and two sons in our apartment in Tokyo. My wife was at work, and I was home taking care of the children. All of sudden I received a call from my boss who needed me to drive across the city to give a presentation to one of our company's new clients. I panicked at first because I knew I could not take the kids along, however I simply called our next door neighbor and asked if she would keep an eye on them for the rest of the evening. She readily

agreed, so I was able to meet the clients. Had she not been so supportive, I wouldn't have been able to fulfill my boss's request, and I would have faced some repercussions the next day.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that it is incredibly helpful to live near supportive people. This is because such people can help us handle life's unexpected emergencies, and can make it easier to deal with both family and work obligations.

**Question 18:** When you face difficult problems in life, what do you feel is the best way to solve them?

- asking someone with more experience for advice about the problem
- finding information about the problem using the Internet
- taking a long time to think about the problem

Use specific details and examples in your answer. Do not use memorized examples.

**Answer:**

We all face difficult problems in life, and everyone has their own approach to handling them. When I am dealing with a serious dilemma, my preferred solution is to talk to an older and more experienced person about it. There are two reasons why I feel this way, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, most of the problems people have are not particularly special and there are many individuals who have already dealt with identical issues. Therefore, when we have a crisis, there is always an older person in our life who has gone through the exact same thing. Not only that, but they have lived with the consequences of the actions they took to deal with it. My personal history is a compelling example of this. When I was a university freshman ten years ago, I once found myself falling terribly behind on one of my assignments. I could not decide between asking my professor for an extension, which may have made me look lazy in her eyes, or submitting poorly done work, which could have made me look like a terrible student. Fortunately, a sophomore in my department explained that most professors are happy to provide extra time when students ask for it in a polite manner. Moreover, he told me that none of my professors would view me as lazy for making such a request, as they all understood the pressures faced by students.

Secondly, simply vocalizing our problems can help to put them in perspective. Merely having someone to listen to our problems can help us to solve them, even if that person does not have a lot of advice to give

us. For instance, after talking to my father about a problem I was having with my girlfriend last week I realized that it was not the end of the world. Just by talking about the fight we had out loud, I realized that I was overthinking it and that my girlfriend would eventually calm down. Additionally, when I explained to my father that we were fighting about a purchase I made that cost just \$50, I realized that we would both get over it pretty quickly. This came to me even before he voiced his opinion on the matter.

In conclusion, my approach to problem solving is to talk to someone about my problems. I do this because there are many people in my life who have endured the same things, and because vocalizing my issues helps me overcome my worries. (422 words)



**Question 19:** In general, people are living longer now. Which of the following do you think accounts for this phenomenon?

- Technological improvements
- Changes to education systems
- Improvements to our diets

Use specific details and examples in your answer. You may choose more than one cause.

**Answer:**

Without a doubt, people are living longer these days than ever before. In my opinion, this is a result of many helpful technological advances. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, developments in medical science have saved and lengthened many lives. Newly discovered pharmaceuticals and medical devices assist doctors in a wide range of ways. They help in the prevention of illness, in the diagnosis of disease and during treatment. My personal history is a compelling example of this. Several years ago I was diagnosed with skin cancer. Fortunately, my cancer was discovered at a very early stage and my doctor treated me right away. Moreover, I fortunately avoided experiencing any unexpected side-effects. All of this happened at a modern facility at a high-tech hospital close to my home. In contrast, several decades ago my grandfather passed away as a result of prostate cancer. He was diagnosed properly, but not soon enough to save his life. This was because there was simply no technology available to make the diagnosis at that time.

Secondly, modern technology gives individuals much more manageable working lives than people had in the past. These days a lot of tasks are automated, which means they are carried out by computers or robotic systems. This means that, unlike in the past, employees don't need to spend long hours at their workplace every day. For instance, I work just thirty-five hours each week. This gives me plenty of time in the evenings and weekends to get a lot of exercise and to relieve my stress by pursuing my hobbies. Moreover, most of my friends and colleagues have a similar schedule. I am quite certain that my anxiety-free life and healthy body will

help me to live a long time. My uncle, who is much older than I, worked more than forty-five hours each week during his career. Without machines to pick up the slack for him, his duties were physically demanding and he developed a lot of mental health problems as he aged. The toll his work took on his body was a major cause of his early death by heart attack, in my opinion. The comparison of myself and my uncle demonstrate how today's employment conditions help us live longer.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that technology is the main reason why people today live longer than earlier generations. This is because it helps us to avoid serious health problems, and it makes our working lives a lot easier to bear. (425 words)

**Question 20:** People have a lot of opinions about the value of advanced education. Which do you think is the most important reason to attend college or university? Use reasons and examples to support your answer.

- new experiences
- career preparation
- increased knowledge

Use specific details and examples in your answer.

**Answer:**

Nowadays, more people than ever choose to attend university after completing high school. In my opinion, the single most important reason to pursue post-secondary education is to prepare for a career in the future. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, a university degree is required in order to be hired at even the most basic jobs these days. Individuals who have only a high school diploma are employed solely in poorly paying and low-skilled fields. This reality is evident to young people all over the world right now, and so people feel quite a lot of urgency regarding their academic qualifications. For instance, my friends and I have noticed that recently it has even become necessary to have a graduate degree in order to begin a career; no longer is it possible to achieve professional success with just an undergraduate diploma. We all think that this trend will not reverse any time soon, and as a result students will continue to consider their career aspirations when making decisions about what to do when they finish their secondary education.

