

TOEFL 2026 WRITING

Build a Sentence Practice

15 Practice Tasks with Sample 5/5 Responses

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How to use this PDF

This PDF contains 15 Build a Sentence practice tasks in the same format you will see on the TOEFL 2026 Writing section. Each task gives you a prompt (what someone said to you), a sentence template with blank slots, and a word bank. Your job is to place the words from the bank into the correct slots to form a grammatically correct response.

Test yourself first. Work through each task on paper or in your head before checking the answer key at the back. The answer key includes the correct sentence, an explanation of the grammar pattern, and a rubric breakdown.

About the Build a Sentence task

Build a Sentence is the first of three tasks in the TOEFL 2026 Writing section. You see 10 items on test day. Each item presents a short conversational prompt and a set of word chunks. You drag the chunks into the correct order to form a grammatically correct response. Some items include distractor words that do not belong in the answer.

Each item is scored all-or-nothing: one point for a perfectly correct sentence, zero for any error. There is no partial credit. The 10 items together contribute to your Writing section band score (1.0 to 6.0).

The most common grammar pattern is embedded clauses and reported speech, where the response uses statement word order rather than question word order. Roughly half of all items involve this pattern.

Scoring criteria

The Writing section is scored across four dimensions (source: **PrepDrills 2026 Writing Guide**, prepdrills.com/blog/toefl-2026-writing-guide/):

1 Purposeful Communication

Does the response address the prompt with appropriate detail?

2 Social Conventions and Tone

Is the register appropriate for the context and recipient?

3 Language Use

Grammar accuracy, vocabulary precision, sentence variety.

4 Organization

Does the sentence flow logically with correct word order?

For Build a Sentence specifically, Language Use and Organization are the primary scoring drivers since the task tests grammar and word order.

TASK 1 Technical lecture

REPORTED SPEECH

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Friend:

"The lecture was way too technical for me."

Build your response using the template and word bank:

I _____

WORD BANK

could not

follow

what

the professor

explained

either

Hint: Reported speech keeps statement word order inside the embedded clause.

TASK 2 Committee chair

EMBEDDED QUESTION

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Member:

"Has the committee picked a new chairperson yet?"

Build your response using the template and word bank:

I _____

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

have not

learned

who

will be

running

the meetings

did

Hint: Embedded clauses use statement order. One word does not belong.

TASK 3 Dean's visit

REPORTED REASON

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Colleague:

"Why did the dean stop by your office today?"

Build your response. "when" is fixed in position 4:

_____ when _____

WORD BANK

She needs

an answer

about

we

plan

to release

the schedule

Hint: "When" is a fixed pivot. Subject before verb in the embedded clause.

TASK 4 Conference room

INDEFINITE KNOWLEDGE

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Coworker:

"Do you know which conference room the meeting was moved to?"

Build your response using the template and word bank:

I _____

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

have

no

clue

which

floor

it

is on

what

Hint: "Which" fits because you are choosing among options. One word does not belong.

TASK 5 Skipped review session

PAST HYPOTHETICAL

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Classmate:

"Why did you skip yesterday's review session?"

Build your response. "not" is fixed in position 3:

_____ **not** _____

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

I

did

expect

it

would

cover

the new material

theirs

Hint: Past expectation. Place "did" before the pivot and "expect" after.

TASK 6 Thesis deadline

REPORTED YES/NO QUESTION

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Friend:

"Did your advisor mention the thesis deadline?"

Build your response. "Yes," starts and "wanted" is fixed in position 3:

Yes, _____ wanted _____

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

he

to check

if

I

needed

an extension

to revise

did

Hint: "If" introduces a reported yes/no question. No auxiliary inversion.

TASK 7 Internship in Berlin

WH-CLAUSE AS OBJECT

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Friend:

"What did Marcus ask about your internship in Berlin?"

Build your response using the template and word bank:

He was eager to hear _____

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

what

I

learned

most

from

it

did

Hint: The noun clause is the object of "hear." Subject before verb, no auxiliary.

TASK 8 Librarian's question

REPORTED WH-QUESTION

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Classmate:

"What did the librarian ask you during research orientation?"

