

## English Proficiency Exam (EPE) – Writing Section (Session II)

In the writing part of the EPE, you will show your ability to write a clear and well-organized academic essay.

### Exam Format

- Duration: **50 minutes**
- Score: **20 points**
- You will **choose ONE** topic from the list on the exam paper.
- You must write **at least 250 words**.

### Essay Types

You will be asked to write **one** of the following:

- **Opinion Essay** – explain your opinion and support it with reasons.
- **Comparison & Contrast Essay** – explain similarities and/or differences between two ideas.
- **Cause Essay** – explain the main reasons for a situation.
- **Effect Essay** – explain the main results or outcomes of a situation.

During the exam, you should:

- plan your ideas before writing
- use paragraphs (introduction, body, conclusion)
- support your ideas with examples and explanations
- use linking words to organize your essay
- check your grammar, vocabulary, and spelling before you finish

### What Is Assessed?

Your essay will be evaluated based on four main areas:

- **Content:** Clear thesis and well-supported, relevant ideas.
- **Organization:** Logical structure with good paragraphing and transitions.
- **Grammar:** Range of correct grammatical structures; errors should not affect meaning.
- **Vocabulary:** Appropriate and varied word choices used accurately in context.

The essay writing criteria are provided on page 7 of this document.

YTU SFL  
DEPARTMENT OF BASIC ENGLISH  
SAMPLE PROFICIENCY EXAM  
WRITING (SESSION II)

Name & Surname: .....

TOTAL SCORE: 20 pts.

Class: .....

Student Number: .....

Duration: 50 minutes

**WRITING (20 pts.)**

Choose only ONE of the topics below and write a well-organized and well-developed essay of at least 250 words.

1. Some people believe that people should spend less time on their phones. Why or why not? Write an Opinion Essay.
2. Some students prefer living on campus, and others prefer living at home. Write a Comparison and Contrast Essay in which you compare living on campus to living at home.
3. "What are the causes of car accidents?" Write a Cause Essay explaining the reasons for this question.
4. "What are the effects of a positive outlook on our lives?" Write an Effect Essay explaining the effects for this question.

## OPINION ESSAY

### People Should Spend Less Time on Their Phones

Smartphones are an important part of daily life today. People use them to study, work, and communicate with others. Although phones are extremely useful, many people spend too many hours looking at screens without noticing how much time goes by. Some believe this is normal, but too much phone use can harm our lives in different ways. People should limit the time they spend on their phones because excessive phone use affects our health, damages our relationships, and causes us to waste valuable time.

First, heavy phone use has negative effects on our physical health. When people sit and look at the screen for long periods, they often experience neck and back pain or eye strain. In addition, using smartphones before sleeping can disturb sleep patterns because the blue light keeps the brain active. If people reduce screen time, they may sleep better, feel less tired, and improve their general well-being.

Second, too much phone use can damage personal and social relationships. When someone is focused on their screen during meals or family gatherings, others may feel ignored. This can make communication weaker and lead to emotional distance. Strong relationships require attention, eye contact, and meaningful conversation, but phones can take those away if people are constantly checking messages or scrolling.

Finally, smartphones can easily waste time. Many people start scrolling through social media “just for a minute,” and later realize that an hour has passed. This reduces the time they could spend studying, exercising, reading, or doing hobbies they enjoy. People often feel busy and stressed, so losing extra time to unproductive screen use makes life harder.

In conclusion, smartphones are helpful tools but overusing them creates many problems. Reducing phone use can improve health, support stronger relationships, and help people use their time more effectively. Everyone should try to use their phones more carefully to have a healthier and more balanced life. (314 words)

#### OPINION ESSAY OUTLINE

Title	People Should Spend Less Time on Their Phones
I. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Background:</b> Smartphones are useful in daily life, but many people spend too much time looking at screens.</li><li>• <b>Thesis:</b> People should limit their phone use because excessive screen time harms health, damages relationships, and wastes time.</li></ul>
II. Body Paragraph 1 – Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sitting and looking at screens causes neck/back pain and eye strain.</li><li>• Using phones before bed disturbs sleep.</li><li>• Reducing screen time helps people feel more energetic and healthier.</li></ul>
III. Body Paragraph 2 – Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People may ignore others when focused on their phones during meals or gatherings.</li><li>• This weakens communication and emotional connection.</li><li>• Strong relationships need attention and real interaction.</li></ul>
IV. Body Paragraph 3 – Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social media scrolling quickly turns into hours of wasted time.</li><li>• Wasted time increases stress and reduces productivity.</li><li>• Planning phone use allows more time for important activities.</li></ul>
V. Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Restate Thesis:</b> Heavy phone use harms health, relationships, and time management.</li><li>• <b>Comment:</b> Using phones more carefully leads to a healthier and more balanced life.</li></ul>

## COMPARISON & CONTRAST ESSAY

### Living on Campus vs. Living at Home

When students begin university, one important decision is where to live. Some students prefer to live on campus, while others stay at home with their families. Both choices allow students to earn their degrees, but the experiences are quite different. Living on campus and living at home differ in cost, daily life, and social experience.