Secondly, universities provide wonderful opportunities for networking and these help young people find and create high-paying jobs following their graduation. The unemployment rate has been quite high for most of the past decade, and it is very difficult for even well-educated people to become employed. Many experts argue that the people we meet in university play a large role in our long-term professional success. My brother's personal experience is compelling evidence of this. He recently founded a lucrative online business which has provided him with a substantial income over the year. He co-founded the business in a partnership with two like-minded students that he met in a freshman computer science class. My brother often

points out that the relationship which he formed with those students has been even more valuable than his actual degree. In contrast to my brother's success, many of my friends who chose not to attend university currently have a limited set of contacts as their social circles have not expanded since their childhood.

In conclusion, I believe that young people choose to enroll in post-secondary education mostly to prepare for their careers. This is because a university degree is a prerequisite for employment in the modern era, and because universities provide students with valuable opportunities to meet new people.

**Question 21:** Imagine you could improve the town where you live by changing one important thing about it. Which of the following would you choose to do?

- Build additional parks
- Construct more libraries
- Improve public transportation

Use specific details and examples in your answer. Do not use memorized examples.

**Answer:**

(question from the Official Guide to the TOEFL)

There is no shortage of things that could be changed in my hometown. However, if I had the opportunity to make one major improvement, I would choose to create more parks and green spaces. I feel this way for two major reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, parks help people to relax and find serenity, two things which are both in short supply in today's hectic world. Here in my hometown people are usually surrounded by high rise apartments made of dull grey concrete. Moreover, they often deal with long commutes, traffic jams and crowded sidewalks. These sorts of problems make residents of this town very anxious. In many cases, our anxiety gets so extreme that we experience health problems. I strongly believe that building parks could offer a permanent solution. My father is a compelling example of what I mean. For thirty years, he lived and worked in the same city that I do now, but several years ago he was forced into early retirement following a minor heart attack brought about by high blood pressure and workplace stress. However, after his retirement he moved to a more rural location, surrounded by trees, rivers and wildlife. In a short period of time, his stress was alleviated and he began to live a happier and healthier life. I am certain that by building some parks in the city where I live, my neighbors and I could enjoy similar benefits.

Secondly, the construction of parks will not just benefit our mental health, but will also encourage physical fitness among the population. Not everyone is able to afford a gym membership, and our crowded sidewalks

and streets are not suited for jogging or bicycling. The construction of parks would provide children with a place to run around and adults with a location to participate in team sports. When my father moved to the countryside, it was not only his worries that went away. He also lost a considerable amount of weight because he made the decision to begin each morning with a brisk walk in the forest. Even if I wanted to follow his example, doing so would be impossible where I live as the streets are too crowded for casual walking. While my father is recovering from his illness, I fear that I might get worse and worse if things do not change soon.

In conclusion, if I could change one thing about my hometown I would choose to convert some of our concrete and steel surroundings to beautiful parks and green spaces. This is because such spaces would benefit both the mental and physical health of me and my neighbors. (446 words)

**Question 22:** These days, people enjoy a lot of time away from their work and school obligations. Many people use this time to visit new places and learn about them. What do you think is the best way to learn about a place you are visiting for the first time?

- Going to a museum
- Joining a guided tour of popular attractions
- Visiting a popular shopping area

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

As travel becomes increasingly accessible, more and more people take long vacations every year. I am of the belief that visiting a museum is the best way to get to know a new destination. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, modern museums are very exciting and accessible, which means they are a great way to acquire new knowledge. These days, museums are designed to be inviting to the general public. In the past, they often contained stuffy and uninteresting exhibitions of boring artifacts, but modern museums contain interactive and stimulating hands-on displays. My own experience while traveling last month in Canada is a compelling example of this. While visiting the city of Winnipeg last year, I spent an afternoon in Canada's National Human Rights Museum. This state-of-the-art facility contains touch-screen displays, and a plethora of sensor-activated exhibits all of which delighted me. I even attended a presentation given by an expert historian that I had read about on the museum's website the day before. My visit taught me an enormous amount about the history of Canada. I feel that there are many similarly interactive museums all over the world nowadays.

Secondly, museums are not focused on making a profit, so they provide an unbiased perspective. These days there are a lot of guided tours available to tourists, but since the operators want to keep their customers happy they might ignore some of the negative aspects of a city or country.

While it is relaxing to be guided by someone else, a tour won't teach us as much as a visit to a local museum. Ten years ago, I was fortunate enough to visit the Central European country of Sokovia. The person who guided my tour of the capital city there was a gregarious person and entertained me and my family with a lot of hilarious jokes, but I felt that his tour was a little superficial. When we visited the State Museum a few days later, we were able to see an exhibit about Sokovia's civil war of the early twentieth century, which highlighted some of the negative actions take by the country's government. Had I not visited the museum, I wouldn't have learned anything about that period of time.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that people should visit museums when they take a holiday. This is because museums are increasingly being designed with mass appeal in mind, and because they can provide a very complete picture of a country's history. (423 words)



**Question 23:** People in society work in many different settings, and for a variety of reasons. What do you think is the main reason why people have jobs?

- to feel happier about their lives
- to save money for the future
- to develop new skills

Use specific examples and details to support your answer.

### **Answer**

Only a very narrow minded person would suggest that making money is the sole reason why people go to work each day. Personally, I believe that people find jobs to feel happier about their daily lives. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, having a job gives our life a sense of purpose, which is good for our mental health. The objectives of our job are something to strive for each day, and make it easy to establish both long and short term goals. Without a job, people often feel that their life lacks a sense of purpose. My own experience is a compelling example of this. In 2008, after ten years of working in a fast-paced corporate environment, I was laid off from my job. Even though I was financially secure and did not need to get another position right away I felt extremely depressed because I did not have an official job. Pursuing my hobbies was fun, but I lacked something to strive for each day. This is because at work I had always been given sales objectives and profit objectives to work towards and without those I felt depressed. Accomplishing professional goals always gave me a great sense of satisfaction.

