

CLEP® College Composition Modular: At a Glance

Description of the Examination

The CLEP® College Composition examinations assess writing skills taught in most first-year college composition courses. Those skills include analysis, argumentation, synthesis, usage, ability to recognize logical development and research. The exams cannot cover every skill (such as keeping a journal or peer editing) required in many first-year college writing courses. Candidates will, however, be expected to apply the principles and conventions used in longer writing projects to two timed writing assignments and to apply the rules of Standard Written English.

The College Composition Modular contains a multiple-choice section that is supplemented with an essay section which is either provided and scored by the college or provided by CLEP and scored by the college. The College Composition Modular is available for colleges that want a valid, reliable multiple-choice assessment and greater local control over the direct writing assessment. The modular contains approximately 90 questions to be answered in 90 minutes and, if the essay section provided by CLEP is chosen, two essays to be written in 70 minutes. Some colleges may opt to provide their own locally scored writing assessment or some other assessment or evaluation.

Knowledge and Skills Required

The exams measure candidates' knowledge of the fundamental principles of rhetoric and composition and their ability to apply the principles of Standard Written English. In addition, the exams require familiarity with research and reference skills. In one of the two essays if the essay section provided by CLEP is chosen, candidates must develop a position by building an argument in which they synthesize information from two provided sources that they must cite. The requirement for candidates to cite the sources they use reflects the recognition of source attribution as an essential skill in college writing courses.

The knowledge and skills assessed in the College Composition Modular are the same as those measured by the College Composition examination, but the format and timing allow a more extended indirect assessment of test-takers' knowledge and skills.

10% Conventions of Standard Written English

This section measures candidates' awareness of a variety of logical, structural and grammatical relationships within sentences. The questions test recognition of acceptable usage relating to the items below:

- Syntax (parallelism, coordination, subordination)
- Sentence boundaries (comma splice, run-ons, sentence fragments)
- Recognition of correct sentences
- Concord/agreement (pronoun reference, case shift and number; subject-verb; verb tense)
- Diction
- Modifiers
- Idiom
- Active/passive voice
- Lack of subject in modifying word group
- Logical comparison
- Logical agreement
- Punctuation

40% Revision Skills, Including Sentence-Level Skills

This section measures candidates' revision skills in the context of works in progress (early drafts of essays):

- Organization
- Evaluation of evidence
- Awareness of audience, tone and purpose
- Level of detail
- Coherence between sentences and paragraphs
- Sentence variety and structure
- Main idea, thesis statements and topic sentences
- Rhetorical effect and emphasis
- Use of language
- Evaluation of author's authority and appeal
- Evaluation of reasoning
- Consistency of point of view
- Transitions
- Sentence-level errors primarily relating to the conventions of Standard Written English

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25% Ability to Use Source Materials

This section measures candidates' familiarity with elements of the following basic reference and research skills, which are tested primarily in sets but may also be tested through stand-alone questions. In the passage-based sets, the elements listed under Revision Skills and Rhetorical Analysis may also be tested. In addition, this section will cover the following skills:

- Use of reference materials
- Evaluation of sources
- Integration of resource material
- Documentation of sources (including, but not limited to, MLA, APA and Chicago manuals of style)

25% Rhetorical Analysis

This section measures candidates' ability to analyze writing. This skill is tested primarily in passage-based questions pertaining to critical thinking, style, purpose, audience and situation:

- Appeals
- Tone
- Organization/structure
- Rhetorical effects
- Use of language
- Evaluation of evidence

The College Composition Modular examination includes an additional question type for assessing revision skills: Improving Sentences.

The award-winning author, John Updike, who was a prolific writer of many genres of fiction, verse, essays and criticism.

