

5th Edition

TOEFL

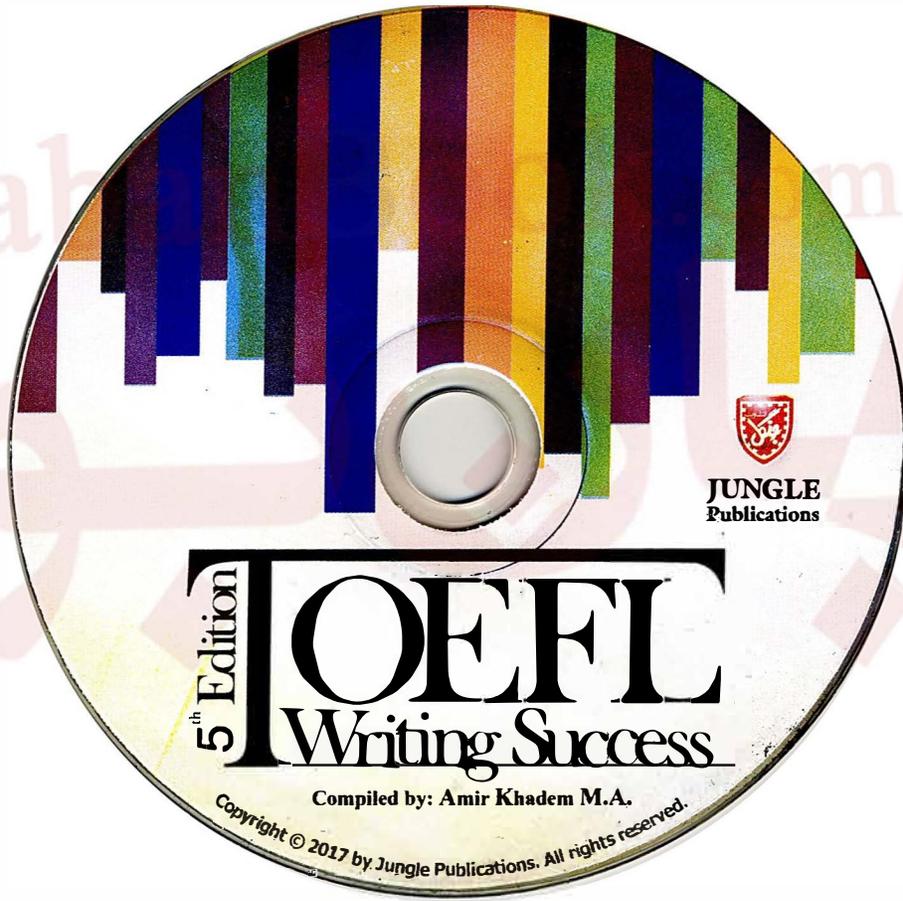
Writing Success

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In the Name of God Almighty

TOEFL WRITING SUCCESS
5th Edition

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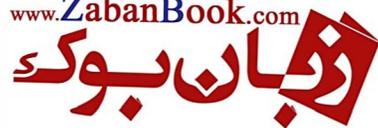


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How to Use the Book

About the Book

The book you are going to read is intended for **upper-intermediate** and **advanced students** who want to take part in the TOEFL iBT Test and get a score from 25 to 30 in the writing task. It helps you to build necessary skills to address the writing task in an excellent fashion. It also familiarizes you with the format of TOEFL iBT writing tasks and teaches essential test-taking strategies to help you guarantee a great score. For the independent writing task, all the five types of writing tasks, that is, **Stating a Preference, Agree or Disagree, Argument, Explanation, and Compare and Contrast the Advantages and Disadvantages of Something**, are separately elaborated upon, and for each of which quite a few samples, **153 independent and integrated samples**, including my own samples, are presented for more familiarity with each task. To find a specific sample, you can **search the topic** in a word file named **Topics Written in the Book**, which is available in **Avaye Shahir Site: www.avayeshahir.com**. In many of these samples, the track of the mistakes is left so that you became aware of the **common mistakes of the Iranian test takers**. It also contains **punctuation and grammar section** that are of great help to those who want to take part in **IELTS, GMAT, and GRE** tests in general and to **TOEFL** test takers in particular. Furthermore, the section allocated to the integrated task is one of a kind, thorough, and varied, in which some good sample responses of my students are included.