Secondly, jobs give us opportunities to meet new people on a regular basis, which can provide us with a sense of happiness. People who are unemployed interact mostly with their family and old friends, which can sometimes be boring. When I was in high school, I worked in a local supermarket. Although the job did not give me a very high salary, I often look back on that experience with fondness; indeed, in many ways it was the best job I have ever had. I was very happy to chat with the eclectic assortment of customers who came in each day. They all came from

radically different backgrounds than me, and as a result it was stimulating to learn about their lives. Even though I now work at a job that pays me a much higher wage, I do miss my low-paying supermarket job sometimes.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that one of the main reasons people work is to feel better about their lives. This is because a job gives us goals to strive for, and opportunities to make connections with interesting people.  
(389 words)

**Question 24:** Everyone wants to be as healthy as possible. Fortunately, in modern society there are many things that people can do to improve their physical condition. What do you think is the best way to stay healthy?

- Get exercise on a regular basis
- Eat healthy food every day
- Visit a doctor for regular examinations

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

Maintaining our health is one of the most effective ways of guaranteeing that we live a long and prosperous life. I do many things in order to stay fit, but the most important is maintaining a healthy diet. There are two reasons why I think this is critically important, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, eating healthy food prevents obesity, which is the cause of many very serious illnesses. Obesity is debilitating all by itself, but it also leads to a variety of other diseases, including diabetes, arthritis and cancer. If we are not aware of this connection when making decisions about the food which we eat, we will suffer serious consequences. My eldest cousin is a compelling example of this. While my cousin maintained a healthy weight throughout high school and university (despite eating a lot of unhealthy snacks and junk food), when he entered adulthood his metabolism changed and he began to rapidly gain weight. My cousin is not a particularly self-conscious individual and was never bothered by how his weight gain affected his appearance, so he continued on this course for many years. However, he was eventually diagnosed with diabetes, which has had a profound effect on his quality of life. As a result, he regrets not being more careful about his dietary choices.

Secondly, eating healthy food gives us a lot of energy, which makes it easier to succeed in our personal and professional pursuits. It is no secret that people who lack certain vitamins and nutrients do not have the energy necessary to complete even simple tasks. For instance, when I was a university student I often skipped meals because I was extremely busy completing my academic work. As a result of not eating proper meals, I

started to suffer from fatigue and lethargy. My grades began to drop because when it came time to write my tests I could barely keep my eyes open long enough to answer the questions. Moreover, my assignments were poorly done because my fatigue made me unable to keep up with deadlines. The following year, though, I was a bit more diligent about making intelligent food choices and my grades quickly recovered.

In conclusion, the most important thing we can do to stay healthy is to maintain a nutritious diet. This is because eating the right food prevents obesity and related diseases, and because it gives us the energy to keep up with our academic and professional obligations. (414 words)

**Question 25:** The people we work with have many different characteristics and all of them affect the quality of our time at work. Of the following, what do you think is the most important quality for a boss or supervisor to have?

- a serious attitude about their work
- a lot of related experience
- a tendency to always tell the truth

You may choose more than one. Use specific details and examples in your answer.

**Answer:**

People today spend an enormous amount of time at their workplace, and how much they enjoy that time really depends on the attributes of their supervisor. I am of the opinion that there are two main characteristics of a good boss, which are his attitude and his experience. I will explore these two factors in the following essay.

First of all, we are more likely to learn from a supervisor who is very experienced in their field. When we are just starting out in our career we absorb new information like sponges, and even older workers can learn from supervisors who have a lot of related experience. My own personal history is a compelling example of this. When I began working as a teacher ten years ago, my supervisor, Simon, had been working in education for more than ten years. I was just out of college and knew very little about creating effective lesson plans, engaging with students or even how to complete my paperwork. Simon took the time to show me what he had learned over the previous decade, and therefore I was soon able to keep up with my officemates. In contrast, when I moved to a new school earlier this year, my supervisor actually had less experience teaching than I did. Moreover, when I struggled with certain aspects of my job, he couldn't suggest ways to improve. As a result, my professional development slowed down.

Secondly, a serious boss is more likely to maintain a positive office environment. This is because they encourage the people under them to act professionally. For instance, my sister once told me that her first job was difficult because of how toxic her office was. Workers often gossiped, tried to avoid doing their duties and even arrived late. This was acceptable

because most of the supervisors in the firm behaved in the exact same way. My sister was miserable because she prides herself on her diligence and her ability to complete her tasks with care and enthusiasm. If her bosses had been more serious, this would not have happened.

In conclusion, I believe that experience and seriousness are the hallmarks of a good supervisor. This is because we can learn a lot from a knowledgeable boss, and because employees will strive to emulate a supervisor who acts with professionalism. (387 words)

**Question 26:** All around the world, people are living longer than ever before. Which of the following do you think are the main causes of this phenomenon? You may choose more than one option.

- The development of new technology
- Changes to our eating habits
- Improvements to our working conditions

Use specific reasons and details to develop your essay. Do not use memorized examples.

**Answer:**

There are many different reasons why humans live longer and healthier lives than ever before. In my opinion, there are two main reasons why people are living longer, which are improvements in medical technology and better working conditions. In the following essay, I will explore these two factors.

