

TOEFL Prep 31

Last Thursday we worked on an Integrative Writing Task. You read a passage, then heard a lecture. Then you were asked to write about how the lecture cast doubt on some of the points in the reading. Here is the response that ETS (Educational Testing Service) believes deserves the full 5 points. Read the essay aloud by paragraph. After each paragraph, summarize. Take this home and compare your essay to this one. Maybe re-write your essay after reading this one.

The lecturer talks about research conducted by a firm that used the group system to handle their work. He says that the theory stated in the passage was very different and somewhat inaccurate when compared to what happened for real.

First, some members got free rides. That is, some didn't work hard but got recognition for the success nonetheless. This also indicates that people who worked hard were not given recognition they should have gotten. In other words, they weren't given the opportunity to "shine". This directly contradicts what the passage indicates.

Second, groups were slow to make progress. The passage says that groups are more responsive than individuals because of the number of people involved and their aggregated resources. However, the speaker talks about how the firm found out that groups were slower than individuals in decision making. Groups needed more time for meetings, which are necessary procedures in decision making. This was another part where experience contradicted theory.

Third, influential people might emerge, and lead the group towards glory or failure. If the influential people are going in the right direction there would be no problem. But in cases where they go in the wrong direction, there is nobody that has enough influence to counter the decision made. In other words, the group might turn into a dictatorship, with the influential party as the leader, and might be less flexible in thinking. They might become one-sided, and thus fail to succeed.

Now we'll work on another TOEFL integrative writing question. But instead of doing this whole assignment, we'll focus on reading the passage and making notes on the key points. You have 3 minutes to read the passage and make notes of the key points.

Altruism is a type of behavior in which an animal sacrifices its own interest for that of another animal or group of animals. Altruism is the opposite of selfishness; individuals performing altruistic acts gain nothing for themselves.

Examples of altruism abound, both among humans and among other mammals. Unselfish acts among humans range from the sharing of food with strangers to the donation of body organs to family members, and even to strangers. Such acts are altruistic in that they benefit another, yet provide little reward to the one performing the act.

In fact, many species of animals appear willing to sacrifice food, or even their life, to assist other members of their group. The meerkat, which is a mammal that dwells in burrows in grassland areas of Africa, is often cited as an example. In groups of meerkats, an individual acts as a sentinel, standing guard and looking out for predators while the others hunt for food or eat food they have obtained. If the sentinel meerkat sees a predator such as a hawk

approaching the group, it gives an alarm cry alerting the other meerkats to run and seek shelter. By standing guard, the sentinel meerkat gains nothing--it goes without food while the others eat, and it places itself in grave danger. After it issues an alarm, it has to flee alone, which might make it more at risk to a predator, since animals in groups are often able to work together to fend off a predator. So the altruistic sentinel behavior helps ensure the survival of other members of the meerkat's group.

1. First, let's work on vocabulary. Were there any words you didn't know?
altruism, altruistic acts, abound, donation, benefit, sacrifice, burrows, sentinel, predators, alerting, grave, issues, flee, fend off, ensure
2. Secondly, this reading passage does not start out with the topic sentence. What do you think the topic sentence is?
3. Thirdly, what are the key points you outlined?