The book is accompanied by a CD, which contains: the audio files for the integrated task, a version of Babylon dictionary with all the learner's glossaries, and a word file that contains a syllabus for the most important TOEFL iBT sources. Since the vocabularies used in the example answers seem to be difficult to follow, a **glossary** was prepared for these words, which is available on **Avaye Shahir Site: www.avayeshahir.com**. These words or phrases are either underlined or boldfaced all through the book.

Apart from what you learn from this book for the writing tasks, this book is an invaluable source of practical vocabularies that are good for your general English and is full of great ideas that will help you in your speaking task as well.

It is worth mentioning that the writing samples in this book may look too complicated and advanced to have been written within the given time, thirty minutes. My students have spent a great deal of time to write these samples, and their writing samples have been edited by the author of the book. Therefore, I hope these advanced samples do not discourage you because a sample writing which is much lower than these samples, concerning quality and quantity, can still earn a high score. **The writing samples are categorized into three groups and are identified with stars: one star (*) for almost easy samples, two stars (**) for difficult ones, and three stars (***) for advanced samples.**

Preface

There are two writing tasks on the TOEFL test: one independent and one integrated. Independent writing refers to essays that express and support the student's point of view on a particular topic. Integrated writing refers to essays that combine what students have learned from assigned reading as well as class lectures. Integrated writing assignments require students to be able to organize and synthesize information from different sources, including their own notes; summarize and paraphrase information from these sources; and make comparisons or draw conclusions about the information from these sources¹.

The independent task measures your ability to compose an essay. You will have 30 minutes to write an essay of at least 300 words in response to an assigned question. However, if you want to get **a score higher than 25**, you should write between a range of **400 and 600 words**. To answer the question, you must either state, explain, and support an opinion or state, explain, and support a preference.

There is no right or wrong answer to the question. Your response is scored on your organization, development of ideas, and accuracy of language in addressing all parts of the question.

In order for a TOEFL test taker to be successful in the writing task, he or she should meticulously (carefully) follow three stages, namely planning, writing, and finally revising. Each test taker is given only 30 minutes to fulfill the independent writing task and 20 minutes for the integrated task; therefore, it stands to reason that the test taker, in order to successfully carry out the task in the short time provided, undergo intensive, constant training. In order to make a good impression on the examiner, one should write his or her essay in a precise, unambiguous, and coherent fashion. The very book you are going to study will assist you to do so.

Before elaborating on the necessary stages to be followed on the part of the test taker, let's take a brief look at the elements that guarantee the score 30 in TOEFL iBT writing task. These elements are as follows: first, effectively addressing the writing task; second, organization and the development of ideas; third, fluency in applying language, by this I mean the ease with which the test taker can get his or her points across; and finally, demonstrating grammatical variety and proper choice of words. A writing sample which enjoys all these qualities is guaranteed to get the very much desired score of 30.

¹Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test (4th Edition).

Independent Task

Strategies to Use for Building Writing Fluency¹

Practice writing in English on a computer keyboard. You will be required to use a computer to type your essays on the TOEFL test. Practice typing on a keyboard using English characters. Do as many of the writing exercises in the Writing section of different books as you can directly on a computer.

Practice writing essays. Set aside regularly scheduled times to practice writing essays. Use the topics in this book or topics of your own to develop your writing fluency. Start writing down your ideas as soon as you have read the topic. Use the strategies suggested later on in this book, both for writing practice essays and for the actual test.

Practice organizing information in written form. Use passages from the Reading and the Listening sections of TOEFL books to practice taking notes on main ideas and organizing those ideas in your writing.

Practice paraphrasing and summarizing information in written form. Use your notes to paraphrase key statements and to summarize passages you have read or heard. These two skills are elaborated upon in the 5th chapter and the last section of this book.

Read and listen to the kinds of material you will encounter on the test. Select material on topics in the fields of science, technology, the social sciences, and the humanities to practice taking notes on main ideas. Organize those main ideas in your writing.

Increase your skills in using a variety of sentence structures and vocabulary. A good written response includes a variety of structures and vocabulary.

Pay attention to time. Check the amount of time it takes you to respond to the essay-writing tasks. At first, don't worry if the amount of time it takes you is longer than the time allotted on the test. With more practice, you can decrease your time. In this way, you can build up your writing fluency so that you can complete the writing tasks within the time allotted on the TOEFL test.

¹ *ibid*

Strategies to Use for the Independent Writing Task

Be familiar with the organization of an effective essay. An effective essay begins with an introductory paragraph that includes a thesis statement. The thesis statement tells the reader what the essay is about. The body of the essay is made up of paragraphs that support the introduction. A concluding paragraph completes the essay.

