


COMPASS Placement Testing



Rockingham
Community College
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(336)342-4261
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The COMPASS placement test is used by RCC to evaluate your current skill level in reading, writing, and math. **You need to take the COMPASS if you are:**

1. a first-time college student and are seeking any associate degree or diploma
2. seeking a certificate in cosmetology, early childhood, phlebotomy, or real estate

If you are planning to take a math or English course but are not planning to enter a specific program, the COMPASS is recommended. **EXEMPTIONS:** If you are transferring from another college to RCC **or** have taken ASSET or COMPASS at another college, you might be exempt from testing; you should first talk with a counselor to determine your status. **If you have taken the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)** and received a score of **500+** on the verbal section, you will be exempt from taking the placement tests in reading and writing. If you have taken the SAT and received a score of **500+** on the mathematics section, you will be exempt from taking the placement test in mathematics.

WHY RCC makes every effort to ensure that you have the "tools" you need to succeed. Placement testing helps determine **where** you start, not **if** you start. We want to know what skills (e.g. fractions, decimals, algebra) you currently have. Once the placement test identifies those skills you have, we can fill in those you need with "brush up" courses.

WHERE The Testing Center is located on the **second floor of the Gerald B. James Library, room M-202** (look for the building with the flagpole in front of it). An elevator is available, and handicapped parking is located behind the library. After you complete your test, you will meet with a counselor in Student Services located in the Whitcomb Student Center. Parking is available in any of the student lots. A temporary parking permit is available from the information desk in the upstairs lobby of Whitcomb.

WHEN Since the test is untimed and on computer, you may begin at **any time between 8:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays**. You do not need an appointment to test on Wednesdays. Other times are available by appointment by calling LaVonne James at 342-4261 ext. 2243. **Plan on approximately two hours to take the test and to discuss the results with a counselor.** Remember, however, you may take as long as you need. The Testing Center is open during semester breaks, but you may want to call ahead regarding holiday scheduling. If you have a disability, please contact the Testing Center in advance so that reasonable accommodations can be provided.

HOW Although COMPASS is a computerized placement test, you can do it -- even if you have never touched a computer before. There are directions and practice sessions, message boxes, a help key, and someone is available to answer your questions. You always have the chance to confirm your answer before moving to the next question. Paper and pencil are provided for working the math problems, however calculators are not allowed. Since it is untimed, you have the option of completing different test sections on different days if your schedule requires it. There is no penalty for guessing. Results are immediately available for discussion with a counselor.

Sample Test Items

READING

When I'm in New York but feeling lonely for Wyoming I look for the Marlboro ads in the subway. But the men I see in those posters with their stern, humorless looks remind me of no one I know here. In our zealous determination 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 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. The 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.

SAMPLE - 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.

WRITING

The zebra mussel probably steamed aboard a transatlantic ship sometime in the mid-1980s from the Caspian Sea into U.S. waters. The growth of the mussel was explosive, partly because the species **was preyed upon by very few native predators in its new environment**. The zebra mussels also found a plentiful food supply. They ate huge amounts of phytoplankton which are tiny free-floating sea organisms that dwell in water.

SAMPLE - Choose the best option:

- 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 upon 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.

MATH

*The math test begins with easier problems and advances as you continue to correctly answer questions. If it has been a while since you studied math, **you may want to review before taking the placement test**. The math department has prepared a short review which you may obtain in the Admissions Office.*

Some RCC programs require basic math skills:

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. $10\frac{5}{6}$

Other RCC programs require algebra skills:

If $x = -1$ and $y = 2$, what is the value of the expression $2x^2 - 3xy$?
A. 8 B. 4 C. -1 D. -4 E. -8

For $i = \sqrt{-1}$, if $3i(2 + 5i) = x + 6i$, then $x =$?
A. -15 B. 5 C. $5i$ D. $15i$ E. $27i$