

Mastering

Skills for the

TOEFL[®] iBT

WRITING

WRITING

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The TOEFL® iBT Writing Section

The writing section of the test is designed to assess your ability to organize and support your ideas in essay format. You will have two writing tasks. One task is based on both a reading and a lecture. You will be required to summarize the information you have read and to relate information heard in the lecture to information in the passage. The second task requires you to generate an essay based on your own experience. In this second task, you will be given no material to work with; it will be based completely on your own ideas.

- **Question Types**

Questions for the writing section of the TOEFL® will appear in the following order:

Question Type	Type	Suggested Time	Response Length	Description
1	Integrated: 250–300 word reading 250–300 word lecture	20 minutes	150–225 words	Contrast information presented in the reading passage with information presented in the lecture
2	Independent	30 minutes	300+ words	Present a personal opinion or describe an experience, including details and examples

Study Tips

● Integrated Writing

- ⇒ Look for magazine or newspaper articles that are about 300 words long. Time yourself as you read the articles. You should aim to read 300 words in less than three minutes. After reading, try to outline the article. Then, without looking back at the article, try to write a summary of the article from your outline.
- ⇒ Practice listening to short reports given in English. There are many websites where such reports are available online. While you listen to a report, take notes. Try to summarize the report from your notes.
- ⇒ Look for a variety of exercises in writing books you have studied that practice paraphrasing. Study the methods such books suggest for paraphrasing. Focus especially on exercises that practice the usage of synonyms and/or changing the grammar of given sentences in order to paraphrase them.
- ⇒ Review useful phrases and expressions for citing sources. Pay attention to where these citation phrases can be placed in sentences and how the phrases should be punctuated.
- ⇒ Practice your typing skills in English. You must type your essay for the TOEFL®.

● Independent Writing

- ⇒ Practice writing TOEFL® essays. Get a list of sample topics at www.ets.org/Media/Tests/TOEFL/pdf/989563wt.pdf. Select a topic at random and write a 30-minute draft essay. Correct the essay, with the assistance of a teacher if possible, and rewrite it with the suggested corrections.
- ⇒ When you are studying a group of writing topics, practice sorting the topics into "opinion" or "experience" topics. This will help you quickly determine the appropriate writing task you will have when you take the test.
- ⇒ Practice outlining ideas before you write. You can do this by taking five or six topics for writing and making a short outline for each one. Don't write the essays, just write the outlines. You can also use different techniques for prewriting, such as making simple charts of information, drawing bubble diagrams, or creating lists of ideas.
- ⇒ Look for a variety of exercises in writing books you have studied that practice writing introductions and conclusions. Study the methods that these books suggest for writing introductions and conclusions. Pay attention to tips for beginning and ending introductions and conclusions.
- ⇒ Practice your typing skills in English. You must type your essay in the actual TOEFL®.

Test Management

- For the integrated writing task, you will read a passage and listen to a lecture afterwards. The reading passage disappears during the lecture and reappears afterward, so do not worry about taking notes on all of the key points in the reading. You will NOT be able to hear the lecture again, so it is important to take good notes while you listen.
- You must type out your answers. You can use icon buttons at the top of the screen for editing. The editing tools include cut, paste, undo, and redo.
- Keep the style of essay writing in English in mind. First select a main idea, explain it clearly, then support and develop it using details and/or examples. Be sure your essay has a logical flow. There should be a reason for every sentence in your essay. Such reasons include introducing a new example or detail to support the main idea, or explaining or supporting an example or detail mentioned previously. Do not write any sentences that are unrelated to your main idea or that do not fit into the organizational structure of your essay just to increase your word count.
- Make every effort to use effective language and appropriate sentence structure and vocabulary. Try NOT to use vocabulary or constructions that you are not confident with, as this will increase your chances of making errors.
- Use a variety of language. English has a large number of synonyms and analogous constructions, so using the same construction repeatedly is considered poor style.
- Keep the 50-minute time limit for the entire writing section in mind. Remember that graders are expecting to read draft essays, not finely polished final products. If you find yourself stuck on a particular part of your essay, it is best to move on and complete the essay, then go back and fix the difficult area if time allows.
- Try to leave at least five minutes for revision. When revising, be sure to look for spelling or grammatical errors (remember, there is no spell checker on the test), as well as ways to improve the structure and flow of your essay.