To begin with, living on campus and living at home can cost very different amounts of money. Students who live at home usually spend less because they do not have to pay for a dorm room, meal plans, or laundry services. They can eat home-cooked meals and share family expenses. On the other hand, students who live on campus must pay dorm fees and buy food from the university. As a result, living on campus is often more expensive.

Another difference is daily life. When students live at home, they usually follow family rules and routines. They may have to help with chores or share a room with a sibling. They do not control their environment fully. However, students on campus have more independence. They are responsible for managing their time, doing their laundry, and deciding when and what to eat. This freedom can help them develop responsibility and independence.

The biggest difference may be the social experience. Students living on campus spend most of their time in the university environment. They can easily join clubs, attend events, and meet new friends. This helps them feel connected to campus life. In contrast, students who live at home often travel back and forth, so they may have fewer chances to socialize or participate in activities. They might find it harder to make close friends.

To conclude, living on campus and living at home have different costs, daily routines, and social opportunities. The best choice depends on each student's needs, personality, and goals for university life. In my case, I would choose to live on campus because I want to make new friends and join more university clubs. (331 words)

#### COMPARISON & CONTRAST ESSAY OUTLINE

Title	Living on Campus vs. Living at Home
I. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Background:</b> University students must decide whether to live on campus or at home.</li><li>• <b>Thesis:</b> The two options differ in cost, independence in daily life, and social opportunities.</li></ul>
II. Body Paragraph 1 – Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Living at home: no rent or meal plans; lower monthly expenses.</li><li>• Living on campus: dorm fees and campus services increase spending.</li><li>• Therefore, living on campus is usually more expensive.</li></ul>
III. Body Paragraph 2 – Daily Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At home: follow family rules and routines; less control over environment.</li><li>• On campus: manage personal time, meals, and responsibilities.</li><li>• Campus life builds independence and time-management skills.</li></ul>
IV. Body Paragraph 3 – Social Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On campus: easy access to clubs, events, and new friends.</li><li>• At home: commuting can limit participation in activities.</li><li>• Campus living helps students feel more connected to university life.</li></ul>
V. Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Restate Thesis:</b> Costs, daily routines, and social opportunities differ.</li><li>• <b>Comment:</b> The best choice depends on personal needs and goals. In my case, I would choose to live on campus because I want to make new friends and join more university clubs.</li></ul>

## CAUSE ESSAY

### Causes of Car Accidents

Driving is an important part of modern life. People drive to work, school, and many other places every day. Although driving is necessary, it can also be dangerous. Many accidents happen each year, and most of them are caused by drivers, not by the weather or the condition of the car. The three main causes of car accidents are poorly trained drivers, distracted drivers, and impaired drivers.

One major cause of accidents is poorly trained drivers. These drivers may not fully understand traffic rules or may not follow them carefully. For example, drivers who exceed the speed limit have less time to react if something unexpected appears on the road. They may also fail to check blind spots or ignore road signs. When drivers do not pay attention to their surroundings, they may easily crash into other cars or objects.

Another common cause is distracted driving. Driving requires full attention, but many people try to do other tasks while driving. For instance, they may text, talk on the phone, adjust the radio, or even eat. These activities take away focus and slow reaction time. A distracted driver may not notice a pedestrian or a car stopping in front of them, which can quickly result in an accident.

The third major cause is impaired drivers. Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs makes it difficult to control the vehicle safely. Alcohol slows reaction time and affects judgment. Illegal drugs can cause confusion or hallucinations. Even legal medicines can make drivers sleepy. If a driver cannot think clearly, they are more likely to make dangerous mistakes.

All in all, car accidents are often caused by driver behavior. Poor training, distractions, and impairment make roads unsafe for everyone. Drivers need to follow the rules, stay focused, and avoid driving when they are not able to think clearly. (305 words)

### CAUSE ESSAY OUTLINE

Title	Causes of Car Accidents
I. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Background:</b> Driving is common but dangerous when drivers make mistakes.</li><li>• <b>Thesis:</b> Car accidents are mostly caused by poorly trained, distracted, and impaired drivers.</li></ul>
II. Body Paragraph 1 – Poorly Trained Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not follow traffic rules (e.g., speeding).</li><li>• Fail to check blind spots and ignore road signs.</li><li>• Lack of awareness leads to collisions.</li></ul>
III. Body Paragraph 2 – Distracted Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try to do other tasks while driving (texting, eating, etc.).</li><li>• Attention moves away from the road; reaction time slows down.</li><li>• Not noticing dangers causes accidents.</li></ul>
IV. Body Paragraph 3 – Impaired Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alcohol reduces reaction time and judgment.</li><li>• Illegal drugs cause confusion or hallucinations.</li><li>• Some medications make drivers sleepy.</li></ul>
V. Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Restate Thesis:</b> Poor training, distraction, and impairment lead to accidents.</li><li>• <b>Comment:</b> Drivers must stay focused and responsible to keep roads safe.</li></ul>

## EFFECT ESSAY

### Effects of a Positive Outlook on Our Lives

Many people want to live a happy life, and they try different ways to improve their well-being. One powerful method is having a positive outlook. A positive mindset influences how people feel, how they act, and how they overcome challenges. A positive outlook can enrich relationships, increase inner strength, and improve both physical and mental health.

