

TO: Students

FROM: The Dean of Academic Enrichment

SUBJECT: Student Placement

Walters State Community College, under the direction of the Tennessee Board of Regents, is required to assess students for readiness for college-level study and place them accordingly as a required component of the admissions process. Your placement depends upon your having met certain academic standards, including achievement in high school courses as evidenced by your high school transcript, achievement on the ACT/SAT test, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and/or achievement on the GED.

IF YOU HAVE TAKEN THE ACT/SAT TEST, YOUR PLACEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:
(See exceptions below)

Course	ACT test	Cutoff Range
Basic Writing (DSPW 0700)	English	1 – 14
Developmental Writing (DSPW 0800)	English	15-18
College-level Composition	English	19-36
Basic Mathematics (DSPM 0700)	Math	1-14
Elementary Algebra (DSPM 0800)	Math	15-16
Intermediate Algebra (DSPM 0850)	Math	17-18
College-level Mathematics	Math	19-26
Basic Reading (DSPR 0700)	Reading	1-11
Developmental Reading (DSPR 0800)	Reading	12-18

Complete COMPASS Test Battery – Check applicable area below:

- 21 years of age or older and do not choose to take the ACT/SAT test.
- 21 years of age or older with ACT/SAT taken over 3 years prior to the first day of the first term of enrollment.
- GED Student and do not choose to take the ACT/SAT test.
- International Student and do not choose to take the ACT/SAT test.

CALL COUNSELING & TESTING (423-585-6800) TO SCHEDULE THE COMPASS TEST-effective through 05/31/03.

STUDENTS MAY CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE THEIR PLACEMENT DURING DROP AND ADD WEEK. YOU NEED TO DISCUSS THIS WITH THE FACULTY MEMBER.

COMPASS INFORMATION

MATHEMATICS SKILLS

The COMPASS Mathematics Placement test will include prealgebra/algebra items. Depending upon the test performance, the student may place in DSPM 0700, DSPM 0800, DSPM 0850, or college level math. Items in the Numerical Skills/Prealgebra Placement Test range in content from basic arithmetic concepts and skills (e.g., basic operations with integers, fractions, and decimals) to the knowledge and skills considered prerequisites for a first algebra course (e.g., exponents, absolute values, and percentages). The Algebra Placement Test is composed of items from three curricular areas: elementary algebra, coordinate geometry, and intermediate algebra. Each of these three areas is further subdivided into a number of more specific content areas (substituting values into algebraic expressions, polynomials, linear equations in one variable, exponents, linear inequalities in one variable, rational expressions, systems of linear equations in two variables, quadratic formulas, absolute value equations and inequalities).

READING COMPREHENSION

The COMPASS Reading Placement Test is designed to determine whether an examinee has the reading skills necessary to succeed in a standard entry-level college course or whether the examinee may place in DSPR 0700 or DSPR 0800. A selection of 41 reading passages are either excerpts from copyrighted material or original works written by contracted item writers. The average length of the passages is 215 *standard words*, with a range from 190 to 225 standard words. (A standard word is equal to six characters, including spaces, punctuation marks, letters, and numbers.) Passages are of five types: *prose fiction* passages emphasize the narration of events and revelation of character; *humanities* passages describe or analyze ideas or works of art and craft; *social sciences* passages present information gathered by research; *natural sciences* passages present a science topic along with an explanation of its significance, and *practical reading* passages present information that is relevant to vocational or technical courses. The reading level of all passages is approximately equal to that encountered in the first year of college; much of the excerpted passage material comes from essays, journals, and magazines commonly used in entry-level college courses. The five reading comprehension items that accompany each passage are of two general categories: referring and reasoning.

Referring items: Items in this category pose questions about material explicitly stated in a passage.

Reasoning items: Items in this category assess readers' proficiencies at making appropriate inferences, developing a critical understanding of the text, and determining the specific meanings of difficult, unfamiliar, or ambiguous words based on the surrounding context

WRITING SKILLS

The COMPASS Writing Skills Placement Test is designed to help determine whether a student possesses the writing skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the typical entry-level college composition course or whether a student may place in DSPW 0700 or DSPW 0800. This test simulates a text-editing task by presenting examinees with an essay on the computer screen and requiring them first to find errors in grammar, usage, and style in the essay and then to correct the errors by selecting the appropriate text segment from among five alternatives.

Composition of Passages and Items

Examinees are presented with an essay on-screen and are then asked to read the essay looking for problems in grammar, usage, and style. Upon finding an error, students may replace the portion of text with one of five alternatives. Test passages are presented to the examinee as an unbroken whole, and there is no indication of where the errors are located. To accommodate the editing task for computer testing, test passages are divided into a series of segments within the software. Because examinees can choose to edit any portion of the essay, every part of the text is included within these segments, and no part of the text is contained in more than one segment. There is a test item for each segment of the text, so that an item with five alternatives will appear no matter where an examinee chooses to revise the text. In addition to the items that correspond to passage segments, there are one or two multiple-choice items that appear after the examinee is finished revising the passage. These items pose global questions related to the passage.

Item Classification Categories

Items in the COMPASS Writing Skills Placement Test are of two general categories: Usage/Mechanics and Rhetorical Skills. Each general category is composed of three subcategories.

Usage/Mechanics Items

Usage/Mechanics items are directed at the surface-level characteristics of writing, as exemplified in three major subcategories: Punctuation, Basic Grammar and Usage, and Sentence Structure.