First of all, medical technology has developed a lot in the past few decades, and can both prevent and cure many different illnesses. Hundreds of diseases that might have killed us in the past can now be treated in safe and non-invasive ways. Not only that, but technology can be used to identify potential illnesses even before they occur. For example, I was told that my great-grandfather died of a heart attack when he was just forty-five years old, despite appearing outwardly healthy to his family. However, thanks to modern medicine, I now know that males in my family have a genetic tendency to develop heart disease. Thanks to this information I am very careful about my diet and get plenty of exercises. When I am older I will begin taking blood thinning medicine as a preventive measure. My great-grandfather did not have access to technology that could predict his illness, and was not able to protect himself.

Secondly, improved working conditions help us live longer, as humans today have safer and less strenuous jobs than people in the past. For instance, my great-grandfather was not the only male in my family to die at a young age. His brother passed away when he was in his fifties. His brother did not die from heart disease, but died from lung cancer caused by the years he spent working in a dirty coal mine. The physical toll of his work

and the dusty air he breathed every day made him extremely sick. He was not the only person in his society to be killed by his job, as it was common for men and women to work in dangerous jobs in terribly unsafe factories. People back then had neither safe working conditions nor effective safety equipment. Modern rules and regulations, however, prevent the same tragedies from happening today.

In conclusion, I believe that people live longer today for two main reasons. They are that doctors have access to a wide range of technology to both cure and prevent illnesses, and because our jobs are safer and less taxing than in the past. (399 words)



**Question 27:** During our careers, we work with many different kinds of people. All of them have unique characteristics and personality traits. In your opinion, which of the following is the most important characteristic of a coworker?

- a serious attitude regarding their work obligations
- a willingness to learn new things
- the ability to make other people laugh

You may choose more than one of these options. Use reasons and specific examples to explain your answer. Do not use memorized examples.

**Answer:**

Everyone in the world spends an enormous amount of time at their workplace, and how much they enjoy their job depends largely on how much they like their coworkers. I am of the opinion that there are two main characteristics of a good co-worker, which are a serious attitude and a willingness to learn new things. I will explore these two factors in the following essay.

First of all, coworkers who approach their tasks with a serious attitude are desirable because they help to maintain an efficient work environment. People who behave in a professional manner are less likely to be lazy and pass their responsibilities off to others. This always makes life much easier for everyone in an organization. For example, last summer the staff at my company felt overwhelmed by the number of assignments we had to complete. It was our busy season, and we had a number of unexpected orders come in from our international clients. Filling these orders required everyone to focus intently on their specific areas of responsibility. While this meant that some employees were working longer hours than others, no one complained about the situation. Instead, we all maintained a professional demeanor, and as a result we were able to get through the season.

Secondly, if workers feel comfortable learning new things, they will be more likely to adapt to rapid changes at their workplaces. The techniques and theories that people learned at school just a decade ago are quickly

becoming obsolete. Employees who are unwilling to learn from their younger colleagues often create unpleasant workplaces. My own experience is a compelling example of what I mean. Last year my firm hired a new employee who had more than twenty years of experience in our industry. While at first glance he seemed like a perfect addition to our organization, his techniques were wholly out of step with the modern world. Not only that, but he became apprehensive and belligerent when younger staff members tried to show him about current trends in our industry. Eventually he was dismissed from the firm because of the negative effect he had on his coworkers.

In conclusion, I believe that professionalism and a willingness to learn new things are the hallmarks of a good employee. This is because a professional attitude is necessary to ensure a smooth and efficient work environment, and because in today's rapidly changing world it is always necessary to learn new skills and techniques. (409 words)

**Question 28:** Some students prefer classes with frequent discussions between the professor and the students with almost no lectures. Other students prefer classes with many lectures and almost no discussions. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

(question from the Official Guide to the TOEFL)

Every student has their own preferred learning style, and therefore it is impossible to accommodate all of them. In my opinion, the best classes are those which include a lot of discussions. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, classes where we have the opportunity to speak help to develop our intellectual abilities. Classes where the teacher does most of the talking are very passive, on the other hand, and do not help us grow academically. They mostly involve the memorization of facts and details which do not help us in the long run. For example, I recently took a political science class that changed the way I think about the world. The cut and thrust of debate in the class made me consider where my political beliefs came from and if they were even correct. I was required to listen to the opinions of others, so I was a more open-minded person after the class finished. I believe that I would not have developed in such a way by just listening to lectures. This example demonstrates how valuable intellectual conversations can be.

Secondly, classes that involve a lot of interactions can help students develop the skills necessary to work well in groups. Many freshman students arrive at university very shy and unable to communicate well. Talking with their peers teaches students how to communicate effectively, and they can use this skill to excel in their future careers. My older brother's experience demonstrates that this is true. When he started university he was a very introverted person and did not enjoy collaborating with others. However, after four years of participating in debates, discussions and presentations in his classes he became a very confident public speaker. As a result, when he began his career after graduation, he excelled in group work and was seen by his co-workers and supervisors as a natural leader. He was promoted

quickly and advanced through the ranks of his company. Without participating in discussions with his professors and classmates he would not have developed the skills necessary to succeed in this way.

In conclusion, I feel strongly that classes which are centered on discussions between professors and students are preferable to those in which the professor does all of the talking. This is because these classes help students develop academically, and because they teach students the skills that they need to achieve success in the future. (411 words)

**Question 29:** Some people like to travel with a companion. Other people prefer to travel alone. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice. (Adapted from a question in the Official TOEFL Guide).

**Answer:**

These days tourism is more accessible than ever, and everyone has their favorite travel style. Personally, I think it is a really wise idea to travel with a partner. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, going on a trip with a companion is more economical than vacationing alone. As a result of leisure travel becoming more and more popular, hotel operators have raised their prices to astronomical levels. Discounts for solo travelers are fairly uncommon nowadays, so sharing a room with a friend is an effective way to cut costs. Not only that, but people traveling in pairs have better access to package deals on tours, entrance fees and other activities. My own experience is compelling evidence of this. When my girlfriend and I traveled together through Peru last year, we were able to rent an entire hotel room for less than the cost of two separate beds in a shared dorm. Over the course of our month-long trip, we saved several hundred dollars in this way. Because we saved so much money, we were able to change our plans and extend our trip for almost an entire week. Had we not taken the trip together, we would not have been able to do that.

