

TSI Objective Writing Assessment:

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

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

1. 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

Directions for questions 2

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) 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. (2) 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. (3) In contrast, in Asian countries such as Japan, there has been a long history of seaweed in the cuisine. (4) Japanese researchers are much more familiar with it and have spent decades studying its potential uses.

2. In context, which of the following is best to insert at the beginning of sentence 4 (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,

Directions for questions 3-4

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.

3. 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

4. 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

TSI Objective Assessment Answers:

1. 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 . . . ”

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. A:

Choice (A) is correct. The sentence should be rewritten “To create a new piñata, Carmen constructed a papier-mâché figure 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.