- (A) John Updike, who was a prolific writer, who wrote many topics on
- (B) John Updike, who was a prolific writer; he wrote about many genres that included
- (C) John Updike, was a prolific writer whose work encompassed a variety of genres, including
- (D) John Updike, was a prolific writer whose writing included all the genres, like
- (E) John Updike, who was a prolific writer in different genres that was

After completing the multiple-choice section, candidates take the direct writing assessment module based on the policy established by their college. Options include:

1. An essay section developed and provided by CLEP that requires candidates to respond to two essay prompts designed to assess the same skills measured in the College Composition essay section. Copies of the handwritten essays are sent to the college designated by the candidate, along with the CLEP Optional Essay Scoring Guidelines.
2. An essay/writing assessment developed, administered and scored by the college.
3. Colleges can also choose to associate the College Composition Modular score with another assessment or evaluation determined by the college.

Study Resources

Most textbooks used in college-level composition courses cover the skills and topics measured in the College Composition Modular examination, but the approaches to certain topics and the emphasis given to them may differ. To prepare for the College Composition Modular exam, it is advisable to study one or more college-level texts, such as readers, handbooks and writing guides. When selecting a text, check the table of contents against the knowledge and skills required for this test.

To become aware of the processes and the principles involved in presenting your ideas logically and expressing them clearly and effectively, you should practice writing. Ideally, you should try writing about a variety of subjects and issues, starting with those you know best and care the most about. Ask someone you know and respect to respond to what you write and help you discover which parts of your writing communicate effectively and which parts need revision to make the meaning clear. You should also try to read the works of published writers in a wide range of subjects, paying particular attention to the ways in which the writers use language to express their meaning.

Sample Test Questions

The following sample questions do not appear on an actual CLEP examination. They are intended to give potential test-takers an indication of the format and difficulty level of the examination and to provide content for practice and

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review. For more sample questions and info about the test, see the *CLEP Official Study Guide*.

Conventions of Standard Written English (10%)

Directions: Read each sentence carefully, paying particular attention to the underlined portions. You will find that the error, if there is one, is underlined. Assume that elements of the sentence which are not underlined are correct and cannot be changed. In choosing answers, follow the requirements of Standard Written English.

If there is an error, select the one underlined part that must be changed to make the sentence correct.

If there is no error, select No error.

1. It is proven that certain food that are ingested
aid the learning processes by releasing natural
memory enhancers called CCKs, also known as
cholecystokinin, which are composed of tryptophan,
choline and phenylalanine. No error

Revision Skills (40%)

Directions: The following passage is an early draft of an essay.

Read the passage and then answer the questions that follow. Some questions refer to particular sentences or parts of sentences and ask you to improve sentence structure or diction (word choice). Other questions refer to the entire essay or to parts of the essay and ask you to consider the essay's organization, development or effectiveness of language. In selecting your answers, follow the conventions of Standard Written English.

Questions 2–4

(1) Taking great notes is one of the best ways to ensure a high grade on a test or exam. (2) We are so used to instant gratification and getting results immediately that we have learned to organize our information into many neatly organized pieces of information. (3) Actually, supposedly, that's the best way to remember things more readily and easily. (4) This must carry over to our note-taking

strategies. (5) If our notes are messy and fragmented, our brains will be less likely to retain the information because it is busy organizing and making sense of a bunch of jumbled information.

(6) The Cornell Method of note-taking is a great way to organize notes. (7) Sometimes referred to as "two-column notes," the Cornell Method uses two columns to organize information. (8) The left-hand column is the cue column, which only contains key words. (9) The right-hand column is much larger and is used to record important points and questions you may have that must be answered later. (10) At the bottom of the page, leave a large enough section for a summary. (11) The summary is most effective if it is one sentence because this forces you to synthesize a large amount of information into one small segment.

2. In context, which of the following revisions must be made to sentence 1 (reproduced below)?
Taking great notes is one of the best ways to ensure a high grade on a test or exam.
(A) Add "Usually" to the beginning of the sentence.
(B) Add "definitely" after the word "is."
(C) Change "to ensure" to "of ensuring."
(D) Change "grade" to "mark."
(E) Add "normally" to the end of the sentence.
3. Which is the best revision of sentence 3 (reproduced below)?
Actually, supposedly, that's the best way to remember things more readily and easily.
(A) Actually, supposedly, the best way to remember things more readily and easily.
(B) Supposedly, the best way to remember things more readily is to organize our notes.
(C) Actually, the best way to remember things more easily is to organize our notes systematically.
(D) Actually and supposedly, the best way to remember things more is to take better notes.
(E) Actually, some say that supposedly, note-taking is the best way to remember things.

