

Writing

The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Writing test contains questions that measure proficiency in four content areas. The four content areas are as follows:

Essay Revision — Topics covered in this category include:

- Coherence, organization and word choice.
- Rhetorical effectiveness and use of evidence

Agreement — Topics covered in this category include:

- Subject-verb agreement
- Pronoun agreement
- Verb tense

Sentence Structure — Topics covered in this category include:

- Comma splices and run-on sentences
- Improper punctuation
- Fragments and parallelism
- Subordination and coordination

Sentence Logic — Topics covered in this category include:

- Correct placement of modifying phrase and clauses
- The use of logical transitions

Writing Sample Questions

Directions for questions 1–5

Read the following early draft of an essay and then choose the best answer to the question or the best completion of the statement.

(1) Seaweed-based fuel could one day power your car. (2) It is more than just an ingredient in a purifying face mask or a sushi roll. (3) According to new research, seaweed has the potential to become an advanced biofuel known as biobutanol.

(4) In the past, U.S. scientists have looked to the possibility of algae-based biofuels, but most of these explorations have shied away from kelp and seaweed. (5) One reason why seaweed may not have taken off as a potential fuel source is the fact that it's not a major part of American culture. (6) In contrast, in Asian countries such as Japan, there has been a long history of seaweed in the cuisine. (7) Japanese researchers are much more familiar with it and have spent decades studying its potential uses.

(8) A second reason for the U.S. avoidance of seaweed-based biofuel is the country's lack of experience with seaweed farming. (9) The U.S. is no stranger to seaweed harvesting. (10) However, for the biobutanol project to be environmentally sustainable, seaweed cannot be harvested; it must be farmed. (11) "One of the challenges of harvesting a natural seaweed bed is you can only [use] a certain percent of the bed if you don't want to have a negative environmental impact," Nikesh Parekh, CEO of Bio Architecture Lab, said.

(12) Farming enough seaweed to support mass production of a biofuel would be very expensive initially, but it could pay off handsomely. (13) They say that the seaweed-based fuel would work better in automobiles than ethanol and be easier to transport.

1. In context, which of the following is the best way to revise and combine sentences 1 and 2 (reproduced below)?

Seaweed-based fuel could one day power your car. It is more than just an ingredient in a purifying face mask or a sushi roll.

- A. Seaweed-based fuel could one day power your car, it is more than just an ingredient in a purifying face mask or a sushi roll.
- B. Seaweed-based fuel could one day power your car because it is more than just an ingredient in a purifying face mask or a sushi roll.
- C. Seaweed is more than just an ingredient in a purifying face mask or a sushi roll; seaweed-based fuel could one day power your car.
- D. Fuel from seaweed could one day power your car so it is more than just an ingredient in a purifying face mask or sushi roll.

2. In context, where would the following sentence best be placed?

There are a number of possible reasons for this.

- A. After sentence 2
- B. After sentence 4
- C. After sentence 6
- D. After sentence 9

3. In context, which of the following is best to insert at the beginning of sentence 7 (reproduced below)?

Japanese researchers are much more familiar with it and have spent decades studying its potential uses.

- A. As a result,
- B. Ironically,
- C. However,
- D. In addition,

4. In context, which of the following sentences would best be inserted between sentences 9 and 10?

- A. New research shows that seaweed may also possess the power to repair tissue damage in heart attack patients.
- B. Planting a large-scale seaweed farm will likely meet with stiff opposition.
- C. Maine Seaweed Co., for instance, harvests the seaweed naturally available along the U.S. coast.
- D. Some say that seaweed-based fuel may one day be competitive with petroleum.

5. In context, which is the best revision to sentence 13 (reproduced below)?

They say that the seaweed-based fuel would work better in automobiles than ethanol and be easier to transport.

- A. Replace “They say” with “Advocates contend”.
- B. Replace “would work” with “would be”.
- C. Delete “and be easier to transport”.
- D. Insert “their” before “automobiles”.

Directions for questions 6–10

Select the best version of the underlined part of the sentence. If you think the original sentence is best, choose the first answer.

6. It is important to learn how to swim, even if one is afraid; the skill will invariably prove useful later in your life.

- A. one is
- B. you are
- C. everyone is
- D. they are

7. In the Roman Empire, the first fish to be brought indoors was the sea barbel, it was kept under guest beds in small tanks made of marble.

- A. sea barbel, it
- B. sea barbel, which
- C. sea barbel, but
- D. sea barbel and

8. The idea that lightning never strikes the same place twice is one of the oldest and most well-known weather-related myths; in fact, lightning strikes the Empire State Building in New York City about 100 times per year.

- A. in fact
- B. therefore
- C. moreover
- D. in contrast

9. Horror films that keep viewers in a state of endless fright and which draw record-breaking crowds.

- A. that keep viewers in a state of endless fright and which draw
- B. keep viewers in a state of endless fright and drawing
- C. that keep viewers in a state of endless fright draw
- D. that keep viewers in a state of endless fright and they draw

10. According to explorers, a “Lost Falls” resembling New York’s Niagara Falls have been found in Tsangpo River Gorge in the Himalaya Mountains.