Moreover, it is much easier to talk to local people when traveling in a pair, and this makes a trip much more rewarding. While a lone stranger can be seen as intimidating, a traveling couple is often considered more approachable. For instance, when my girlfriend and I took the trip to South America that I mentioned above, we were often welcomed into people's homes and businesses with open arms. The individuals who invited us often pointed out that they were willing to do so because we looked so happy, friendly and cheerful spending time together. In contrast, when I visited Bolivia by myself the previous year, I wanted to make the same kinds of connections, but it was almost impossible to achieve my goal. It is true that

a solitary traveler may actually be quite kind and outgoing, this can be somewhat difficult to determine from a distance.

In conclusion, I definitely prefer to travel with a companion rather than alone. This is because there are significant financial benefits of doing so, and because traveling with a partner makes it easy to interact with strangers.  
(402 words)

**Question 30:** Some people think that the government should use extra money to fund programs to improve the environment. Others think that it is better for the government to spend money to support artistic programs. Which option do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

In today's turbulent society, it is difficult for us to determine the best way to help the world. In my opinion, spending money to help protect the environment is more important than donating to the arts. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, environmental problems are a more urgent concern than issues surrounding the arts. While we are certainly living in a society where the arts are severely underfunded, the environment is a matter of life and death for many people. The consequences of environmental degradation not only hit close to home, but also affect human beings all over the planet. For example, I recently read a report in a major newspaper which pointed out that within three decades certain countries in South Asia will suffer from catastrophic flooding as a result of global warming. One country that was mentioned was Bangladesh, which just happens to be the poorest nation in the region. Public officials are trying to deal with the issue, but because of the poverty in that country they are wholly unable to do so. This means that nations in the developed world need to fund programs that will help them deal with the looming crisis.

Secondly, it is possible for artistic and cultural programs to be privately funded. Many businesses and individuals are willing donate to artists in exchange for promotional considerations. Not only that, but the Internet has made it possible for artists to fund their work through online "crowdfunding" promoted through social networking sites. For instance, there is a community theater group in my hometown which recently lost a significant portion of its public funding following recent budget cuts by the municipal government. While the situation looked dire at first, the group was able to attract financial support from companies who wanted to have their logo displayed on theater programs and in the lobby of their building. In addition, the company used the Internet to raise money from individual donors who

were happy to help their favorite theater group. These examples demonstrate some of the methods that artists can use to attract funding to replace government support in times of economic trouble. The amounts of money needed to solve environmental programs, in contrast, cannot be raised using such methods.

In conclusion, I feel that if the government is forced to make a choice, it should choose to fund environmental programs rather than the arts. I feel this way because environmental problems are a more critical concern, and because the arts can often be privately funded. (431 words)



**Question 31:** Some people like to spend their money as soon as they earn it, while others think it is better to save their money for some time in the future. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion. Do not use memorized examples.

**Answer:**

Money concerns are a major cause of stress and anxiety in the modern world. In my opinion, it is a really wise idea to save money for the future. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, older people are able to make better financial decisions than youngsters due to their experience and maturity. Young people, who have very little worldliness, are prone to spending their money on products that are mostly useless and which they quickly tire of. Older people, on the other hand, know which purchases will result in long-term happiness and satisfaction. My own experience is a compelling example of this. When I was young, I spent a tremendous amount of money on video games and comic books which I enjoyed only for a short time. Later, when I enrolled in university, I did not have enough savings to pay for my tuition, and was forced to take out a significant number of student loans. Even today, several years after graduation, I regret not saving much money as a teenager. These days I am a lot more conservative when it comes to spending, and carefully consider all of my future expenses.

Secondly, life is full of unexpected emergencies which can cause a lot of anxiety if we do not have a lot of money saved up. According to reports in the media, more than seventy-five percent of all bankruptcies in my country are the result of medical bills. I am totally aware that it is humiliating to lose our financial independence in this way. For example, last year my uncle suffered a major heart attack which required him to undergo very expensive cardiac surgery. He did not have enough money to pay for this procedure, so he had to ask his elderly parents for a loan. They were able to help him because they had resisted the urge to spend and saved money through their entire lives. He felt extremely embarrassed about begging his

parents for assistance, especially as he could have avoided the situation by emulating their frugal behavior.

In conclusion, I believe that it is better to save money for the future rather than spend it right away. I feel this way because we gain the ability to make better financial decisions as we mature, and because saving money helps us avoid the humiliating effects of unexpected financial emergencies.  
(405 words)

**Question 32:** 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? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

**Answer:**

(note that this question came from the Official Guide to the TOEFL, 4th Edition, which is a really great resource)

Everyone has different dreams when it comes to where they wish to live. Personally, I think it is very desirable to live in a large city. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, cities offer a great environment for raising children, and I am a person who values family above all else. Urban areas have numerous parks and recreation centers which encourage children to lead vital and healthy lives, and they also have well-funded community centers which contribute to the intellectual development of young people. My own experience demonstrates the value of such facilities. Both my husband and I work full time jobs, and are not home when our two sons finish school. This is not a problem, though, as both of them go directly to a local community center when their classes are over. Our eldest son participates in a computer club there, while our youngest son practices photography. Their participation in these programs sets my mind at ease, as without access to the community center they would just sit at home all alone. This situation compares favorably to a friend of mine who lives in a small town and recently had to hire an expensive babysitter to watch her children when they get home from school, as she was not able to locate any meaningful activities for them to take part in.