To begin with, a positive attitude can improve personal and social relationships. People who look at the bright side are usually more pleasant to be around. Their energy makes others feel comfortable, and this helps them build strong friendships. In professional life, optimism also creates a better atmosphere at work. Colleagues enjoy working with someone who avoids conflict and focuses on solutions.

Second, positive thinkers deal with difficulties more effectively. When people believe they can overcome challenges, they stay calm and think clearly. This helps them find solutions instead of giving up. For example, optimistic students are more likely to ask for help when they have trouble in a course. They trust they can improve, so they take action. A positive mindset also increases self-confidence, which is important for success.

Finally, having a positive outlook benefits physical and mental health. People who focus on solutions experience less stress and anxiety. Their bodies react more calmly, which supports heart health, better sleep, and stronger immunity. Positive thinkers are also more motivated to exercise, eat well, and keep healthy routines because they believe these actions will bring good results.

In summary, a positive outlook can change life in meaningful ways. It strengthens relationships, helps people face challenges, and supports overall health. If we try to think more positively each day, we can increase happiness and build a healthier and more successful life. (286 words)

### EFFECT ESSAY OUTLINE

Title	Effects of a Positive Outlook on Our Lives
I. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Background:</b> Many people want to feel happier; a positive attitude can help.</li><li>• <b>Thesis:</b> A positive outlook improves relationships, increases inner strength, and supports health.</li></ul>
II. Body Paragraph 1 – Better Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive energy makes others comfortable.</li><li>• People enjoy working and spending time with optimistic individuals.</li><li>• Leads to stronger personal connections.</li></ul>
III. Body Paragraph 2 – Handling Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Optimism helps people stay calm and think clearly.</li><li>• They are more willing to ask for help and find solutions.</li><li>• Positive mindset builds confidence.</li></ul>
IV. Body Paragraph 3 – Better Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Less stress and anxiety when focusing on solutions.</li><li>• Healthier habits because people believe actions will bring good results.</li><li>• Supports longer and healthier lives.</li></ul>
V. Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Restate Thesis:</b> Positive outlook strengthens relationships, coping ability, and health.</li><li>• <b>Comment:</b> Thinking positively each day can improve life in meaningful ways.</li></ul>

## ESSAY WRITING CRITERIA

Band	Content	Organization	Grammar	Vocabulary
<b>5</b>	Fully relevant, well-developed ideas with clear thesis and strong support; demonstrates some critical engagement with sources or perspectives.	Consistently clear and logical structure (introduction, body, conclusion); smooth progression of ideas with effective transitions; strong paragraph unity.	Wide range of grammatical structures used accurately; few or no errors; meaning mostly clear.	Wide range of vocabulary; mostly accurate word choices; appropriately used in context.
<b>4</b>	Mostly relevant and developed ideas; clear thesis with supporting details, though depth of analysis may be uneven.	Mostly clear structure with introduction, body, and conclusion evident; logical progression with minor lapses; transitions generally effective.	Good range of grammatical structures; mostly accurate; occasional errors rarely affecting meaning.	Good range of vocabulary; generally accurate word choices; mostly appropriate in context.
<b>3</b>	Generally relevant content; thesis is present but may be simple; ideas developed but sometimes repetitive or loosely connected.	Generally clear structure with introduction, body, and conclusion; some progression of ideas, though cohesion may be weak or mechanical.	Limited range of grammatical structures; some noticeable errors occasionally affecting meaning.	Limited range of vocabulary; basic word choices; occasional appropriacy issues.
<b>2</b>	Limited relevance or development; ideas are basic, weakly supported, with little elaboration or detail	Poor or incomplete structure; introduction, body, and conclusion may be incomplete or unclear; uneven progression of ideas; limited cohesion.	Very limited range of grammatical structures; frequent errors often affecting meaning.	Very limited range of vocabulary; frequent repetition; often inappropriate in context.
<b>1</b>	Inadequate or irrelevant; little evidence of understanding task; ideas are unclear or unsupported.	No clear structure; ideas listed randomly with no logical progression or cohesion.	Minimal range of grammatical structures and memorized patterns; major and frequent errors impeding meaning.	Minimal range of vocabulary; heavily reliant on memorized words and phrases; frequent misuse in context