- A. have been found
- B. has been found
- C. having been found
- D. being found

Directions for questions 11–15

Think about how you would rewrite the following sentence according to the directions given, and then choose the best answer. Keep in mind that your revision should not change the meaning of the original sentence.

11. In some places, virtually all the topsoil has washed away, leaving the subsoils to sustain the crops.

Rewrite, beginning with

In some places, the subsoils must sustain the crops ...

The next word will be

- A. although
- B. because
- C. until
- D. before

12. Hawaii, which consists of eight major islands and many smaller ones, and which used to be known as the Sandwich Islands, was admitted to the Union as the fiftieth state in 1959.

Rewrite, beginning with

Formerly known as the Sandwich Islands, and consisting of eight major and many smaller islands, ...

The next words will be

- A. Hawaii was
- B. in 1959
- C. the Union
- D. Hawaii, which

13. Facing a 50% cut in funding for the library, the director was forced to lay off two librarians and sharply reduce hours of operation.

Rewrite, beginning with

Funding for the library was cut by 50%, ...

The next words will be

- A. the director was forced
- B. forcing the director
- C. this forced the director
- D. two librarians were

14. Carmen created a new piñata by constructing a papier-mâché figure and decorating it with brilliantly colored tissue paper.

Rewrite, beginning with

To create a new piñata, ...

The next words will be

- A. Carmen constructed a papier-mâché figure
- B. Carmen, constructing a papier-mâché figure
- C. a papier-mâché figure that Carmen had to construct
- D. that Carmen would construct a papier-mâché figure for

15. If Antarctica's icebergs could be floated north before melting, many arid areas would experience relief from drought.

Rewrite, beginning with

If they could be floated north before melting, ...

The next words will be

- A. relief would be brought
- B. many arid areas would experience
- C. Antarctica's icebergs would bring
- D. drought relief would be experienced

Writing

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
1	C	Choice (C) is correct. The new sentence must be a logical and grammatical combination of the existing sentences, which indicate that “Seaweed-based fuel could one day power your car” and that “It” (presumably, seaweed) “is more than just an ingredient in a purifying face mask or a sushi roll.” Only (C) properly orders the two claims, first expressing that “Seaweed is more than just an ingredient . . .” and then, following a correct use of a semicolon to join two related independent clauses, narrowing the focus to “seaweed-based fuel.” The other choices introduce errors: choice (A) creates a comma splice (two independent clauses joined by only a comma), choice (B) provides an illogical cause-effect statement, and choice (D) contains a vague pronoun (“it”).
2	B	Choice (B) is correct. The new sentence, “There are a number of possible reasons for this,” needs to fit logically and grammatically between two existing sentences. Sentence 4 states that American scientists have “shied away from,” or ignored, kelp and seaweed as possible biofuels. Sentence 5 notes “One reason why seaweed may not have taken off as a fuel source.” Later in the passage, sentence 8 provides “A second reason for the U.S. avoidance of seaweed-based biofuel.” The new sentence fits logically and grammatically between sentences 4 and 5 because it introduces the reasons for “this” (American scientists’ neglect of kelp and seaweed as potential fuel sources)—reasons that are provided in the following sentences. On the contrary, if choices (A), (C), or (D) were chosen as the answer, “this” would refer to other things for which no reasons are given.
3	A	Choice (A) is correct. The inserted word or phrase must properly link sentence 7 with the sentences that come before it in the passage. Sentences 5 and 6 suggest that unlike the U.S., where seaweed has not been considered a potential fuel source because U.S. scientists are not familiar with it, Japan has “a long history of seaweed in the cuisine.” Sentence 7 states that “Japanese researchers are much more familiar with it and have spent decades studying its potential uses.” Only the phrase “As a result” properly links sentence 7 with what has come before: in the context of the passage, Japanese scientists’ familiarity with seaweed is clearly a result of its history as a food in their culture. Choices (B) and (C) suggest a contrast between sentences 6 and 7 that does not exist, and choice (D) suggests that sentence 7 simply adds more information to sentence 6 rather than showing the proper cause-effect relationship.
4	C	Choice (C) is correct. The new sentence needs to fit logically and grammatically between sentence 9 (“The U.S. is no stranger to seaweed harvesting”) and sentence 10 (“However, for the biobutanol project to be environmentally sustainable, seaweed cannot be harvested; it must be farmed”). The only sentence that provides a direct link back to sentence 9 and forward to sentence 10 is choice (C): “Maine Seaweed Co., for instance, harvests the seaweed naturally available along the U.S. coast.” This sentence provides the example of Maine Seaweed, a seaweed-harvesting company, to support the claim in sentence 9 that the U.S. is familiar with seaweed harvesting. And sentence 10 seems to refer back to the work of Maine Seaweed in stating that “However . . . seaweed cannot be harvested; it must be farmed.” Neither choice (A), choice (B), nor choice (D) offers the same explicit, logical link to sentences 9 and 10.

