

TOEFL Build a Sentence

A Premium 10-Page Practice Guide

Master sentence order, fix common grammar traps, and answer faster under TOEFL writing pressure. This guide turns confusing mixed-word questions into clear, teachable patterns you can recognize, rebuild, and repeat with confidence.

[Sentence Order](#)[TOEFL Writing](#)[Fast Grammar Fixes](#)

6 Patterns

Negation, questions, clauses

10 Pages

Compact + printable

Free

Student resource

How the Build a Sentence Task Works

You see one complete sentence, then a response sentence with words mixed up. Your job is to rebuild the response so the grammar, meaning, and punctuation all work together.

The pressure is real - so your method must be simple.

Many students lose time because they try to translate every word. Strong test-takers look for structure first: Is it a statement, a question, an embedded question, or a clause? Once the structure is clear, the sentence usually falls into place.

What you are training

- Word order: choosing the correct position for the subject, verb, object, and extra information.
- Question grammar: knowing when the auxiliary verb comes before the subject and when it does not.
- Clause logic: identifying which words belong together inside a relative clause or embedded idea.
- Speed: making a confident decision without freezing over every grammar term.

The 1313 Fast-Fix Routine

1

Find the sentence type

Question, statement, indirect question, or clause?

2

Anchor the subject

Who or what is doing the action?

3

Place the verb system

Auxiliary + main verb, or main verb only?

4

Add the rest

Object, time, location, and final details go where they make meaning clean.

Teacher Note

The goal is not to memorize fancy grammar labels. The goal is to recognize patterns quickly enough to build a **correct sentence before the clock starts bullying your brain.**

The Big Idea: English Sentences Need Architecture

A good sentence is not a pile of words. It is a structure. When you understand the architecture, you stop guessing and start building.

The beginner-friendly explanation

Think of every TOEFL Build a Sentence item like a small construction project. The subject is the foundation. The verb is the engine. The object receives the action. Extra information - time, place, reason, and manner - decorates the sentence after the main structure is stable.

When you drag words randomly, the sentence feels confusing. When you build from the foundation, the answer becomes easier to see.

Real-world example

Prompt: I cannot find the advising office.

Mixed words: you / know / where / do / it / is

Strong answer: Do you know where it is?

Why it works: The opening question is "Do you know," but the embedded part uses normal order: where + subject + verb.

Common misconceptions to fix early

- Misconception: Every sentence with a question word needs question order. Fix: Embedded questions usually use normal subject-verb order.
- Misconception: Extra words always belong at the end. Fix: Some time or contrast phrases can begin the sentence, but only when the grammar remains clean.
- Misconception: If the sentence sounds almost right, it is fine. Fix: TOEFL sentence building rewards exact structure, not a general feeling.

Core Reminder

Meaning guides grammar. Grammar protects meaning. Use both.

Pattern 1: Subject-Verb-Object with Negation

Learn the shape first. Then place the words inside the shape.

1

Subject-Verb-Object with Negation

CORE PATTERN

COMMON ON TOEFL

Formula: Subject + auxiliary/modal + not + main verb + object / detail.

Watch for: Do not let “not” float around the sentence. It must attach to the correct verb phrase.

Mini Example

Did Mia submit the assignment?

Word bank: has / not / she / submitted / it / yet

Best Answer

She has not submitted it yet.

Teacher Fix: First place the subject, then attach not to the verb system. “She has not submitted” is stable; “she not has submitted” breaks English word order.

Pattern 2: Subject-Verb Inversion

Learn the shape first. Then place the words inside the shape.

2

Subject-Verb Inversion

CORE PATTERN

COMMON ON TOEFL

Formula: Auxiliary / modal + subject + main verb + object / detail?

Watch for: A yes/no question usually begins with an auxiliary, modal, or form of be.

Mini Example

The campus bookstore has a sale today.

Word bank: does / include / it / textbooks / this semester

Best Answer

Does it include textbooks this semester?