How Writing Will Be Scored

ETS graders will score test takers' essays for **integrated** writing tasks according to the following scale:

Score	General Description	Key Points
5	The essay includes important information from both the reading and the lecture and appropriately explains the information with regard to the prompt.	The essay is well organized; it may include minor errors in grammar or word choice, but the errors do not make sentences difficult to understand.
4	The essay includes most of the key points from the reading and the lecture as they relate to the prompt. Some points may not be fully explained or the explanation may be vague.	There are several minor errors with language; some ideas may not seem connected, but there are no real problems with clarity.
3	The essay has one or more of the following problems: does not include a key point from the lecture or reading, shows only a limited understanding of the information, incorrectly explains a key point, has problems with grammar or word choice that make some sentences unclear.	Errors in sentence structure and word choice may make the meaning of some sentences unclear; transitions or connections between ideas are not always easy to follow; overall, the important ideas in the essay can be understood.
2	The essay has one or more of the following problems: does not include sufficient information from the reading, lecture, or both, contains many problems with grammar or word choice so the reader cannot follow connections between ideas.	Errors in sentence structure and word choice make ideas in the essay difficult to understand; readers unfamiliar with the reading and lecture may not be able to follow the essay.
1	The essay includes few or none of the key points from the reading, lecture, or both. The essay is poorly written and difficult to understand.	Frequent and serious errors in grammar and word choice make some sentences in the essay impossible to understand.
0	The essay only copies words from the prompt or is not related to the topic at all.	There is not enough of the student's writing available to score.

How Writing Will Be Scored

ETS graders will score test takers' essays for **independent** writing tasks according to the following scale:

Score	General Description	Key Points
5	The response answers the question or prompt well. The essay is easy to understand and well organized.	There is good use of language, including correct choice of words and idioms to express ideas. Minor errors in grammar and word choice are acceptable.
4	The response answers the question or prompt, but not all of the ideas are fully developed. The essay can be understood, but there are some clearly noticeable mistakes in the writing.	There is good use of language, including a variety of sentence structures and appropriate range of vocabulary. There are some minor errors in sentence structure, word form, or the use of idioms, but these errors do not make comprehension difficult.
3	The essay gives a basic answer to the question or prompt, but not many examples or details are provided. Most sentences can be understood, but errors in grammar or word choice could make the meaning of some sentences unclear.	Little use of connectors to link ideas or show progression of thought. Sentence constructions are very simple, or there are frequent errors in more complex sentence structures. Word choice and poor grammar may make some sentences vague or difficult to comprehend.
2	The essay is very short and not well organized. The ideas are not connected and examples are not explained.	Errors in grammar or word choice appear in almost every sentence. Overall, ideas are difficult to follow.
1	The essay is short and confusing. Little or no detail is given to support ideas, and irrelevant information is included. Some sentences cannot be understood by the reader.	There are serious errors in grammar and word choice.
0	The essay only copies words from the prompt or is not related to the topic at all.	Not enough of the student's writing is available to score.

The following is a sample Integrated Writing task similar to the one you will see when you take the test. You will first be asked to read a passage. On the real test, the reading passage will remain on your screen throughout the task.

In light of our growing energy crisis, ethanol has been proposed as a replacement for gasoline. Ethanol is a type of alcohol that is commonly made from corn. Although it has gained widespread popularity as an alternative fuel, ethanol has some serious disadvantages which make it an impracticable replacement for gasoline.