Study the question carefully. Be sure you understand what the task requires. Consider a few ways to address the question. Quickly organize your thoughts and write down your ideas.

Organize your ideas. Organize your ideas into a logical progression by using a table or a traditional outline. Check your ideas to make sure they cover the requirements of the task. Then start typing your essay.

Write cohesively and concisely. While you are organizing your ideas, keep in mind the techniques for making your essay cohesive¹. While you are writing the essay, keep in mind the techniques for making your sentences cohesive and concise.

Budget your time so that you will be able to complete and correct your essay. You have only 30 minutes to write your essay. Use your time efficiently while you read and think about the question, organize your ideas in a simple form, write the essay, and make minor revisions.

Use sentence structures and vocabulary you know to be correct. Use sentence structures and vocabulary that you know how to use well. A well-written essay includes a variety of structures and vocabulary.

Check your grammar. When you are writing, look out for the kinds of grammar errors that you know you commonly make. Check your grammar when you review your essay.

Don't lose time worrying about whether the evaluator will agree with your opinions and the support you have used. Your essay is evaluated on how well you present your opinion, not on whether the evaluator agrees with you. Be sure you have supported your opinion well and have responded to all parts.

¹Something that is cohesive consists of parts that fit together well and form a united whole.

Evaluation Criteria¹

Almost all essays are evaluated according to three main criteria: Content, Organization, and Language. Although different teachers interpret these categories varyingly, I have specified below what I believe each involves.

| 1. Content | 2. Organization | 3. Language |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| a. logic | a. focus | a. grammar |
| b. evidence | b. structure | b. clarity |
| c. development | c. unity | c. style |

1. a LOGIC:

Logic refers to clear thinking, ordered thoughts, and precise arguments. You should have an arguable claim backed up by good reasons that support it. Hasty generalizations¹, poor causal reasoning, and other fallacies should be avoided as you make your argument.

→→ **Example:** *People go to university to have fun!!*

This is not a logical reason at all. There are many other reasons we can mention which are much more logical than this one.

¹ **Hasty Generalization:** Generalizing from a sample that is too small.

→→ **Example:** *I conclude from the several pleasant, hard-working AUC students I met this morning that all AUC students are pleasant, hard-working students.*

Actually, you may have just met the only three nice students on campus.

1. b EVIDENCE:

Evidence refers to the support you give your argument. This support could be in the form of facts, statistics, authoritative quotations, surveys, studies, or other types of evidence. Good evidence involves more than just finding quotations to agree with your position. It expounds the reasoning behind these authoritative statements and offers factual data for your position.

1. c DEVELOPMENT:

Development refers to the degree of depth you give a topic. If your thesis takes a specific, narrow claim and expands at length that idea with insights, evidence, and commentary, then you are said to be "developing" the idea. On the other hand, if you merely state a position and give superficial reasons for it, and then move on to another idea, your ideas will not be developed.

¹ <http://www1.aucegypt.edu/academic/writers>

2. a FOCUS:

Your overall essay should have a clear, specific focus as stated in the thesis. Additionally, each paragraph should be focused on supporting that thesis. Overall, your focus on the topic should be sufficiently narrow such that it allows you to explore in depth a specific idea. Your essay should not cover so much ground that your treatment ends up broad and shallow.

2. b STRUCTURE:

Structure refers to the way you organize your thoughts about the topic you are writing about. A well-structured essay presents your ideas in clear, distinct paragraphs with topic sentences that guide the reader—the topic sentence is the summary of that specific paragraph. Your insights and explanations should be logically divided and presented in some progressive or sequential order that makes sense for the topic.

2. c UNITY:

Unity involves remaining focused in each paragraph on a single main idea. Additionally, unity implies that each paragraph supports the thesis in a relevant way. Paragraphs with multiple main ideas or essays with extraneous or irrelevant paragraphs break the principle of unity.

→→ Your ideas in the two or three body paragraphs should not overlap, which means you should not mention the same reason with different wording.

→→ **Example:**

Paragraph 2: *One of the advantages of co-ed classes is that students, boys and girls, can share their ideas.*

Paragraph 3: *Another advantage of co-educational schools has to do with learning things from the opposite sex.*

These two reasons are similar to each other to a great extent. As a result, the candidate loses a big proportion of his or her score.

