

WOULD YOU RATHER ... ?

Purpose: The independent tasks on the TOEFL® iBT ask students to draw on their personal experience to answer the question in either speaking or writing. Students need to practice forming a statement or opinion and supporting it with specific details, reasons, or examples. Wacky questions can turn on students' creativity and are surprisingly effective.

Organization: Pairs or small groups

Preparation: Unconventional questions starting with "Would you rather...?"

Time: 60-90 minutes

Procedure:

Variation 1 - Writing

1. Brainstorm a list of 5-10 "Would-you-rather...?" questions. Write the questions on the blackboard.

Sample Questions:

- Would you rather do without your sense of hearing or your sense of taste?
 - Would you rather eat a small bowl of caramel-covered worms or a jar of chocolate-covered bees? (The bees' stingers have been removed.)
 - Would you rather be stuck alone in a car in traffic for four hours without music or a cell phone or take two TOEFL® tests in a row?
 - Would you rather go to your first college class with a terrible haircut and coffee spilled on your clothes or go on a first date and have your pants split badly?
 - Would you rather tell a relationship-threatening lie to your spouse/partner or have your spouse/partner tell one to you?
2. Put students in small groups to discuss the questions for 10-15 minutes. Ask students to choose and explain the reasons for their choices. Also, have them take notes about the various choices other people made and reasons they gave, gathering language that may be used later.
 3. Next, have students work alone. Ask them to choose one of the questions and in class, write a well-supported paragraph or essay.

4. Put students back in groups of 2-4. Have students read their work aloud in their groups and discuss whether the support is strong enough. (You may wish to put guiding questions on the board, such as *Did the writer use clear examples?*)

Follow-up:

- Have students identify ETS sample writing questions that ask the student to choose between two options.
- Have students choose one of these questions and write an essay on it for homework.

- OR -

Have students choose a question and then form pairs. Give them time in class to interview each other and take notes on each other's responses. For homework, have students write an essay about their partner's ideas, using the third person.

Variation 2 - Speaking

1. Put students into groups of 3 and repeat steps 1-2 from Variation 1.
2. Ask students to choose one of the questions they just discussed and, on their own, take 15 seconds to prepare their opinion and support and 45 seconds to present to the group.
3. Have one student in the group be the reporter and restate the main idea and support given by the speaker to check both speaker's clarity and reporter's comprehension. Ask students to take turns being the reporter.

Follow-up: Have students practice using real practice questions from their *Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL® Test: iBT* textbook.