Perhaps the greatest disadvantage of ethanol is that its production means less food to feed the world's hungry. Ethanol requires a lot of corn to produce. This is corn that could be used to feed people in starving countries. Some critics have said that the amount of corn it would take to create one tank of ethanol would be enough to feed a person for an entire year. As a result, the large-scale production of ethanol would seriously reduce the food available and create worldwide starvation.

Ethanol is also highly damaging to the environment. This may seem ironic because one of the praises of ethanol is that it creates less pollution than gasoline does. Yet as one scholar recently pointed out, ethanol creates major erosion of the Earth's soil. Corn is one of the most damaging crops in regards to soil erosion. Therefore, the mass farming of corn to produce ethanol would create a severe amount of soil erosion.

Finally, the large-scale production of ethanol requires lots of energy. More gasoline would be needed in order to produce this energy, not less. Countries will have to ship in more oil to run the ethanol factories, which will make our energy crisis even worse. Considering all of these disadvantages, it would be better if ethanol was not used to replace gasoline.

Now read the professor's lecture below. On the real test, you will listen to this lecture with your headphones. The lecture will NOT appear on your screen.

All right, folks. Today we're going to talk about some alternative fuels we could use to replace the use of gasoline in vehicles. I'm sure most of you know that ethanol has become well-known as a possible replacement for gasoline. Now recently, reports have come out from scientists that criticize the use of ethanol in automobiles. However, when all these criticisms are researched properly, you'll find that they're pretty much false.

Now first off, there really isn't any way that ethanol can cause starvation. It's absolutely true that ethanol requires a lot of corn, so yes, we will have to dedicate more cornfields for ethanol production. One would think that since we already have so many starving people out there in the world, this would be wasting a dwindling food supply. Well, let me let you in on a little secret . . . there is currently enough food to feed everyone in this world. How can this be possible with so many starving people? It's because the available food never gets to these people. Starvation is

caused by unstable governments, war, lack of transport—not because we don't have enough food to feed everyone. Therefore, we really don't have to worry about ethanol production causing food shortages.

We also don't have to worry about ethanol harming the environment. A couple of years ago, this one scientist—I forget his name—brought up the fact that corn isn't an environmentally-friendly crop. He said that the large-scale corn production needed to produce ethanol would be highly damaging to the Earth's soil. He was correct on the first point, but wrong on the second. Corn does cause a lot more soil erosion than other crops do. Now fifty years ago, this may have been a problem. But today, conservation efforts have become so advanced that we've found new ways to reduce the soil erosion caused by crops like corn. This soil erosion will be a lot less than what the scientist predicted.

Then there's this faulty assumption that the energy needed to produce ethanol will require more gasoline. This is one hundred percent incorrect. Yes, ethanol does require a lot of energy to produce it, but most of this energy will be provided by coal and other natural gases. And unlike gasoline, we have plenty of coal available to use as energy! We won't have to worry about shipping in more gasoline and reducing our already declining oil reserves.

So, to sum it all up, ethanol is a pretty good alternative for gasoline. Most of the claims against it are faulty, and the benefits are many. I think we'll soon see ethanol taking the place of gasoline to power our cars.

When the lecture concludes, you will be given a prompt that will ask you to give your response for this task. A prompt for this task might be as follows:

Summarize the points made in the lecture you just heard, explaining how they cast doubt on points made in the reading.

The reading passage will appear once again on your screen. You will have 20 minutes to plan and write your response for this task. A sample outline of a response and a sample response can be found on the next page.

Sample Outline

Introduction:

- Topic
- Main idea of the reading passage
- Main idea of the lecture

Body:

Key point 1

- Supporting information from the reading passage
- Supporting information from the lecture

Key point 2

- Supporting information from the reading passage
- Supporting information from the lecture

Key point 3 (optional)

- Supporting information from the reading passage
- Supporting information from the lecture

Conclusion:

- Summary of the main ideas from the reading passage and the lecture

Sample Essay

The reading and lecture both discuss whether ethanol, a form of alcohol produced from corn, can replace fossil fuels. The reading suggests that there are a number of problems with ethanol that make it a bad replacement for gasoline. However, the lecture disagrees, saying that these problems commonly associated with ethanol are untrue.