Build your response using the template and word bank:

She was interested in _____

WORD BANK (TWO DISTRACTORS)

how

I

had organized

my

earlier

research

was

did

Hint: Two words do not belong. Embedded clauses never take extra auxiliaries.

TASK 9 Opening slide

INDECISION

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Teammate:

"What should I include on the opening slide of our pitch?"

Build your response (no fixed words):

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

I'm not sure

which

detail

will

catch

their attention

first

a

Hint: "Which" already specifies the noun. One word is redundant.

TASK 10 Development team

REPORTED REQUEST

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Stakeholder:

"What did the development team want to know?"

Build your response using the template and word bank:

They asked _____

WORD BANK (TWO DISTRACTORS)

what

our

specific

requirements

were

are

which

Hint: Past reporting verb backshifts "are" to "were." Two distractors.

TASK 11 Presentation prep

PRESENT PERFECT

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Boss:

"Are you ready to present tomorrow?"

Build your response using the template and word bank:

Not yet, _____

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

I

have

not

had

time

to review

my notes

was

Hint: Present perfect for an unfinished situation. One word does not fit.

TASK 12 **Sister's apartment**

RELATIVE CLAUSE

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Friend:

"Which apartment did your sister finally choose?"

Build your response. "the one" is fixed in position 3:

_____ **the one** _____

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

She

picked

that

is

closest

to her office

which

Hint: Defining relative clause. "That" for defining, "which" for non-defining.

TASK 13 Group study

GERUND AS SUBJECT

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Classmate:

"Why is studying with classmates so popular before exams?"

Build your response. "more material" is fixed at the end:

_____ more material

WORD BANK (TWO DISTRACTORS)

Working

in groups

helps

students

remember

with

to

Hint: Gerund as subject. Two words do not belong.

TASK 14 Budget report

FUTURE DEADLINE

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Manager:

"When are you going to finish the budget report?"

Build your response. "I" starts and "ready" is fixed in position 4:

I _____ ready _____

WORD BANK (ONE DISTRACTOR)

will have

it

by

the end

of the day

will

Hint: "Will have it ready" is the multi-word verb. One word is redundant.

TASK 15 Lease split

EMBEDDED "HOW" CLAUSE

SOMEONE SAYS TO YOU:

Roommate:

"Did your roommate explain the new lease terms?"

Build your response using the template and word bank:

He showed me _____

WORD BANK (TWO DISTRACTORS)

how

the rent

would

be

split

between us

did

is

Hint: Passive modal in embedded clause. Two words do not belong.

Answer Key: Sample 5/5 Responses

Each answer below shows the correct sentence, the grammar explanation, and a compact rubric note.

TASK 1 Technical lecture

Friend: *"The lecture was way too technical for me."*

I could not follow what the professor explained either.

Reported speech keeps statement word order. "What the professor explained," not "what did the professor explain," because the clause is the object of "follow."

LANGUAGE USE

Correct embedded clause word order. No auxiliary inversion.

ORGANIZATION

Logical flow: subject, verb, embedded clause, adverb.

TASK 2 Committee chair

Member: "Has the committee picked a new chairperson yet?"

I have not learned who will be running the meetings.

After "have not learned," the embedded clause uses statement order. "Who will be running" has subject before verb. "Did" is the distractor.

LANGUAGE USE Present perfect + embedded clause. Distractor correctly excluded.

ORGANIZATION Main clause then dependent clause in natural sequence.

TASK 3 Dean's visit

Colleague: "Why did the dean stop by your office today?"

She needs an answer about when we plan to release the schedule.

"When we plan to release" is an embedded clause: subject ("we") before verb ("plan"), no auxiliary. "When" is given as a fixed pivot word.

LANGUAGE USE Fixed pivot word correctly bridges main and embedded clause.

ORGANIZATION Reason structure: need, topic, embedded time clause.

TASK 4 Conference room

Coworker: *"Do you know which conference room the meeting was moved to?"*

I have no clue which floor it is on.

"Which floor it is on," not "which floor is it on." Embedded clauses do not invert. "What" is the distractor.

LANGUAGE USE Statement word order in embedded clause. Correct determiner choice.

ORGANIZATION Idiom ("no clue") followed by specifying clause.

TASK 5 Skipped review session

Classmate: "Why did you skip yesterday's review session?"

