

TOEFL iBT® Test Writing Practice Sets

Feedback

Note: These sample questions allow you to experience the types of tasks presented in the *TOEFL iBT*® test. They are not intended to mimic the testing experience. Audio is not included with the questions in these sets. However, transcripts of the audio are provided.

Writing Practice Set 1 (Integrated)

Passage, Lecture and Question

Directions: Give yourself 3 minutes to read the passage.

Reading Time: 3 minutes

In an effort to encourage ecologically sustainable forestry practices, an international organization started issuing certifications to wood companies that meet high ecological standards by conserving resources and recycling materials. Companies that receive this certification can attract customers by advertising their products as "ecocertified." Around the world, many wood companies have adopted new, ecologically friendly practices in order to receive ecocertification. However, it is unlikely that wood companies in the United States will do the same, for several reasons.

First, American consumers are exposed to so much advertising that they would not value or even pay attention to the ecocertification label. Because so many mediocre products are labeled "new" or "improved," American consumers do not place much trust in advertising claims in general.

Second, ecocertified wood will be more expensive than uncertified wood because in order to earn ecocertification, a wood company must pay to have its business examined by a certification agency. This additional cost gets passed on to consumers. American consumers tend to be strongly motivated by price, and therefore they are likely to choose cheaper uncertified wood products. Accordingly, American wood companies will prefer to keep their prices low rather than obtain ecocertification.

Third, although some people claim that it always makes good business sense for American companies to keep up with the developments in the rest of the world, this argument is not convincing. Pursuing certification would make sense for American wood companies only if they marketed most of their products abroad. But that is not the case—American wood businesses sell most of their products in the United States, catering to a very large customer base that is satisfied with the merchandise.

Directions: Read the transcript.

Narrator: Now listen to part of a lecture on the topic you just read about. Professor Well, despite what many people say, there's good reason to think that many American wood companies will eventually seek ecocertification for their wood products. First off, consumers in the United States don't treat all advertising the same. They distinguish between advertising claims that companies make about their own products and claims made by independent certification agencies. Americans have a lot of confidence in independent consumer agencies. Thus, ecologically minded Americans are likely to react very favorably to wood products ecologically certified by an independent organization with an international reputation for trustworthiness.

Second point—of course it's true that American consumers care a lot about price—who doesn't? But studies of how consumers make decisions show that price alone determines consumers' decisions only when the price of one competing product is much higher or lower than another. When the price difference between two products is small—say, less than five percent, as is the case with certified wood—Americans often do choose on factors other than price. And Americans are becoming increasingly convinced of the value of preserving and protecting the environment.

And third, U.S. wood companies should definitely pay attention to what's going on in the wood business internationally, not because of foreign consumers, but because of foreign competition. As I just told you, there's a good chance that many American consumers will be interested in ecocertified products. And guess what, if American companies are slow capturing those customers, you can be sure that foreign companies will soon start crowding into the American market, offering ecocertified wood that domestic companies don't.

Directions: Give yourself 20 minutes to plan and write your response. Your response is judged on the quality of the writing and on how well it presents the points in the lecture and their relationship to the reading passage. Typically, an effective response will be 150 to 225 words. You may view the reading passage while you respond.

Response time: 20 minutes

Question: Summarize the points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they cast doubt on specific points made in the reading passage.

Response Tips

What is important to understand from the lecture is that the professor disagrees with the points made in the reading, namely that American consumers mistrust advertising, that they are unwilling to pay extra for ecocertified products, and that American companies do not need to compete in parts of the world where ecocertification is valued.

In your response, you should convey the reasons presented by the professor for why ecocertification of wood should be adopted by U.S. companies. A high-scoring response will include the following points made by the professor that cast doubt on the points made in the reading:

| Point made in the reading | Counterpoint made in the lecture |
|---|---|
| Because American consumers have come to distrust frequently used advertising claims such as 'new' or 'improved,' they won't pay attention to or trust the | American consumers do pay attention to claims about products when those claims are made by independent consumer agencies. |

| | |
|---|--|
| ecocertified label. | |
| Since ecocertification adds to the cost of a product, Americans would be unlikely to buy ecocertified products and would choose cheaper, uncertified products. | This is true only if there is a big price difference between two similar products; if an ecocertified product costs only about five percent more, American consumers would accept this in order to buy the product that is better for the environment. |
| Because American companies sell their products mainly in the U.S., they do not need to compete in the rest of the world where ecocertification is desired by consumers. | American companies must be ready to compete with foreign companies that will soon be selling ecocertified products in the U.S. market. |

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