Teacher Fix: Questions often flip the usual order. Instead of "it does include," TOEFL expects "Does it include...?"

Pattern 3: Auxiliary Verb After a WH-Word

Learn the shape first. Then place the words inside the shape.

3

Auxiliary Verb After a WH-Word

CORE PATTERN

COMMON ON TOEFL

Formula: WH-word + auxiliary/modal/be + subject + main verb + rest?

Watch for: A wh-question normally begins with the question word, then the helper verb, then the subject.

Mini Example

I am waiting for the shuttle.

Word bank: when / does / next / the / one / arrive

Best Answer

When does the next one arrive?

Teacher Fix: The question word opens the sentence. The helper verb does comes before the subject "the next one."

Pattern 4: Embedded Questions with Cancelled Inversion

This pattern requires careful reading because the sentence may look familiar while hiding a serious word-order trap.

4

Embedded Questions with Cancelled Inversion

CORE PATTERN

COMMON ON TOEFL

Formula: Main statement + WH-word + subject + verb + rest.

Watch for: This sentence may contain a question word, but the whole sentence is not always a direct question.

Mini Example

I need to print my essay tonight.

Word bank: know / where / you / can / do / that / I

Best Answer

I know where you can do that.

Teacher Fix: After “where,” use normal order: you can do. Do not write “where can you do” unless the whole clause is a direct question.

Pattern 5: Interrogative Indirect Questions

This pattern requires careful reading because the sentence may look familiar while hiding a serious word-order trap.

5

Interrogative Indirect Questions

CORE PATTERN

COMMON ON TOEFL

Formula: Opening request question + WH-word/phrase + subject + verb + rest?

Watch for: The sentence begins as a question, but the embedded part keeps normal order.

Mini Example

You missed the last shuttle.

Word bank: can / tell me / when / the next one / arrives / you

Best Answer

Can you tell me when the next one arrives?

Teacher Fix: The first part is a question: "Can you tell me." The second part is embedded: "when the next one arrives," not "when arrives the next one."

Pattern 6: Relative Clauses

This pattern requires careful reading because the sentence may look familiar while hiding a serious word-order trap.

6

Relative Clauses

CORE PATTERN

COMMON ON TOEFL

Formula: Noun + who/that/which/where/whose + clause + main verb/rest.

Watch for: A relative clause describes a noun. The biggest trap is deciding which words stay inside the description.

Mini Example

I still do not understand the assignment.

Word bank: the email / that / our professor / sent / explains / everything

Best Answer

The email that our professor sent explains everything.

Teacher Fix: The clause “that our professor sent” describes “the email.” After the description is complete, the main verb “explains” finishes the sentence.

Final Practice: Build with Confidence

Use these short drills to review the whole guide. Do not overthink. Identify the pattern, build the structure, then check the meaning.

Practice Set

1. I cannot access the course page.

Word bank: know / you / do / why / it / is / not loading

Answer: Do you know why it is not loading?

2. Should I email the professor again?

Word bank: not / you / send / should / another message / tonight

Answer: You should not send another message tonight.

3. The library is closed today.

Word bank: where / can / we / study / instead

Answer: Where can we study instead?

4. I lost the receipt from the bookstore.

Word bank: the cashier / who / helped me / printed / another copy

Answer: The cashier who helped me printed another copy.

5. The deadline changed again.

Word bank: can / tell me / when / it / is due / you

Answer: Can you tell me when it is due?

Discussion Questions

- Which pattern feels easiest for you, and why?
- Which pattern makes you slow down the most: embedded questions, indirect questions, or relative clauses?
- How can you train yourself to find the subject and verb faster before test day?

Premium Summary

The Build a Sentence task is a speed-and-structure challenge. You are not simply arranging words; you are proving that you understand how English sentences work under pressure. Train the six patterns, practice with a timer, and keep your method clean: identify the sentence type, anchor the subject, place the verb system, then add the remaining details.

Keep practicing with 1313 English Lab

TOEFL support, speaking practice, writing strategy, and real English training for serious learners.