Secondly, large cities offer cultural experiences that adults can enjoy and appreciate. Most major cities have a plethora of museums, ethnic restaurants, libraries, theater groups and other stimulating and cosmopolitan facilities. My city is no exception. For instance, my colleagues and I spend every Friday evening visiting a new ethnic restaurant for dinner. Over the past three months we have enjoyed food from more than a dozen different national cuisines. Meanwhile, my sons and I go to a different museum once a month and I have found that I enjoy our visits almost as much as they do. These are the sort of outings that are only possible in a heavily-populated

urban area. Small towns offer easy access to beautiful natural scenery, but I prefer the intellectual and cultural stimulation that my city offers.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that living in a large city is preferable to living in a small town. This is because cities are better places to raise children, and because they offer stimulating intellectual and cultural experience that grown-ups can enjoy.

**Question 33:** Some students prefer to study and do homework alone. Others prefer to study and work on class assignments with a group of fellow students. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

Everyone has their own favorite study methods, and all of them have specific benefits. I am of the opinion that it is better to study alone than to study as part of a group. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, studying alone helps us to focus on specific areas of a subject that we are struggling with, rather than doing a broad overview of the subject. Diligent students always attend classes and communicate regularly with their professors and teachers, so they are constantly aware of which topics they need to focus on when they study. When people study in a group, everyone in the group has different needs, and the study session is required to touch on all of them. My own experience is a compelling example of this. As a freshman four years ago, I was not aware of the aforementioned drawback and found myself wasting my time studying in a group for an important European history exam. I knew that I really needed to focus on religious history, but sat uncomfortably through a group study session that progressed through political, cultural, scientific, literary and artistic history before touching only briefly on the issue of religion. As a result, I performed worse on the test than I would have if I had just studied alone.

Furthermore, when people study in a group they are easily distracted. Many people will agree that they desire to socialize rather than study when they get together with their friends and classmates. For instance, in the group I mentioned above not only did I suffer from the fact that we only touched briefly on my problem area, but certain group members (including myself) were easily drawn off-topic. We were quick to make jokes about the material being covered, or make tenuous and meaningless connections between those topics and our own lives. Thankfully I have avoided this problem since then as I have decided to always prepare for exams by myself.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that studying alone is better than studying in a group. This is because it allows me to focus on the areas that I need to, and because it helps me to avoid socializing when I should be doing real academic work.

**Question 34:** Some people prefer to eat meals at restaurants, while others prefer to prepare and eat food in their own home. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

These days, people enjoy a plethora of dining options, as it is now possible to eat food at wonderful restaurants serving food from around the world, or to use modern technology to prepare great food in the comfort of our own homes. Personally, I prefer to eat at home, rather than going out. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, meals cooked at home are healthier than meals from restaurants, and I strongly value my health. While meals prepared at restaurants are certainly delicious, they usually include a lot of oil, salt and sugar. Over consumption of unhealthy ingredients can have a profound effect on our health, and can even lead to chronic illnesses. When I cook for myself at home, I precisely measure the amounts of everything that goes into my food and try my best to limit unhealthy ingredients whenever possible. It is true that my meals may not taste quite as nice as those I might get at a fancy restaurant, but I still enjoy my creations. Rather than enjoying just the taste of the food, much of my pleasure is derived from the enjoyment that went into the cooking of it, and the peace of mind that I gain from knowing that I am taking care of my body.

Secondly, these days restaurants are increasingly expensive. I do not blame the restaurants for this because I know they must pay a lot for labor, real estate and utilities, but it is true that a meal that might cost five dollars to prepare at home will cost ten times that amount when served to me at a restaurant. Moreover, my country has a tipping culture, which adds increased costs every time I eat out. For example, I remember last month how I paid about fifteen dollars for a simple meal of fish and chips. Potatoes are clearly one of the most inexpensive vegetables in the world, and since I live near the sea, fresh fish can be bought at a local market for just a few dollars a pound. I enjoyed myself, but the amount I paid for it made me feel like I was being irresponsible with my money.

In conclusion, I certainly prefer to eat at home rather than at a restaurant. I feel this way because eating at home is healthier, and it makes a lot more economic sense than going out for an expensive meal. (413 words)



**Question 35:** Some people think that they can learn much more by themselves than if they work with a teacher. Others think that it is always better to get help from a skilled teacher. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons to support your choice.

**Answer:**

Everyone realizes that it is important to improve our skills and abilities. I am of the opinion that it is much better to study with a teacher than it is to study alone. I feel this way for two main reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, studying with a teacher helps us to stay focused and avoid distractions, which are two things that people today often struggle with. Nowadays, we have a lot of technological distractions right at our fingertips, including smartphones, social networking websites and streaming videos. Even when we make firm plans, it is difficult to stay focused on our studies because it is so easy to consume some frivolous entertainment instead. My own experience is a compelling example of this. When I was attempting to learn English for the first time, my studies faltered because I pulled out my phone whenever I hit a difficult part in my exercise book. When I switched to studying with a tutor, however, she scolded me whenever I tried to use a phone in class. Additionally, whenever I tried to begin some idle small talk in order to avoid hard work, she changed the subject back to learning English. I progressed much more quickly with her than I did while studying on my own.

