

## **Reading to Write (RTW) English Placement Test Preparation Packet**

### **Overview**

The RTW English Placement Test is required for all incoming students who do not meet exemption criteria (see FAQs for information on exemptions). English Faculty use the RTW English Placement Test to place students into the English course that will best promote academic success and to determine eligibility for other courses new students can take in their first semester.

It is not possible to *fail* this test! However, it is important that you do your best to ensure appropriate placement.

The test has four parts:

#### **Part One: Local Background Information**

- Answer questions related to your academic, demographic, and personal background.

#### **Part Two: Reading Comprehension**

- Read a short article.
- Answer reading comprehension questions.

#### **Part Three: Essay**

- Read the article again.
- Write a multi-paragraph essay in response to the article.

#### **Part Four: Self-Placement**

- Read descriptions of the English course levels.
- Write a short paragraph explaining which course level you think fits your current skills.

**This test is timed. The time will be displayed on your screen.**

The test must be completed in one sitting. You will not be able to log out then log back in and resume the test.

Before beginning the test, you are encouraged to carefully review the preparation material provided in this packet.

## **Preparation**

### **About the article**

You will read a brief college-level article. A sample passage can be found in this packet (Additional Resource #1). Topics are based on current issues and will challenge you to reflect on personal experiences and what you read in the article. As you read the passage, you are encouraged to take notes on a separate sheet of paper. Here are some questions to check your reading comprehension:

- What is the main idea of the article?
- What details are used to support the main idea?
- What is the author's purpose for writing this article?

### **About the essay response**

You will write an essay in response to the ideas presented in the article with the following prompt: "In your own words, explain the author's most important argument. Do you agree or disagree with the author's ideas?" You should support your position using the article, your own experience, and your knowledge of the subject. Here are some questions to help you write your essay response:

- What is the main idea of the article?
- Why did the author write this passage?
- What is the author trying to argue or demonstrate?
- Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?
- Have you ever experienced what the author is discussing? If so, how?

### **Planning your essay**

Many academic writers plan their essays by pre-writing (listing, idea mapping, free writing) and creating outlines. A suggested outline template can be found in this packet (Additional Resource #2). Academic writing should be divided into paragraphs. A well-organized essay has an introduction paragraph with a clear thesis statement (your position), supporting details organized into well-developed body paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph.

### **Structuring Your Response**

- Introductory paragraph
  - Summary of the author's main idea
  - Thesis statement (your position)
- Body paragraphs
  - Details that support your thesis
- Concluding paragraph

Be sure to use an academic tone (not conversational language), support your position with examples, and use standard English grammar and mechanics.

## Organizing Your Time

It is recommended that you use all the time you are given using the following strategy:



**Background Information:** Spend 20-30 minutes reading and responding to brief questions to help us better understand your academic and personal background.

**Reading Comprehension:** Spend 20-30 minutes reading an article and answering questions about the reading passage.

**Essay:** Spend 90-120 minutes composing a multi-paragraph essay in response to the same reading passage:

**Outlining, Planning, and Pre-Writing:** Spend 10-15 minutes outlining your response, or pre-writing. Your outline and notes will not be turned in; they are for your benefit. The purpose is to generate an easy-to-follow plan that you can refer to when you begin to write your response.

**Writing:** Spend 75-90 minutes writing your essay. Make sure to follow the directions and answer all parts of the essay question. Your essay will be assessed based on the following: your ability to critically respond to the writing task, the development of your ideas, the structure of your response, your sentence structure and word choice, and your grammar and mechanics.

**Proofreading and Editing:** Spend 10-15 minutes proofreading and editing your essay. Read your essay carefully and make any changes that you feel would improve your writing. As you proofread, consider the following questions:

- Did I answer the prompt question and follow the directions?
- Did I organize my essay with an introduction, supporting details divided into neat paragraphs and units, and a conclusion?
- Did I provide enough details to fully support my thesis (position)?
- Did I use proper punctuation, including the proper use of periods and commas?
- Did I write clear and grammatically correct sentences?

**Self-Placement:** Spend 20-30 minutes to complete this portion of the test. You will read descriptions of English courses and write a short paragraph explaining the level of English that you believe is a good fit for you.

### **Academic Honesty**

You may not use any outside sources while you are taking this placement test. All tests are checked for plagiarism. If plagiarism is found anywhere on your test, the test will become invalid and a CCC administrator will contact you.

### **Understanding Your English Course Placement**

This is a placement test, not a graded exam. Scores are codes for each course placement option; they are not grades. These are the criteria faculty scorers use to determine English placement:

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Analysis/ Critical Response</b>	Relates to your ability to break down the reading into smaller portions, clearly present those smaller portions, and meaningfully respond to them
<b>Source Integration</b>	Relates to how well you compose ideas from the reading with your own ideas
<b>Development</b>	Relates to how thoroughly you explain your ideas and clearly and sensibly connect your own ideas with ideas from the reading
<b>Organization</b>	Relates to how well you order and structure statements and paragraphs according to a main point or thesis statement
<b>Sentence Structure/Word Choice</b>	Relates to how precisely you use vocabulary and sentence variety to convey meaning in your writing
<b>Grammar/Mechanics</b>	Relates to your level of control over correct sentence structure and punctuation in Standard American English

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCE #1**

**Suggested Outline Template for the Essay**

<p><b>Introduction Paragraph</b></p> <p>Summary of the points made in the article</p> <p>Thesis Statement (your position)</p>
<p><b>Body Paragraph #1</b></p> <p>First major supporting point (topic sentence)</p> <p>Minor supporting details (personal experience and references to the article)</p>
<p><b>Body Paragraph #2</b></p> <p>Second major supporting point (topic sentence)</p> <p>Minor supporting details (personal experience and references to the article)</p>
<p><b>Body Paragraph #3</b></p> <p>Third major supporting point (topic sentence)</p> <p>Minor supporting details (personal experience and references to the article)</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>Final thoughts: Tell your readers again why this issue is so important.</p>

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCE #2**

### **Sample Passage**

#### **“Competition or Collaboration” adapted from an article by A. Kohn**

Most of us were raised to believe that we do our best work when we're in a race -- that without competition we would all become fat, lazy, and mediocre. It's a belief that our society takes on faith. It's also false.

There is good evidence that productivity in the workplace suffers as a result of competition. The research is even more compelling in classroom settings. David Johnson, a professor of social psychology at the University of Minnesota, and his colleagues reviewed all the studies they could find on the subject from 1924 to 1980. Sixty-five of the studies found that children learn better when they work cooperatively as opposed to competitively, eight found the reverse, and 36 found no significant difference. The more complex the learning task, the worse children in a competitive environment fared.

Brandeis University psychologist Teresa Amabile was more interested in creativity. She asked 22 girls, ages seven to 11, to make "silly artwork." Some competed for prizes, and some didn't. Seven artists then independently rated the girls' work. It turned out that the children who were trying to win produced artwork that was much less creative -- less spontaneous, complex, and varied -- than the others.

One after another, researchers across the country have concluded that children do not learn better when education is transformed into a competitive struggle. Why? First, competition often makes kids anxious and that interferes with concentration. Second, competition doesn't permit them to share their talents and resources as cooperation does, so they can't learn from one another.

Finally, trying to be Number One distracts them from what they're supposed to be learning. It may seem paradoxical, but when a student concentrates on the reward (an A or a gold star or a trophy), she becomes less interested in what she's doing. As a result, performance declines.