3. a GRAMMAR:

The grammar in your sentences should be correct. In particular, commas, semi-colons, capitalizations, possessives, and periods should be used correctly. Additionally, your sentences should be free of subject-verb agreement errors, tense shifts, misspellings, misplaced modifiers, fragments, run-ons, and all awkwardness. All these common errors are discussed in the section named “Common Errors.”

Identifying the task

Example: Stating a Preference

In this essay type, the candidate must consider the pros and cons of, the advantages and disadvantages of, something, and must discuss, compare, or contrast both sides of the issue in hand, by giving support, details and examples, and then tell which side he or she agrees with. You should not state that you agree with both sides of the issue, i.e. sitting on the fence. Rather, you must make a choice.

A typical question for this type of writing may look like this:

Some people prefer to live in the country, while others prefer to live in the town or big cities. Which do you prefer? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

There are some key words or phrases which show whether the topic in hand is State a Preference or otherwise. Some of these words and phrases are as follows: Some do/say ..., while others do/say ...; which opinion do you agree with?; in your opinion, which one is better?; which one would you prefer?; would you prefer to...; which is better for you?; and finally, which viewpoint do you agree with/approve of?

Having determined the task type, in this case being State a Preference, you are to start jotting down as many ideas as you can, as your general notes, before embarking on (starting) the writing task. This is sometimes called **the brainstorming stage**. To set a practical example, I will follow these steps one by one.

Having read the essay topic, that is, a choice between ***the country life or that in the town or big cities***, and having determined the essay type, a preference in this case, I write my thesis statement which is as follows:

As far as I am concerned, the advantages of the city life basically outweigh those of the country life.

After writing the thesis statement, I am supposed to write my general ideas in this regard, which will be shown below. Here, I try to write as many ideas as I can so that I will be able to choose two or three of them that will later form the body of my essay. I will list the elements that may affect life in the country or in the city. To me, these are the main factors affecting the city or country life:

People/physical and psychological health/facilities/cost of living/privacy/the upbringing of children/entertainment.

Now, from among the general ideas I already thought of, I should choose three of them for which I have enough supporting details such as facts, examples, and statistics, to name but a few. I,

personally, can provide ample evidence and support for three of the above-mentioned ideas, namely the quality of life, the issue of health, and children's upbringing.

After determining the three main paragraphs of my essay, I should start making specific notes to support my opinion, which will be thoroughly (completely) dealt with in the next step.

1.3 Step 5: Include Specific Details to Support Your Opinion

Having written my general notes, I am supposed to write specific details which support my argument. As for the essay type, State a Preference, we should have a table like the one that follows in order that the specific details for or against each choice can be clearly written. Just a word of caution, in stating a preference, **never ever see things simply** as “black and white.” By this, I mean you should not mention only positive points about one and negative points about the other, but rather discuss the merits and demerits of both cases and finally express your own preference based on your argument and reasoning. To clarify what I mean by this, let's see the specific supports provided in the following table concerning our topic.

A detailed plan for this topic may sound like this:

| City life ++/- | | Country life --/+ |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| + high-speed internet + modern malls + transportation + high-tech sport + <u>recreational</u> centers | The quality of life | - almost no amusement - difficult to bear - low quality of life |
| + access to experienced doctors + <u>state-of-the-art</u> hospitals & facilities + high level of hygiene | Health | + healthy life style + <u>wholesome</u> foods/fresh air + peace of mind but - no hospital or professional doctors if necessary - life-threatening |
| + <u>state-of-the-art</u> educational services + their talents are discovered and developed → knowledgeable → success in life | Children's <u>Upbringing</u> | + corruption-free atmosphere but - limited access to advanced <u>upbringing</u> facilities - poor educational conditions |

→ To read the sample writing for this topic, go to the Stating a Preference Section 4.1.

2. Writing

2.1 Step6: Write the Introduction

The introduction of your writing should enjoy four important elements, three of which—that is—the first three elements, which will follow, must be mentioned in your introduction, and the last one is usually mentioned, but if it is not, your score will not suffer. These elements are outlined as follows:

1. *A general statement (a fact)/a proverb/a quote/a rhetorical question (a fact in the form of a question)/an anecdote*
2. *Restatement of the topic*
3. *Your thesis statement—your stance—which is necessary*
4. *Your reasons (optional)*

In order to commence writing the introduction, you can opt for one of the choices mentioned in item 1, the best and easiest of which being the general statement. In order to clarify how you can apply each of the aforementioned options, I will provide at least an example for each of them, which have been taken from the sample responses written by my students or the ones offered by me.