I did not expect it would cover the new material.

Reporting a past expectation: "I did not expect it would cover the new material." "Not" is given as a fixed pivot. "Theirs" is the distractor.

LANGUAGE USE Past simple + modal "would" for past expectation. Distractor excluded.

ORGANIZATION Fixed pivot "not" correctly placed between auxiliary and main verb.

TASK 6 Thesis deadline

Friend: "Did your advisor mention the thesis deadline?"

Yes, he wanted to check if I needed an extension to revise.

"If" introduces a reported yes/no question. No "did" because it is no longer a direct question.

LANGUAGE USE Reported yes/no with "if." Backshifted tense ("needed").

ORGANIZATION Affirmation, subject, purpose clause, conditional clause.

TASK 7 Internship in Berlin

Friend: "What did Marcus ask about your internship in Berlin?"

He was eager to hear what I learned most from it.

"What I learned most from it" is a noun clause acting as the object of "hear." Subject before verb, no "did."

LANGUAGE USE Noun clause as object. Statement word order. Distractor excluded.

ORGANIZATION Main clause flows into embedded object clause naturally.

TASK 8 Librarian's question

Classmate: "What did the librarian ask you during research orientation?"

She was interested in how I had organized my earlier research.

After "interested in" comes a noun clause: "how I had organized my earlier research." Both "was" and "did" are distractors.

LANGUAGE USE

Past perfect in embedded clause. Two distractors correctly excluded.

ORGANIZATION

Prepositional phrase bridges to embedded clause.

TASK 9 Opening slide

Teammate: "What should I include on the opening slide of our pitch?"

I'm not sure which detail will catch their attention first.

"Which detail will catch their attention first" is the embedded clause after "I'm not sure." "A" is the distractor because "which" already specifies the noun.

LANGUAGE USE Determiner "which" replaces article. Future tense in embedded clause.

ORGANIZATION No fixed words. Full reorder tests complete clause construction.

TASK 10 Development team

Stakeholder: "What did the development team want to know?"

They asked what our specific requirements were.

Past reporting verb "asked" backshifts "are" to "were." "Which" and "are" are distractors.

LANGUAGE USE Tense backshift in reported speech. Two distractors excluded.

ORGANIZATION Reporting verb + noun clause with correct tense agreement.

TASK 11 Presentation prep

Boss: "Are you ready to present tomorrow?"

Not yet, I have not had time to review my notes.

Present perfect "have not had" expresses unfinished time relevant to now. "Was" is the distractor.

LANGUAGE USE Present perfect for ongoing relevance. Distractor excluded.

ORGANIZATION Concession ("Not yet") followed by reason clause.

TASK 12 Sister's apartment

Friend: "Which apartment did your sister finally choose?"

She picked the one that is closest to her office.

Defining relative clause with "that" identifies which apartment. "Which" is the distractor because it requires a comma for non-defining clauses.

LANGUAGE USE Defining vs non-defining relative clause distinction.

ORGANIZATION Fixed pivot "the one" bridges main clause to relative clause.

TASK 13 Group study

Classmate: "Why is studying with classmates so popular before exams?"

Working in groups helps students remember more material.

Gerund "Working" acts as the subject. The fixed phrase "more material" anchors the end. Both "with" and "to" are distractors.

LANGUAGE USE Gerund subject + third-person singular verb agreement.

ORGANIZATION End-fixed anchor. Subject-verb-object with clear structure.

TASK 14 Budget report

Manager: "When are you going to finish the budget report?"

I will have it ready by the end of the day.

"Will have it ready by the end of the day" expresses a deadline. "Ready" is given as a fixed pivot. "Will" alone is the distractor because you need the multi-word verb "will have."

LANGUAGE USE

Future completion with "will have." Multi-word verb recognition.

ORGANIZATION

Fixed pivot "ready" correctly placed between verb phrase and time adverbial.

TASK 15 Lease split

Roommate: "Did your roommate explain the new lease terms?"

He showed me how the rent would be split between us.

"How the rent would be split between us" is an embedded clause with passive modal ("would be split"). Both "did" and "is" are distractors.

LANGUAGE USE Passive modal in embedded clause. Two distractors excluded.

ORGANIZATION Main clause flows into "how" embedded clause naturally.

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