Topic Main idea of reading
Main idea of lecture

The reading and lecture first discuss the issue of starvation. The reading suggests that using corn for ethanol means less corn can be used for food, resulting in mass starvation. The professor, on the other hand, points out that the world currently has enough food to feed all of the people. He says that starvation is caused by unstable governments and many other factors, not by lack of food.

Key point 1 Supporting info from reading
Supporting info from lecture

Secondly, the reading and lecture discuss ethanol's harm to the environment. The reading states that the corn that produces ethanol creates a lot of soil erosion. In contrast, the professor says that recent conservation efforts have greatly reduced soil erosion caused by corn production, so large-scale corn farming will not be a problem.

Key point 2
Supporting info from reading Supporting info from lecture

Finally, the reading and lecture discuss the amount of energy needed to produce ethanol. The reading points out that lots of energy is needed to produce ethanol, which will require more gasoline and not less. However, the professor says that this energy is usually provided by coal and other forms of natural gases, not by gasoline.

Key point 3 Supporting info from reading
Supporting info from lecture

In conclusion, the speaker says the claims that ethanol is worse than fossil fuels are not valid. He says that ethanol is a good replacement for fossil fuels.

Summary of reading and lecture main points

Independent Writing Task Preview

The following is a sample Independent Writing task similar to the one you will see when you take the test. You will first see a prompt on your screen describing the task.

Some single people like to live with a roommate, while others prefer to live alone. Which would you prefer? Give specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

You will then have 30 minutes to plan and write your response for this task. A sample outline of a response and a sample response can be found below.

Sample Outline

Introduction:

Topic

Thesis statement

Body:

Key point 1

Topic sentence

Reasons, examples, and details

Key point 2

Topic sentence

Reasons, examples, and details

Key point 3 (optional)

Topic sentence

Reasons, examples, and details

Conclusion:

Restatement of thesis and concluding sentence

Sample Essay

Lots of people who are single prefer to live with a roommate to keep them company, while others would rather live by themselves. I believe that it is best to live by yourself, at least for a time. Living by yourself provides benefits that you could never experience while living with someone else.

Topic
Thesis statement

First of all, living by yourself teaches you how to be responsible. You learn to take care of yourself because there is no one else around to take care of you. Some people might think this is a disadvantage. For example, no one will be around to help you pay the rent. However, in my opinion it is a great advantage. You will have to learn such important skills as saving money and living practically. This measure of independence is the best part of living on your own.

Topic sentence
Reasons, examples, and details

Another advantage of living on your own is that you become more of an individual. You can make whatever decisions and choices you would like. This is very important because you'll discover aspects of yourself that you may keep hidden when you are around other people. Being able to know yourself and make your own decisions is crucial to becoming an individual.