2.1.1 Step 1 in Writing the Introduction

A) General Statement

The simplest item from among the ones mentioned already, general statement seems to be the easiest and the most practical one. To have a better understanding of its usage, take a look at the following examples.

Example 1: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The best things in life do not cost money. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

In this world, everything has a price, yet this price is not always evaluated by money. As a fundamental element in socio-economic context, money plays an absolutely essential role in our life; however,...

Example 2: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: books are not needed any more because people can read information on computers.

Today, as it is commonly sensed, the galloping rate at which science and technology are flourishing requires an efficient and innovative approach to the application and storage of information. As far as storing information is concerned, books have been an inseparable and truly unforgettable element in human history; however,...

Example 3: **

Leaders like John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King have made important contributions to the people of the United States. Name another world leader you think is important. Give specific reasons for your Choice.

From among all positions, leadership is the most important one in a society. From long ago, the world has seen the face of many leaders, some of whom loved killing innocent people, and some loved human beings and tried their best for the sake of humanity. In my opinion,...

B) Proverb

Example 1:

“When people succeed, it is because of hard work. Luck has nothing to do with success.” Do you agree or disagree with the quotation above? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.

There is a French proverb that says, “Everyone is the author of his own good fortune.”

*A French proverb **says**, “Everyone is the author of his own good fortune.”¹*

*A French proverb **says (that)** “everyone is the author of his own good fortune.”*

OR

There is an English proverb that says, “Everyone is the maker of his own fate.”

OR

There is a Chinese proverb that says, “Everything can be done with enough perseverance.”

Example 2: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: books are not needed any more because people can read information on computers.

*An old Persian proverb **states**², “Your best friend is your book, for it teaches you quite a few things in a pleasant manner.” It is generally agreed upon that the commencement/advent of computers has led to a gradual decline in the number of books, which are sold all over the world.*

¹ If “says”, “states”, etc. are followed by a comma, the first word after the quotation mark is capital letter. If there is no comma after them, the first word is small letter.

²I, personally, do not know whether or not we have such a proverb in our language, but it seems quite natural and “cleverly-devised.”

C) Quote

Example 1: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young . Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

As Vincent van Gogh once said, and I am quoting, "It is a pity that, as one gradually gains experience, one loses one's youth." In this regard/With this in mind, some people are of the opinion that...(My own example)

Example 2: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Subjects such as art, music, and drama should be a part of every child's basic education. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Stella Adler once **said that** "life beats down and crushes the soul, and art reminds you that you have one."

Example 3: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

A philosopher, whose name eludes me at the moment, once said, "The prime of one's life directs his or her lifestyle."

In order for you to find "Famous Quotes, Quotations, Proverbs, and Sayings", you can refer to the following site, <http://www.worldofquotes.com>, which provides you with an invaluable, priceless treasure of famous quotes which are organized by the author and topic, as well as proverbs that are organized by nationality or origin.

D) Rhetorical Question

First, let's take a look at the definition of the rhetorical questions, and then we can go through some relevant examples. "A rhetorical question is a figure of speech in the form of a question that is asked in order to make a point and without the expectation of a reply. The question is used as a rhetorical device, posed for the sake of encouraging its listener to consider a message or viewpoint. Although these are technically questions, they do not always require a question mark¹."

¹ Wikipedia

→ Rhetorical questions are less common in TOEFL these days, so I just offer two examples for it.

Example 1: **

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Who, in his or her right mind, can deny that youth is the prime of life for every single human being? (My own example)

Example 2:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? In any society, the contributions of scientists and engineers are more important than the contributions of artists and writers. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Who can question scientists' and engineers' contribution and services to human society since the dawn of civilization? (My own example)

E) Anecdote

An anecdote is a short and amusing or interesting story about a real incident or person¹. Anecdotes are the least common form of writing an introduction, yet if they are adeptly used, they can make a very good impression on the readers.

