

# COMPASS SAMPLE TEST

## What You Need To Know About COMPASS™

### ***What Is COMPASS?***

COMPASS is given on a computer and is not timed. It helps evaluate your skills and place you into appropriate English, math and reading courses. You will receive your COMPASS test results immediately when you finish the test. At this time a counselor will review your score report with you, identify your advisor, and inform you of any developmental courses you should take, if they are required.

### ***How Are COMPASS Scores Used?***

COMPASS is not used like a traditional test because you cannot “fail” it. There is no "passing score." Rather, COMPASS scores indicate areas in which you are strong and areas in which you may need help. Thus, COMPASS can identify problems in major subject areas before they disrupt your educational progress, giving you the opportunity to prepare more effectively for the courses you must have.

### ***How Can I Arrange to Take the COMPASS Tests?***

A COMPASS Testing Schedule and this Sample Test are available in both paper copy and online, by going to our website ([www.bladencc.edu](http://www.bladencc.edu)) and clicking on Calendars and Schedules. You do not need to make an appointment to take the COMPASS Test. You may walk in (**Building 2, Room 118**) and test at anytime during the hours listed on the COMPASS Testing Schedule.

## **Tips for Taking COMPASS™ Tests**

- 1. Relax! The COMPASS tests are designed to help you succeed in school. Your scores help you and your institution determine which courses are most appropriate for your current level of knowledge and skills. Once you identify your academic strengths and weaknesses, you can get the help you need to improve underdeveloped skills before they interfere with your learning.**
- 2. You will be able to concentrate better on the test if you get plenty of rest and eat properly before the test. You should also arrive a few minutes early so you can find the testing area, bathrooms, etc., and have time to gather your thoughts before the test begins.**
- 3. Be sure you understand the directions for each test before that test session begins. Ask the counselor any questions if you need to.**
- 4. Read each question carefully until you understand what the question is asking. If answering an item requires several steps, be sure you consider them all.**
- 5. Be sure to answer every item. You are not penalized for guessing. Your score will provide more useful placement information if you answer every item, even if you guess. If taking all 3 parts, you should take a break after the Reading portion.**
- 6. Don't be afraid to change answers if you believe that your first choice was wrong.**
- 7. If you have a problem or question during the test, raise your hand and the test administrator will help you. Although they cannot answer test questions for you, they can help you with other types of problems.**

## How Long Will the COMPASS Test Take?

This depends on you. The COMPASS is **UNTIMED** so you may take as long as you need. The test is adapted to your individual skill level so the length of time will be different for each person. Generally, you need to give yourself a minimum of 2 hours to take all 3 parts (Math, Reading, and Writing).

## May I Retest?

Retesting is only permitted when there is a substantial reason to believe that your current COMPASS scores are not indicative of your current level of knowledge and skills. If you feel there are compelling reasons why a retest is appropriate, contact the counselor who administered the test immediately.

## What Do I Need to Bring on the Day I Test?

There are two **REQUIRED** items you will need to bring with you on the day you test:

1. A **picture I.D.** (driver's license, school I.D., or other laminated picture I.D. will suffice)
2. **Your Social Security Number** (you need to know the number – we do not have to see your card)

You can bring a **non-graphing** calculator or one will be provided for you.

## Numerical Skills/Pre-Algebra Placement (Calculators are allowed)

### (Averages: Means, Medians, and Modes)

1. What is the average (arithmetic mean) of 8, 7, 7, 5, 3, 2, and 2?

- A.  $3\frac{4}{7}$       B.  $4\frac{5}{6}$       C.  $4\frac{6}{7}$       D. 5      E.  $6\frac{4}{5}$

### (Basic Operations with Decimals)

2. Ben is making wooden toys for the next arts and crafts sale. Each toy costs Ben \$1.80 to make. If he sells the toys for \$3.00 each, how many will he have to sell to make a profit of exactly \$36.00 ?

- A. 12      B. 20      C. 30      D. 60      E. 108

### (Basic Operations with Fractions)

3. How many yards of material from a 24-yard length of cloth remain after 3 pieces, each  $3\frac{1}{2}$  yards long, and 5 pieces, each  $2\frac{1}{4}$  yards long, are removed?

- A.  $2\frac{1}{4}$       B.  $4\frac{1}{4}$       C.  $4\frac{5}{6}$       D.  $10\frac{1}{4}$       E.  $10\frac{5}{6}$

### (Percentages)

4. Phillip charged \$400 worth of goods on his credit card. On his first bill, he was not charged any interest, and he made a payment of \$20. He then charged another \$18 worth of goods. On his second bill a month later, he was charged 2% interest on his entire unpaid balance. How much interest was Phillip charged on his second bill?

- A. \$8.76      B. \$7.96      C. \$7.60      D. \$7.24      E. \$6.63

## Algebra Placement

(Elementary Algebra: Linear Equations in One Variable)

1. A student has earned scores of 87, 81, and 88 on the first 3 of 4 tests. If the student wants an average (arithmetic mean) of exactly 87, what score must she earn on the fourth test?