Topic sentence
Reasons, examples, and details

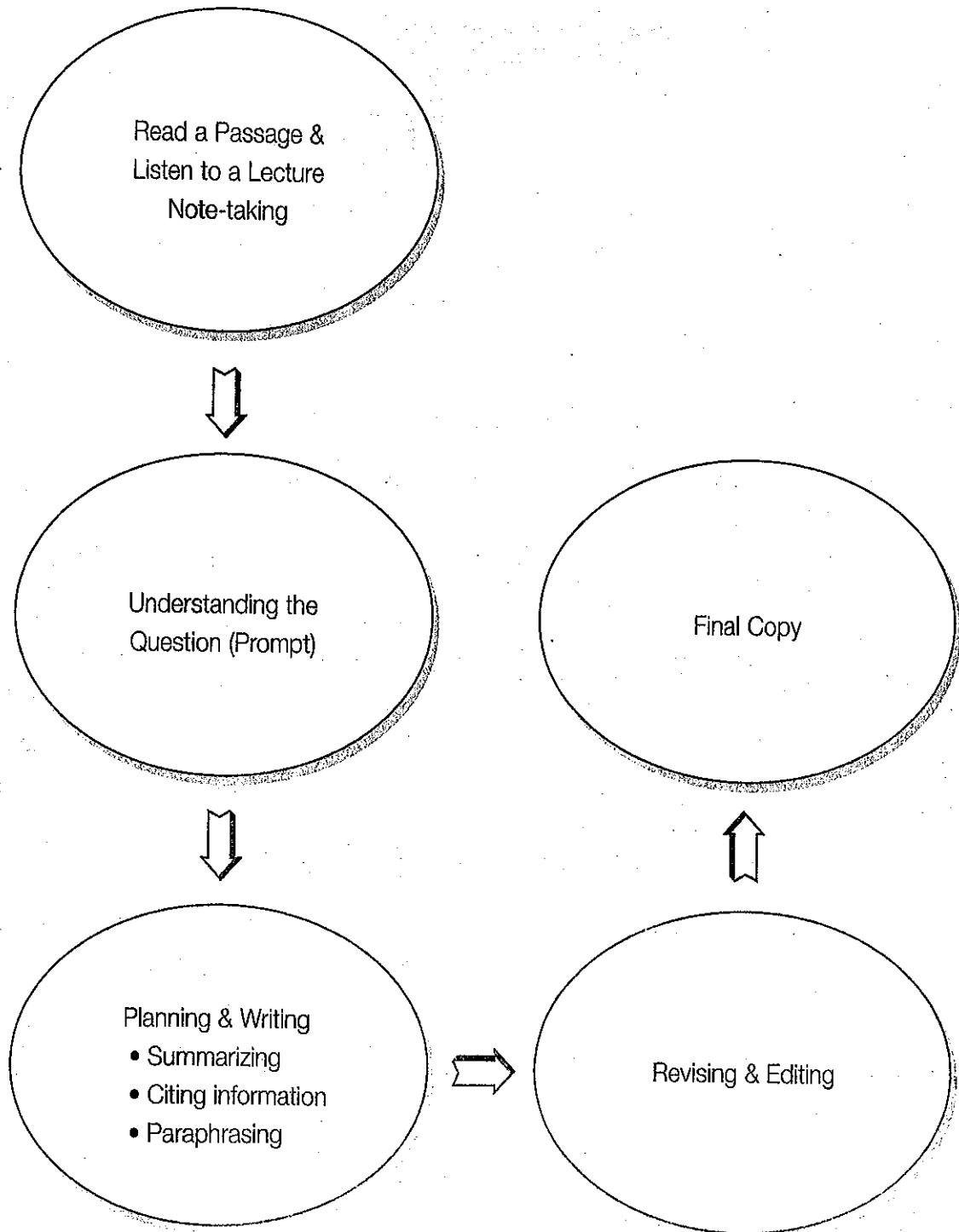
Finally, living alone helps you to avoid conflict with other people. Some of the biggest disadvantages I experience living with my parents and siblings are lots of noise and fighting. Living on your own allows you to create your own fight-free, quiet environment. Your home can look however you want it to look, and you can live however you want to live, without someone disagreeing with you.