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4. The passage as a whole could be made more effective by the addition of which of the following?
- (A) A visual example of the Cornell Method
 - (B) A comparison of the Cornell Method with other note-taking methods
 - (C) Background information on how the Cornell Method originated
 - (D) A history of Cornell University
 - (E) A passage that readers can use to practice using the Cornell Method

Ability to Use Source Materials

Directions: The following questions test your familiarity with basic research, reference and composition skills. Some questions refer to passages, while other questions are self-contained. For each question, choose the best answer.

5. clamor *n.* **1:** A loud noise, especially of voices; confused shouting or continual uproar **2:** A noisy demand; popular outcry **3:** Any loud noise, as of animals or musical instruments *v.* **4:** To make a loud noise; make a continual uproar; shout **5:** To utter or assert by making a loud noise clamor **6:** *obsolete* to silence

Which of the following statements is NOT supported by the definition above?

- (A) The word “clamor” is only used as one part of speech.
 - (B) The word “clamor” is a loud noise either made or heard.
 - (C) “Clamor” is a sound that cannot be heard.
 - (D) The word “clamor” can refer to a loud noise from confusion.
 - (E) A crowd can clamor.
6. Devitt, Terry. “Lightning injures four at music festival.” *The Why? Files*. 2 Aug. 2001. 23 Jan. 2002 <<http://whyfiles.org/137/lightning/index.html>>.
- The citation above is for
- (A) a book with one author
 - (B) a magazine article
 - (C) an encyclopedia entry
 - (D) a newspaper article
 - (E) an online article

Rhetorical Analysis (25%)

Directions: The following questions test your ability to analyze writing. Some questions refer to passages, while other questions are self-contained. For each question, choose the best answer.

(1) I’m sure you will agree that sea horses are one of the most interesting sea creatures to inhabit the waters. (2) But, did you realize that sea horses are members of the fish family? (3) There is one major difference that sets sea horses apart from other fish, however, and that is their layer of bony plates. (4) Sea horses do not have scales like fish but have a tough layer of bony plates that are just like a suit of armor. (5) The tails of sea horses are another interesting part of their bodies. (6) The eloquently curled tail is not only beautiful to look at, but it also serves a useful purpose. (7) Sea horses can grasp tightly onto a blade of sea grass, which anchors the male while he rocks and shakes in order for his pouch to expand to allow newborn sea horses to be released. (8) That’s right! The male sea horse is the one who holds the eggs for two to six weeks until the baby sea horses are born.

7. The passage is primarily concerned with
- (A) male sea horses and their role in the birthing of offspring
 - (B) the uniqueness of the sea horse compared to other fish
 - (C) arguing that sea horses are the most interesting animals to inhabit the water
 - (D) informing readers how baby sea horses are birthed
 - (E) explaining how fish and sea horses are very closely related
8. In context, “eloquently” (sentence 6) most nearly means
- (A) fluently
 - (B) expressively
 - (C) forceful expression
 - (D) articulate
 - (E) clarity

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Credit Recommendations

CLEP uses a common recommended credit-granting score of 50 for all CLEP exams.

This common credit-granting score does not mean, however, that the standards for all CLEP exams are the same. When a new or revised version of a test is introduced, the program conducts a standard setting to determine the recommended credit-granting score ("cut score").

A standard-setting panel, consisting of 15 to 20 faculty members from colleges and universities across the country who are currently teaching the course, is appointed to give its expert judgment on the level of student performance that would be necessary to receive college credit in the course. The panel reviews the test and test specifications and defines the capabilities of the typical A, B, C and D students' performance on the exam. Expected individual student performance is rated by each panelist on each question. The combined average of the ratings is used to determine a recommended number of examination questions that must be answered correctly to mirror classroom performance of typical B and C students in the related course. The panel's findings are given to members of the test development committee (also faculty) who, with the help of Educational Testing Service and College Board psychometric specialists, make a final determination on which raw scores are equivalent to B and C levels of performance.

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