Example 1: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Youth is wasted on the young. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

In response to Napoleon who said, "You have not kept track of the years you have lived," one of his colonels promptly replied, "Sir, I always count my money, my shirts, and my horses - but as for my years, I know nobody who wants to steal them, and I shall surely never lose them²." I believe that the youth of today are like this colonel and are incognizant of the priceless period of their life—youth. (My own example)

Example 2: ***

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? We should always tell the truth to our friends. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

*The topic reminds me of the novel *Les Misérables*, written by Victor Hugo, in which a priest tells a lie to the police to save the face of a criminal, Jean Valjean, which later led to his becoming a righteous, respectful, and benevolent person. However, I, personally, believe that we can tell a white lie for our friends, but under no circumstances are we supposed to tell any lie to them. (My own example)*

¹ Wikipedia

² Taken from <http://www.liraz.com/Anecdote.htm>

Last, the new guidelines provide a lot of paid work for archaeologists, work that didn't exist before. Expert archaeologists are now hired all stage of the process to examine the site for archaeological value, then have to drop the preservation plan to do the researcher and professional scientific manner and finally to process the data and write reports and articles. The increased job career opportunities in Archaeology have increased the number professional archaeologists in Britain which is now the highest it's ever been.

Track 19: Encyclopedia

The communal online encyclopedia will probably never be perfect, but that's a small price to pay for what it does offer. The criticisms in the reading are largely the result of prejudice against and ignorance about how far online encyclopedias have come.

First, errors. It's hardly a fair criticism that encyclopedias online have errors. Traditional encyclopedias have never been close to perfectly accurate, if you are looking for a really comprehensive reference work without any mistakes, you are not going to find it, on or off line. The real point is that it's easy for errors in factual material to be corrected in an online encyclopedia But with the printed and bound encyclopedia, the errors remain for decades.

Second, hacking. Online encyclopedias have recognized the importance of protecting their articles from malicious hackers. One strategy they started using is to put the crucial facts in the articles that nobody disputes in a read-only format, which is a format that no one can make changes to. That way you are making sure that the crucial facts in the articles are reliable. Another strategy that's being used is to have special editors whose job is to monitor all changes made to the articles and eliminate those changes that are clearly malicious.

Third, what's worth knowing about? The problem for traditional encyclopedias is that they have limited space, so they have to decide what's important and what's not. And in practice, the judgments of the group of academics that make these decisions don't reflect the great range of interests that people really have. But space is definitely not an issue for online encyclopedias. The academic articles are still represented in online encyclopedias, but there can be a great variety of articles and topics that accurately reflect the great diversity of users' interests. The diversity of use in topics that online encyclopedias offer is one of their strongest advantages.

Track 20: Sustainable Forestry

Well, despite what many people say, there is a good reason to think that many American wood companies will eventually seek ecocertification for the wood products.

First off, companies in the United States don't treat all advertising the same. They distinguish between advertising claims that companies make about their own products and claims made by independent certification agencies. Americans have a lot of confidence in independent agencies. Thus, ecologically-minded Americans are likely to react very favorably to wood products ecologically certified by independent organization with an international reputation for trustworthiness.

Second point, of course it is true that American consumers care a lot about price, who doesn't? But studies of how consumers make decisions show that price alone determines consumers' decisions only when the price of one competing products is much higher or lower than the other. When the difference between two products is small, say, less than 5 percent, as is the case with certified wood, American often do choose on factories other than price. And Americans are becoming increasingly convinced of the value of preserving and protecting the environment.

And third, US Wood companies should definitely pay attention what is going on in the wood business internationally. Not because of foreign consumers but because of foreign competitors. As I just told you, there is a good chance that many American consumers will be interested in ecocertified products, and guess why? If American companies are slow capturing those consumers, you can be sure that foreign companies will soon start crowding into the American markets, offering ecocerfied wood that domestic companies don't.

Track 21: Car Manufacturers

The reading is correct in pointing out the problems associated with oil-powered cars. Yes, oil is a finite resource, and yes, burning oil harms the environment. However, the reading is way too optimistic in its assessment of hydrogen-based fuel-cell engines. Hydrogen is not the solution to these problems.

First, hydrogen is not as easily available as the passage indicates. Although it's present in common substances like water, it's not directly useable in that form. For using a fuel-cell engine, hydrogen must first be obtained in a pure liquid state. This pure liquid hydrogen is a highly artificial substance. It's technologically very difficult to produce and store liquid hydrogen. For example, it must be kept very very cold at minus 253 degrees Celsius. Imagine the elaborate cooling technology that's required for that! So hydrogen is not such a practical and easily available substance, is it?

Second, using hydrogen would not solve the pollution problems associated with cars. Why? Producing pure hydrogen creates a lot of pollution. To get pure hydrogen from water or natural gas, you have to use a purification process that requires lots of energy that's obtained by burning coal or

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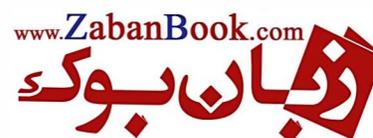
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