Topic sentence
Reasons, examples, and details

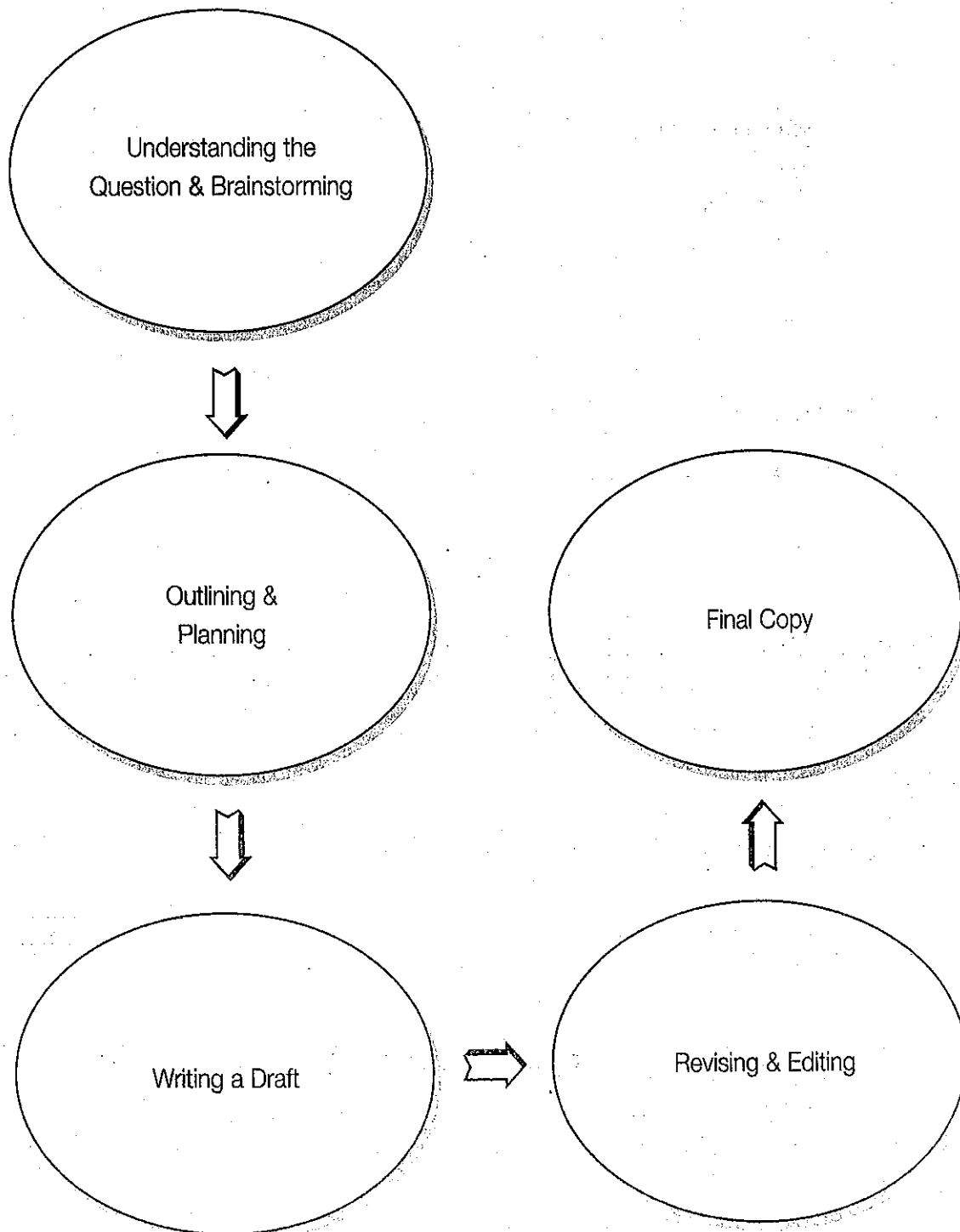
In conclusion, I feel that it is best for all people to spend at least some time living on their own. Living on your own will give you experiences that will help to define yourself as a person.

Restatement of thesis

Integrated Writing Process



Independent Writing Process



1. Read the question carefully and be sure that you understand the task.
2. Make a mind map or a traditional outline.
3. Using your mind map or outline, decide on a thesis statement.
4. Make sure that the topic sentences support the thesis statement.
5. Make sure that all supporting ideas relate to the topic.
6. Read through your draft again while editing and making revisions.

Part 1

Integrated Writing

- **Chapter 1 Organizing Information**
- **Chapter 2 Paraphrasing**
- **Chapter 3 Making Connections**
- **Vocabulary Review 1**
- **Vocabulary Review 2**