

## Writing Placement Test

**Purpose:** The writing sample is designed to assess how well you write in order to place you in an appropriate English course. It is important, therefore, that you produce an example of your best writing skills.

**Evaluation:** Your essay will be judged on the basis of:

- ✓ The clarity of your language and ideas
- ✓ The organization of your ideas
- ✓ The sentence structure and use of the rules of standard English

**Directions:** You will have 50 minutes to write this essay. Read the questions carefully and choose one to answer. You will write an essay of three to five paragraphs in response to a prompt that is similar to one of the ones given below.

### **Choice A:**

Books, films and television shows often serve as our entertainment. Sometimes, however, we encounter a book, movie, or program that goes beyond mere diversion and affects us deeply or challenges our thinking. **Describe a book, film or television program that was more than just an entertaining diversion and explain how it affected you or changed you.**

**Choice B:** In the U.S. many children, some as young as age nine, are home alone after school until their parents return from work. **To make sure these children are safe, what rules**

**and plans would you suggest as the best strategies for parents to adopt?**

### **Steps to writing well**

- 1. Reflect.** Take your time to think about the question - you have plenty of it. It will be extraordinarily helpful for you to write an outline of your ideas. This will focus your thoughts and guide you in structuring a coherent essay. Students who take the opportunity to construct an outline first **always** do better.
- 2. Formulate a thesis.** A thesis is not a announcement of the topic. A thesis is a declarative statement that is a judgment. In other words, a thesis is an opinion or idea that can be argued. It is your task to argue that opinion in the body of the essay. Don't be afraid of expressing your opinion, but **don't** make the mistake of constantly qualifying your remarks by writing, "I think," or "In my opinion." Simply say what you mean - and mean what you say.
- 3. Use an essay map.** An essay map is a brief statement in the introductory paragraph that introduces the main aspects of your arguments. In fact, your essay map is simply a more sophisticated version of your outline. By writing an essay map you will set up the structure of the rest of the essay.
- 4. Following your outline, develop two or three arguments** or points that support your thesis. Make sure to keep ideas grouped appropriately. Don't talk about one subject, change subjects, and then return to your first

subject later in the essay. Treat one issue at a time, and treat it fully. This will keep your essay organized and effectively structured - a big plus.

- 5. Use transition words** and phrases to move between ideas and paragraphs. Some examples of transitions are: "On the other hand," "In the first place," "Furthermore," or "In addition to."
- 6. Use examples.** Cite examples, explain causes, offer reasons, or use other strategies to supply enough evidence to persuade your readers that the opinion expressed is a sensible and valid one.
- 7. Be cautious about sentence structure.** Don't try to develop long and complex sentences. Try to be straightforward. Your writing should communicate - not obscure.
- 8. Stay on point.** Be certain that every paragraph supports your thesis. Don't get sidetracked by ideas that are not related to your thesis.
- 9. Don't give up at the end.** Many students make the mistake of allowing their essays to run out of steam. Incorporate concluding thoughts in your outline so that you have a way to tie up your thoughts effectively.
- 10. Proofread.** Read your essay over carefully, three or four times. You'd be surprised how many mistakes can creep into your writing. If you are uncertain about spelling - use a dictionary.

## Reading Skills

**Directions:** There are three passages in the placement test. Each is followed by eight questions. After reading a passage, choose the best answer to each question. Mark each answer by blackening the corresponding space on the answer sheet. For the placement test you will have 25 minutes to answer 24 questions. Work carefully.

**Pay close attention to the question asked.**

When doing multiple choice questions, first eliminate the answers that are obviously wrong, and then re-examine the passage and choose between the two that are left.

### Example #1:

When the fox and the hound were young, they were best friends. They played together on a daily basis. Their favorite game was tag, but they also enjoyed hopscotch and kick-ball. Marbles, jacks, and hide-and-seek were their least favorite games. The fox and the hound would play until their mothers called them in for supper after a full day of fun.

**Question:** (Choose one) **What were the second favorite games the fox and hound liked to play?**

- A. Tag and hide-and-seek.
- B. Marbles, jacks, and hide-and-seek.
- C. Hopscotch and kickball.
- D. Tag and baseball.

The answer is **C**. Remember that the question asked for the **second favorite**, and **C** is the only answer that corresponds **completely** to

the passage. **A** is wrong because it combines the most and least favorites. **B** is wrong because it refers to all the least favorite games, and **D** is obviously wrong because the passage never mentions baseball.

### Example #2:

Many people enjoy shopping on the Internet, because they find that they can shop more easily and quickly than by going out to malls. Although this is a convenient way of doing business, some people are worried about using credit cards online because they are concerned about a lack of security with their credit card numbers.

**Question:** (Choose one) **According to the passage, what is one reason why people do not want to shop online?**

- A. They don't have computers.
- B. They can shop more easily.
- C. They spend too much money.
- D. They think their credit card numbers are not secure.

The answer is **D**. The passage never speaks of computer ownership, so **A** is wrong. **B** is a reason for shopping online - not against it. Although answer **C** may seem true in your experience, the passage does not say that. Only answer **D** fits the passage.

**Remember:** Read both the passage and the question very carefully, and work only with what the passage directly tells you.

# Placement Test Study Guide for English

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