- A. 85      B. 86      C. 87      D. 92      E. 93

(Elementary Algebra: Basic Operations with Polynomials)

2. Which of the following expressions represents the product of 3 less than twice  $x$  and 2 more than the quantity 3 times  $x$ ?

- A.  $-6x^2 + 25x + 6$       B.  $6x^2 + 5x + 6$       C.  $6x^2 - 5x + 6$       D.  $6x^2 - 5x - 6$       E.  $6x^2 - 13x - 6$

(Elementary Algebra: Substituting Values into Algebraic Expressions)

3. If  $x = -1$  and  $y = 2$ , what is the value of the expression  $2x^3 - 3xy$ ?

- A. 8      B. 4      C. -1      D. -4      E. -8

(Intermediate Algebra: Rational Expressions)

4. For all  $r \neq \pm 2$ ,  $\frac{r^2 - 5r + 6}{r^2 - 4} = ?$

- A.  $\frac{r-3}{r+2}$       B.  $\frac{r-2}{r+2}$       C.  $\frac{r-2}{r+3}$       D.  $\frac{r+3}{r-2}$       E.  $\frac{r+3}{r+2}$

(Coordinate Geometry: Linear Equations in Two Variables)

5. What is the equation of the line that contains the points with  $(x,y)$  coordinates  $(-3,7)$  and  $(5,-1)$ ?

- A.  $y = 3x - 2$       B.  $y = x + 10$       C.  $y = -\frac{1}{3}x + 8$       D.  $y = -\frac{3}{2}x + \frac{11}{4}$       E.  $y = -x + 4$

## Sample Humanities Passage: Reading Placement

When I'm in New York but feeling lonely for Wyoming I look for the Western movie ads in the subway. But the men I see in those posters with their stern, humorless looks remind me of no one I know in the West. In our earnestness to romanticize the cowboy we've ironically disesteemed his true character. If he's "strong and silent" it's because there's probably no one to talk to. If he "rides away into the sunset" it's because he's been on horseback since four in the morning moving cattle and he's trying, fifteen hours later, to get home to his family. If he's "a rugged individualist" he's also part of a team: ranch work is teamwork and even the glorified open-range cowboys of the 1880s rode up and down the Chisholm Trail in the company of twenty or thirty other riders. It's not toughness but "toughing it out" that counts. In other words, this macho, cultural artifact the cowboy has become is simply a man who possesses resilience, patience, and an instinct for survival. "Cowboys are just like a pile of rocks—everything happens to them. They get climbed on, kicked, rained and snowed on, scuffed up by the wind. Their job is 'just to take it,'" one old-timer told me.

Adapted from Gretel Ehrlich, *The Solace of Open Spaces*. ©1985 by Gretel Ehrlich.

(Referring)

1. According to the passage, cowboys are probably "strong and silent" because:

- A. their work leaves them no time for conversation.  
B. they have been cautioned not to complain.

- C. they are stern and humorless.
- D. there is no one nearby to listen to them.
- E. their work makes them too tired to talk.

**(Reasoning)**

2. For which of the following statements does the passage give apparently contradictory evidence?
- A. The cowboy's work takes endurance.
  - B. Cowboys work alone.
  - C. Cowboys are adequately paid.
  - D. The cowboy's image has become romanticized in American culture.
  - E. Cowboys think of themselves as humorless.

## **Sample Practical Reading Passage: Reading Placement**

Regular tune-ups of your heating system will cut heating costs and will most likely increase the lifetime and safety of the system. When a service technician performs a tune-up, he or she should test the efficiency of your heating system.

The technician should measure the efficiency of your system both before and after servicing it and provide you with a copy of the results. Combustion efficiency is determined indirectly, based on some of the following tests: 1) temperature of the flue (or chimney); 2) percent carbon dioxide or percent oxygen in the atmosphere; 3) presence of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere; and 4) draft. Incomplete combustion of fuel is the main contributor to low efficiency. If the technician cannot raise the combustion efficiency up to at least 75% after tuning your heating system, you should consider installing a new system or at least modifying your present system to increase its efficiency.

Adapted from Alex Wilson & John Morrill, *Consumer Guide to Home Energy Savings*. ©1993 by Am. Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

**(Reasoning)**

1. The passage suggests that the presence of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere:
- A. can provide information regarding combustion efficiency.
  - B. is found in 75% of heating systems tested.
  - C. can be reduced by decreasing heating system draft.
  - D. is the main cause of low efficiency in heating systems.
  - E. is more reliable than flue temperature as an indicator of combustion efficiency.

**(Referring)**

2. According to the passage, when performing a tune-up of a heating system, the service technician should:
- A. ensure that the combustion efficiency is at least 25%.
  - B. modify the heating system before initially measuring efficiency.
  - C. measure combustion efficiency both before and after servicing the system.
  - D. provide his or her supervisor with a written report of the system's efficiency.

- E. ignore the age of the heating system.

