

TOEFL Speaking Task 3 Sample Question and Answer

Text of conversation

(Male student) Thank goodness the department has made changes to the way they assess group work! I had a nightmare last term with our geology project. I couldn't bear going through that again!

(Female student) Why, what happened?

(Male student) Well, there were three of us in the group. One guy worked really hard, but he didn't trust anyone else to do anything. He just wanted to do it all himself.

(Female student) It sounds like you were freeloading.

(Male student) Well, I wasn't. I offered up plenty of ideas, but he kept saying they were no good. In the end, I stopped trying and left it to him. The other guy was a waste of space. He didn't pull his weight at all. We barely saw him.

(Female student) Did you get a good grade?

(Male student) A reasonable one, considering how little work I did. But I'm sure I'd have done better if I'd been given the chance to say what I wanted.

(Female student) Well, the new system should give you that opportunity.

(Male student) Yeah, I hope so, though I wish they'd abolish group work altogether. All this organization and communication is just a waste of time. It's got nothing to do with geology.

Text of sample answer**Sample answer:**

The man is not keen on group work. In his experience, group work was frustrating because another group-member wasn't interested in his ideas and so did the work himself. He denies being a freeloader because he did try, unlike the other team-member, but he admits that he did not deserve the marks he was awarded, because so little of the group work was his own. So it sounds as if the faculty is right in identifying that group marks don't correctly reflect the amount of work students have done. Another problem is that the man wishes he'd had the opportunity to approach the task in an individual way. The faculty seems to recognize this. That is why they have decided to implement a system whereby students do an individual piece of work based on a group project.

The man and the faculty don't agree on everything, though. The man doesn't think that the skills required in group work; that is, group organization and communication, are useful for a student of geology. However, the faculty thinks they are, and that's why they aren't abolishing group work altogether.