Secondly, most of us have an inflated sense of our own intelligence, which causes problems when we try to study alone. Many people believe that with just a nice textbook they can master any topic on their own. They are of the opinion that they can create a curriculum all by themselves and formulate their own study plan. However, this is something that only trained experts are actually very good at. For example, when I first started learning English I studied all by myself. I wrote complicated lesson plans and schedules that I thought would match my progress. Sadly, I did not learn as quickly as I anticipated and my plans fell apart. When I started studying with a talented and experienced tutor, she immediately assessed my needs and

ability level and created a more realistic timeline for me. As a result, I have been able to make realistic progress without feeling discouraged.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that studying with a teacher is better than studying alone. This is because teachers help us to avoid distractions, and because they can help us form realistic goals and objectives. (407 words)

**Question 36:** The administrators of a university are revising their budget and have decided to change their funding priorities. As a result, the university will now spend more money on sports and athletic facilities than they do on the campus libraries. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.

**Answer:**

It is very challenging for university administrators to decide how to spend their money. Personally, I am of the belief that universities should provide more funding for athletics than they do for libraries. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

To begin with, most universities offer identical academic programs, and are only able to set themselves apart from the crowd through the popularity of their sports teams. These days there are hundreds of universities across the United States which are almost entirely interchangeable, while only a few Ivy League schools are considered better than average. It may seem somewhat arbitrary, but a sports team can help a school stand out from the crowd and attract new students. For example, my cousin is a very average student. When he graduated from high school a few years ago, he chose to attend California State College based solely on the fact that he loves basketball and that school is known for its on-court success. This may seem superficial to some people, but it mattered a lot to him. Moreover, according to recent surveys he is not the only student who chose to attend the school for this reason. It is clear that the college earned his loyalty as a result of the care and attention it has paid to its athletic program.

Secondly, sports are very profitable and are a good source of revenue in today's precarious economic times. Schools across the nation are facing

a funding crisis, but they still need to build academic facilities and dormitories for new students. University sports are a huge business in my country, and are even more popular than professional sports in a lot of areas. Therefore, athletic teams can generate money for their schools through corporate sponsorships, ticket sales, licensing and broadcast agreements. These profits can then be used to pay for academic facilities, including libraries. For instance, my school recently built a state-of-the-art biology lab using the money it made from its popular football team. It would not have been able to afford the construction without that revenue.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that colleges should provide more funding to their sports teams than they do to their libraries. This is because sports help universities stand out in today's crowded market of schools, and because the profits they generate can be used to fund other programs. (400 words)

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**Question 38:** It is very important for students to learn as much as possible before their graduation from university. For this reason, many schools require students to attend all of their classes in person in order to achieve a passing score. Do you agree or disagree with this kind of policy? Use specific reasons and examples to support your argument.

**Answer:**

As technology develops and ideas about learning change, there are many different opinions about whether it should still be mandatory for students to attend classes. Personally, I support policies that require students to actually be present for all of their classes. I will explore why I feel this way in the following essay.

To begin with, being physically present in a class makes it more likely that a student will participate in lively conversations and debates, and this will help him following his graduation. A university education is not just about writing essays and getting grades. It is also about spending time in a stimulating academic environment. It is critically important for students to share their opinions with their peers, and even to engage in healthy debates with their professors. Exchanges of this type shape young minds, and students who miss out on them do not get as much from their degree as they ought to. My own experience is a compelling example of this. I learned an enormous amount about effective communication by participating in classroom discussions as an undergraduate. Moreover, classroom discussions showed me how to support my opinions with facts, and also how to remain polite when talking with others. My finely honed communication skills were very useful when it came time for me to work a professional job.

Secondly, attending classes helps students to network with like-minded people, which also makes it easier to find jobs following their graduation. As I said above, students are likely to talk to their classmates during lectures. This not only helps them to become effective communicators, but also helps them form relationships and friendships with their classmates. For instance, after my graduation, I was able to get recommendations and referrals from classmates who had already been hired by prestigious firms. These connections were critical when it came to landing

job interviews and eventual employment. Had I not developed close relationships with my peers, I would not be happy with my career today.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that it is still very important for students to attend classes. This is because doing so helps them to perfect their communication skills, and because the opportunities for networking that classes provide are extremely valuable.



**Question 39:** "It is important to improve our skills and knowledge as much as possible. Some people prefer to learn from individuals who have more experience than they do - like teachers and supervisors - instead of learning from peers, like their colleagues and classmates. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not?"

**Answer:**

Almost everyone agrees that improving our skills and abilities is a great way to ensure a more prosperous life. Personally, I feel that it is people above us, like our teachers and our bosses, who can teach us the most. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, people with real-world experience can provide more complete and comprehensive lessons.. Young people like myself are full of bright ideas and plans for the future, but our ideas are all hypothetical or based on assumptions instead of hard facts. My own experience is a compelling example of this. Following my graduation from university, I drew up plans to start a small software development firm. My plans were exceptionally detailed, and I was confident that my business would be a success. However, when I consulted with one of my former professors, his advice opened my eyes to the fact that my plan was missing key points. I had concentrated on all of the most exciting aspects of starting a business, but I had not given much thought to the more mundane details I would have to sort out, like how to rent office space or how to pay my taxes. His years of tangible experience opened my eyes to such topics.

Moreover, people who are above us are more likely to actually be trained as educators, which means they can more effectively provide instruction. A young person who is a master of his particular field of expertise may be unable to teach others about it if he lacks experience conveying information to beginners. For example, several years ago I shared an introductory physics class with Philip, a close friend of mine. Philip excelled in all of his classes, and achieved particularly impressive grades in the sciences. One week when I was struggling in the class Philip offered to tutor me so that I could keep up. Our tutoring sessions did not go well – try as he might, Phil was unable to help me understand even the most basic topics. In desperation, I visited our professor to seek assistance. To my surprise, she

was able to correct my misunderstandings after only half an hour of conversation. It was not her depth of knowledge of the topic that permitted her to achieve this, but her training as an educator.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that we can learn more from individuals who are above us than we can from people on our own level. This is because older people tend to have more experience than younger people, and because they are more likely to have training in education and instruction. (450 words)

**Question 40:** Nowadays, the world is developing at a very rapid pace and we are constantly forced to make a lot of choices that can affect the rest of our lives. Do you agree or disagree with the idea that should always ask someone else for help when we need to make an important decision? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your choice.