## **Sample Essay: Writing Skills Placement**

Examinees are presented with an essay similar to the one below and are asked to look for errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, and style. When examinees find what they believe to be errors, they move the mouse pointer to the appropriate part of the text and click the mouse. On the right side of the screen five options appear for revising that area of text. Note that the first option is always identical to the original wording in the text, and thus represents a NO CHANGE option. Examinees can choose to revise any section of the essay. After revising the essay, examinees are routed to two items focusing on rhetorical strategies.

The essay below contains the same number and types of errors that an actual Writing Skills Test unit would contain; however, for demonstration purposes, only a handful of the segments below have been selected for revision. These segments are indicated by bold type, and the items associated with them are shown below. (Note: There are additional errors in the essay that are not in bold that a student in an actual testing situation would need to respond to.)

### **An increasing number of lakes and rivers in the northern United States invaded are being by a mussel no larger than a fingernail.**

The zebra mussel probably steamed aboard a transatlantic ship sometime in the mid-1980s from the Caspian Sea into U.S. waters. Despite its growth was explosive, partly because the species was preyed upon by very few native predators in its new environment. As a consequence, the zebra mussels did find a plentiful food supply. They eat huge amounts of phytoplankton, which tiny free-floating sea organisms that dwell in water. Scientists are concerned when the mussels may compete aggressively with other species that depend on the same food supply.

Others concerned by the invading species are industry, public utilities, and boat owners. Zebra mussels cluster in huge colonies, being anchored themselves to any hard surface. These colonies can clog your water intake pipes of electric and water treatment plants. Fishery specialists are currently casting about and baiting their hooks to gun down control methods that will cause the lowest amount of damage to water supplies and other aquatic species. Two of the alternatives exploring are interrupting the species reproductive cycle and finding a bacterium harmful only to zebra mussels.

*(End of Essay)*

### **(Basic Grammar and Usage: Ensuring Grammatical Agreement)**

#### **Segment 1**

- A. An increasing number of lakes and rivers
- B. An increasingly number of lakes and rivers
- C. A number increasing of lakes and rivers
- D. A number increasingly of lakes and rivers
- E. An increasing of lakes and rivers

**(Style: Avoiding Redundancy)**

**Segment 2**

- A. was preyed upon by very few native predators in its new environment.
- B. found very few predators in its new environment.
- C. found very few native predators and was seldom eaten in its new environment.
- D. was preyed on by very few native predator species in its new environment.
- E. was seldom eaten or preyed on by native predator species in its new environment.

**(Sentence Structure: Relating Clauses)**

**Segment 3**

- A. Scientists are concerned when the mussels
- B. Scientists are concerned that if the mussels
- C. Scientists are concerned wherein the mussels
- D. Scientists are concerned that the mussels
- E. Scientists are concerned as if the mussels

**(Strategy: Making Decisions about Cohesive Devices)**

**Segment 4 (end-of-passage)**

The writer wishes to add a sentence at the end of Paragraph 1 that will serve as a transition between Paragraphs 1 and 2 and will establish the main focus of the essay. Which of the following sentences most effectively fulfills that purpose?

- A. The zebra mussel will provide a difficult challenge for public utility managers.
- B. The zebra mussel is only the latest in a series of newly introduced species to thrive in the U.S.
- C. No one knows how far south and west the zebra mussel is likely to spread, but scientists think they may be on the trail of important clues.
- D. Although small in size, the zebra mussel may become a huge problem for pleasure boat owners in North American waterways.
- E. Despite its size, however, the zebra mussel may have a dramatic effect on North American waterways.

## ***How Can I Study for the Test?***

The purpose of the COMPASS placement test is to identify your current strengths and weaknesses and to place you in your beginning math and English courses where you will be the most successful. Sometimes a review may be helpful for those students who experience test anxiety.

## **Additional COMPASS Test Preparation Resources:**

COMPASS Sample Items can be found at: <http://www.act.org/compass/sample/index.html>

Free COMPASS Test Prep at: [http://www.testprepreview.com/compass\\_test\\_breakdown.htm](http://www.testprepreview.com/compass_test_breakdown.htm)

Math Tutorial sites: <http://www.visualmathlearning.com> <http://www.sosmath.com/>

Reading Tutorial sites: <http://ux.brookdalecc.edu/fac/reading/mhurley/>

Writing Tutorial sites: <http://www.labette.cc.ks.us/dept/english/Compass.htm#Third>  
[http://college.cengage.com/devenglish/resources/writing\\_ace/students/index.html](http://college.cengage.com/devenglish/resources/writing_ace/students/index.html)  
<https://web.gsc.edu/fs/mhorton/LSEnglish/>

## **Answers to Sample Items:**

**Numerical Skills - 1. C 2. C 3. A 4. B Algebra Placement - 1. D 2. D 3. B 4. A 5. E**  
**College Algebra Placement - 1. A 2. E Humanities Reading Placement - 1. D 2. B**  
**Practical Reading Placement - 1. A 2. C Writing Skills Placement - 1. A 2. B 3. D 4. E**