5	A	Choice (A) is correct. It is unclear to whom the pronoun “They” in sentence 13 refers. In fact, there are no plural nouns in the sentences that come before sentence 13 to which “They” could possibly refer. “They” must, therefore, be replaced with a plural noun describing the people who “say that the seaweed-based fuel would work better in automobiles than ethanol and be easier to transport.” These people clearly support the use of seaweed as a biofuel, so it would be appropriate to refer to them as “Advocates.” In addition, they are making an argumentative claim, so it would be more precise to state that they “contend” than that they “say” what follows. None of the other three potential revisions—choices (B), (C), and (D)—solves the problem presented by “They,” and each is unnecessary.
6	B	Choice (B) is correct. It avoids the pronoun agreement errors of the other options by providing the second-person pronoun “you” to be consistent with the second-person pronoun “your” that follows it (“in your life”). The third-person pronouns “one,” “everyone” and “they,” in choices (A), (C) and (D), respectively, are not consistent with the second-person pronoun “your.”
7	B	Choice (B) is correct. It avoids the comma-splice error of the original sentence by replacing the pronoun “it” with the relative pronoun “which,” thus making the second independent clause into a dependent clause. Two independent clauses (“the first fish to be brought indoors was the sea barbel” and “it was kept under guest beds in small tanks made of marble”) cannot be joined by only a comma. Choice (C) is incorrect, because there is no contrast between the idea that “the first fish to be brought indoors was the sea barbel” and the fact that the sea barbel “was kept under guest beds.” Choice (D) results in awkward phrasing: “. . . the first fish to be brought indoors was the sea barbel and was kept under guest beds . . .”
8	A	Choice (A) is correct. It avoids the illogical phrasing of the other options by providing the phrase “in fact,” which is used in this context to introduce evidence validating a previous statement. In this sentence, the information in the second clause (“lightning strikes the Empire State Building . . . about 100 times per year”) offers evidence confirming the truth of the statement made in the first clause (“The idea that lightning never strikes the same place twice” is a “well-known” yet false belief). Options (B), (C) and (D), while grammatically correct, result in illogical phrasing because they do not indicate the relationship specified by the information in the sentence.
9	C	Choice (C) is correct. It avoids the sentence-fragment error of the original sentence by providing the main verb “draw” to agree with the subject “horror films” and to carry out the action of the sentence. In addition, choice (C) appropriately provides the relative clause “that keep viewers in a state of endless fright” to modify the noun phrase that precedes it, “horror films.” None of the other options results in a complete sentence.
10	B	Choice (B) is correct. It avoids the subject-verb agreement error of the original sentence by providing the singular verb phrase “has been found” to carry out the action of the sentence. Choices (C) and (D) result in sentence fragments; they provide participial verb forms (“having been found,” “being found”), not main verbs.
11	B	Choice (B) is correct. The sentence should be rewritten “In some places, the subsoils must sustain the crops because virtually all the topsoil has washed away.” Choice (B) avoids the errors of the other options and appropriately provides the causal link needed to explain why the subsoils must sustain the crops. None of the other options can express the causal relationship between the two ideas (“virtually all the topsoil has washed away” and “the subsoils must sustain the crops”) in the sentence.

12	A	Choice (A) is correct. The sentence should be rewritten “Formerly known as the Sandwich Islands, and consisting of eight major and many smaller islands, <u>Hawaii was</u> admitted to the Union as the fiftieth state in 1959.” Choice (A) avoids the modification errors of choices (B) and (C) by placing the subject, “Hawaii,” directly after the phrases modifying it, “Formerly known as the Sandwich Islands” and “consisting of eight major and many smaller islands.” Choice (D) also avoids the modification errors but results in a sentence fragment; there is no main verb to carry out the action of the sentence, only the relative clause beginning “which.”
13	B	Choice (B) is correct. The sentence should be rewritten “Funding for the library was cut by 50%, <u>forcing the director</u> to lay off two librarians and sharply reduce hours of operation.” Each of the other choices results in a comma splice, with two independent clauses improperly joined by only a comma. Choice (B) avoids the comma-splice error by providing the participial phrase “forcing the director to lay off two librarians . . .” to join the independent clause “Funding for the library was cut by 50%.”
14	A	Choice (A) is correct. The sentence should be rewritten “To create a new piñata, <u>Carmen constructed a papier-mâché figure</u> and decorated it with brilliantly colored tissue paper.” Choice (A) avoids the errors of the other options by providing the past tense verb “constructed” to serve as one of the two main verbs in the sentence. Each of the other options results in a sentence fragment with no main verb to carry out the action of the sentence.
15	C	Choice (C) is correct. The sentence should be rewritten “If they could be floated north before melting, <u>Antarctica’s icebergs would bring</u> many arid areas relief from drought.” Choice (C) avoids the modification and pronoun errors of the other options by providing the appropriate subject, “Antarctica’s icebergs,” immediately after the dependent clause that modifies it, “If they could be floated north before melting.” Choices (A) and (D) do not clearly establish that “they” refers to “Antarctica’s icebergs,” and choice (B) illogically implies that “many arid areas” “could be floated north before melting.”