

Tips for successfully completing the Reading Section:

1. Don't rush through.
2. Read the questions before you read the passage; then read the passage carefully, looking for the answers to the questions.

What Is In The Writing Test?

The writing portion of the Compass tests shows you short passages on the computer screen and ask you to find and fix errors. It also asks you to judge how well a piece of writing is developed and organized. For example, you may be shown several sentences and be asked to decide which one fits best in a paragraph. The writing test determines if you will take English 01 (a developmental class to help strengthen your writing skills) or English III (a three-credit college writing course).

Tips for successfully completing the Writing Test:

1. Review basic grammar and punctuation rules prior to testing.
2. During the test, look carefully at each sentence for common errors in grammar and punctuation.

What Is In The Writing Sample?

When the Compass writing placement score doesn't tell enough about your writing, you will be asked to provide a writing sample. Members of the English faculty read it to determine which writing class is best for you. The Writing Sample is a timed portion of the test; you will have one hour to complete your writing sample.

What Do The Faculty Look For?

The readers know that you only have a limited time to prepare, write and check your sample, so they do not expect the writing to be perfect. The readers look for signs of certain skills necessary to write successfully for college courses. These are the skills they review:

Focus: Do the ideas in the writing hold together? Does the writing seem to be discussing one main idea?

Development and organization: Are there enough details to make the main ideas clear? Do the sentences and paragraphs add relevant information so that the ideas keep growing and we find out more as we read?

Mechanics: Are the sentences complete, with the correct punctuation showing where complete sentences end? Is the spelling reasonably accurate, especially for common words?

Standard English: Do subjects and verbs agree? Do nouns have plural or possessive endings where needed? Do verbs have the correct tense forms? Do pronouns have the correct forms?

Sentence structure: Are sentences put together well, with no missing words or unnecessary words that interfere with understanding? Are different types of sentence structures used to convey information and connections?

Tips for successfully completing the Writing Sample:

1. Take your time.
2. Use the time where it does the most good. It is a good idea to make some notes about your ideas or create a rough outline; however, it is probably not a good idea to create a detailed outline. And it's probably not a good idea to re-copy a completed essay to avoid a few cross-outs or erasures. The readers don't expect neatness for the sake of neatness.
3. Save time at the end to check over your writing being sure to read the essay aloud (quietly, of course), and read each sentence one at a time.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PLACEMENT TESTING

at J. SARGEANT REYNOLDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Placement tests at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College are one of the several tools used in advising students on proper course selection. We encourage you to read this placement test preparation information thoroughly before taking the Compass Placement Test.

An Overview of Placement Testing:

Placement tests are administered on a walk-in basis. There is a \$6.00 (cash only) fee for placement testing. Testing times can be found on the Testing Center website at www.reynolds.edu/testing or by contacting the Testing Center on any campus: Downtown Campus (804) 523-5470, Parham Road Campus (804) 523-5411, Western Campus (804) 523-5421. Students may use a calculator during the mathematics portion of the test; the College will provide you a calculator or you can use the online calculator provided by Windows. If you want to bring your own calculator, please make sure it meets the Compass test guidelines which can be found at <http://www.act.org/compass/student/calculator.html>.

In general, students may not take a placement test in the same subject matter more than one time in a four month period. Placement test scores are valid for a period of one year.

Why You Should Practice Before Taking Placement Tests:

Compass helps determine your placement in JSRCC courses. There is very little pressure as there is no time limit; most students take two hours to complete the tests. However, it is very important that you take this test seriously. Not reviewing before taking the placement test could possibly place you in a course that is lower than your actual skill level. Some students are delayed in completing their math sequence by one or more semesters, costing time and money, because they did not take the test seriously. Starting your review process early will give you enough time to practice so that you can feel confident that you are doing your best on the placement test.

What is the Compass Placement Test?

Compass is the placement test used at JSRCC and all 22 colleges in the Virginia Community College System. The test is administered on a computer and is comprised of three parts: reading, writing and mathematics. Some students will be required to provide an additional writing sample.

Compass is “user friendly” so experience with computers is not needed. The Testing Center staff will assist you in beginning Compass and will be available if you need additional help. The computer selects questions for you on the basis of your answers to previous questions and will explain how to record your answers as you take the test. Upon receiving your test scores, you will be directed by the Testing Center staff regarding your next steps for advising and registration.

Who Must Take the Compass Placement Test?

All curricular students must take placement tests. Curricular students who have previous degrees, prior college credits, AP scores, SAT and/or PSAT scores may be exempted from the placement tests. Please refer to the college catalog regarding how to receive an exemption (<http://www.jsr.vccs.edu/catalog/>). Non-curricular students registering for English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, and other courses requiring tests as listed in the college catalog and/or class schedule, must take the appropriate placement tests. Non-curricular students who have accumulated nine or more semester credits in college courses and are experiencing academic difficulty in one or more areas will also be required to take placement tests.

How Can I Pass Compass?

Preparing for Compass is a very good idea! Compass is not a pass or fail test. It is a college placement test. You cannot fail. The test is simply designed to help you and the college to determine whether you are ready to immediately start the program of study or course(s) you have chosen or if you need some additional preparation first.

Here are some tips to help you the day of your test:

1. 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.
2. Be sure you understand the directions for each test before that test session begins. Ask questions if you need to.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Don't be afraid to change an answer if you believe that your first choice was wrong.

What Type of Questions Will I Be Asked On Compass?

The first set of questions in Compass asks for information about you: your name, desired program of study at JSRCC, education, background and goals. You will also be given the opportunity to indicate areas such as financial aid, childcare, career counseling or tutoring with which you may need help. After you complete the demographic questions, you will begin one of three parts: reading, writing or mathematics. The computer will move you through the three sections. You may take a break between sections.

How Should Multiple-Choice Tests Be Taken?

A multiple-choice math test should be taken differently than most multiple-choice tests. The choices should be covered up. The problems should be worked out on separate paper and checked first. Then the answer should be found in the choices. If the answer is not on the test, go back and rework the problem.

Review the following sample questions and good luck!!

Mathematics

Multiple-choice items in each of the five mathematics placement areas test the following:

- Basic skills - performing a sequence of basic operations
- Application - applying sequences of basic operations to novel settings or in complex ways
- Analysis - demonstrating conceptual understanding of principles and relationships in mathematical operations

Sample practice questions for Numerical Skills/Pre-Algebra, Algebra, College Algebra, Geometry, and Trigonometry can be found online at: <http://www.act.org/compass/sample/math.html> and <http://www.purplemath.com/>

Reading and Writing Placement

Sample practice questions for Reading and Writing can be found online at: <http://www.act.org/compass/sample/index.html> and <https://web.gsc.edu/fs/mhorton/LSEnglish/>

What Is In The Reading Test?

The reading portion of the Compass test shows short passages on the computer screen and asks multiple-choice questions about the information in them. It also asks you to choose the correct definitions of some of the words in the passage. Students who score below a 79 will be placed into a developmental reading course to strengthen reading skills.