**Answer:**

The choices we make today can profoundly influence our future. Personally, I feel that we should never make important decisions on our own. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, while we might think our lives are unique, there is always someone close to us that has been in a similar situation. By consulting someone who has made a similar decision in the past, we can more carefully weigh our options. My personal experience is a compelling example of this. When I graduated from high school five years ago I was forced to choose between enrolling in either a trade school or a university. I knew that a trade school would lead to more reliable employment in the future, but I also knew that a university would provide a more stimulating intellectual environment. I did not think that my old-fashioned and practical-minded parents had struggled with the same dilemma in their youth, but when I talked it out with my father I found out that despite his conservative nature he had considered studying the liberal arts. As we talked about his motivations, and some of the regrets associated with his ultimate choice, I was able to more fully consider all of my own options.

Secondly, when we make decisions alone, we are more likely to make rash and impulsive moves. Talking about a problem with another person takes time, and thus our decision making process is slowed down. For example, when I decided to buy a new car last year I made purchase the very same day that the idea popped into my head. It seemed like a wonderful idea at the time because gas prices were low and there was plenty of parking available on campus. However, when I told one of my classmates about my purchase she reminded me that gas prices always shoot up when we least expect them to, and that parking was only easy to find at that time because it was summer vacation and many students were away. Had I talked about

these issues before buying the car, I might have reconsidered whether or not it was a wise idea.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that it is never a smart idea to make decisions without first talking to someone about them. This is because there is always someone in our life who has had to deal with a similar situation, and because talking about issues prevents us from acting impulsively. (418 words)

**Question 41:** Consider a situation where you are asked by your supervisor to work with one of your co-workers on a project. This co-worker has opinions that are very different than yours and they feel very strongly about these opinions. Do you think this is a good idea? Use reasons and examples to support your answer.

**Answer:**

It is always a challenge to collaborate with our colleagues on important projects. Personally, I believe that it is extremely beneficial to work on assignments with people who do not share our opinions. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, co-workers who do not share our beliefs can often show us solutions that we would not ordinarily come up with. We can sometimes get stuck in our ways if we spend too many years at a job, and this can negatively affect our problem-solving skills. However, if we are exposed to people with radically different perspectives we can make unexpected breakthroughs. My personal experience is a compelling example of this. A few years ago I was employed as an intern at a local magazine. I was given the task of getting new companies to buy advertising in the magazine. I was convinced that only large retailers would want to promote themselves in the publication, but when I called a few they just weren't interested. As a result, my boss assigned my colleague Jeff to help me out. He was of the opinion that local cafes would be more likely to partner with us. Right after we started calling them we quickly sold all of our advertising space. I was quite certain that I was correct in my original belief, and had it not been for Jeff's input I would have totally failed at my work.

Secondly, working with individuals who have different opinions is a wonderful way to improve our communication skills. In cases like these, we need to speak clearly and persuasively to win others over. For instance, when I was a graduate student I worked as teaching assistant together with a classmate. I thought that our students should be punished harshly for submitting essays after the given deadlines, but he was more liberal and wanted to give them generous extensions. To convince him to change his mind I had to debate his stance using effective reasoning and well-articulated logic. This helped

me to be a powerful communicator, which has served me well in my career since then.

In conclusion, I feel that working with people who do not share our opinions is very advantageous. This is because they can improve the way we carry out tasks, and because such situations can really improve our ability to convey our ideas.

**Question 42:** Imagine that your city government has given permission for a major company to build a large factory near your neighborhood. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? Explain your position using specific reasons and examples.

**Answer:**

The presence of factories near residential zones is a very controversial topic in modern society. personally, I would wholeheartedly support the construction of a factory near my town. I feel this way for two reasons, which I will explore in the following essay.

First of all, my community desperately needs the jobs that a factory would provide. I live in an economically disadvantaged region which has suffered from high unemployment rates for more than fifty years. This has had some very serious effects on the town, including high rates of child poverty and crime, as well as poorly developed public services. This makes me think of my brother's situation. He lives in the same country as I do, but in a different city. Several years ago, a manufacturing plant actually was constructed in his region. There was, indeed, an increase in pollution, noise and traffic after the factory opened, but everyone agrees that this was an acceptable trade-off for the declines in crime, graffiti and homelessness that occurred at the same time. I believe that my brother's example demonstrates why it would be a great idea to construct new industry in my town.

Secondly, modern industry is not as bad as a lot of people think. Here in Canada, factories come equipped with modern technology that removes the most dangerous chemicals from their regular emissions. Moreover, advances in public transportation can alleviate some of the traffic-related concerns that most people have when they think about industrial development. For example, when that factory was constructed in my brother's town he and many of his neighbors were quite surprised at how little air pollution they noticed. There was some effect on their air quality, but it was not nearly as bad as they thought it would be. Not only that, but the construction of the factory caused the local government to invest heavily in public transportation for the workers, and this has made life more convenient

for everyone in the city. This example describes another reason why I would love for a factory to be constructed in my hometown.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that a factory would be a wonderful addition to my community. This is because it would create a lot of employment, and because factories are not as dirty and inconvenient as many people think.