



Reading Skills

**Directions:** After reading a passage, choose the best answer to each question.

When answering multiple choice questions, first eliminate answers that are obviously wrong, and then re-examine the passage and choose between the two that are left. Work carefully, paying close attention to the questions asked.

**Reading Skills Example One:**

When the fox and 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.

**Reading Skills Example Two:**

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.

For more information regarding College admissions, contact the Admissions Office at (518) 562-4170.  
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## 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 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 the examples below.

### Writing Sample Choice A:

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Books, films and television shows often serve as our entertainment. Sometimes, however, we encounter a book, movie, or program that goes beyond a 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.

### Writing Sample Choice B:

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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 time to think about the question. It may be helpful to write an outline before you start the essay. This will focus your thoughts and guide you in structuring a coherent essay.
- 2. Formulate a thesis.** A thesis is not an announcement of the topic (“I am going to write about...”). A thesis is an opinion or an idea that can be argued or developed in your 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 identifies 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 for your 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 evidence that the opinion expressed is a sensible and valid one.
- 7. Be cautious about sentence structure.** Don’t use 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 to tie up your points effectively.
- 10. Proofread.** Read your essay carefully three or four times. You’d be surprised by how many mistakes can creep into your writing. If you are uncertain about spelling - use a dictionary.