

The logo consists of a dark blue L-shaped graphic. The horizontal part is a right-pointing arrow containing the text "CLEP" in white, bold, sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to its right.

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College Composition Modular: At a Glance

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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. Test takers 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 exam 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. 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 exam 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 College Composition exams measure test takers' 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, test takers must develop a position by building an argument in which they synthesize information from two provided sources that they must cite. The requirement that test takers cite the sources they use reflects the recognition of source attribution as an essential skill in college writing courses.

College Composition Modular allows institutions to administer and/or score test takers' essays themselves. The knowledge and skills assessed are the same as those measured by College Composition, 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 test takers' 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

This section measures test takers' 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

25% Ability to Use Source Materials

This section measures test takers' 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 test takers' 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

Compared to the College Composition exam, College Composition Modular includes an additional question type for assessing revision skills: Improving Sentences. Below is more information for this question type and an example question.

Directions: The following sentences test correctness and effectiveness of expression. In choosing your answers, follow the requirements of standard written English: that is, pay attention to grammar, diction (choice of words), sentence construction and punctuation.

In each of the following sentences, part of the sentence or the entire sentence is underlined. Beneath each sentence you will find five versions of the underlined part. The first option repeats the original; the other four options present different versions.

Choose the option that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence. If you think the original is better than any of the alternatives, choose the first option; otherwise, choose one of the other options. Your choice should produce the most effective sentence—one that is clear and precise, without awkwardness or ambiguity.

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 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. One of the greatest athletes that the United States ever produced was Jim Thorpe, who was the first winning gold medals in both the pentathlon and decathlon. No error
2. In her studies of Polynesian cultures, Margaret Mead discovered that the difficulties many teenagers in the United States experience are neither typical or universal. No error

Revision Skills

Questions 3–6

3. To revise the state science standards is complicated, it involves a lengthy review process and the appointment of a committee of educators.
 - (A) To revise the state science standards is complicated, it involves
 - (B) Revising the state science standards is complicated, involving
 - (C) To revise the state science standards, which is complicated, that involves
 - (D) Revising the state science standards is complicated which involves
 - (E) Involving a revision of the state science standards which means
4. Some of Cicero's letters have such simplicity and directness so that they can be used for first-year Latin students.
 - (A) have such simplicity and directness so that
 - (B) have so much simplicity and directness so
 - (C) being so simple and direct that
 - (D) are simple and direct to such an amount that
 - (E) are so simple and direct that

Questions 5 and 6—refer to the passage below.

The following passage is an early draft of an essay.

(1) During the Second World War, the Japanese kept breaking the codes used by the United States military. (2) Trying to create unbreakable codes, they developed codes that were so complicated that messages took a long time to decode. (3) This is not good when information takes a long time to move. (4) Moreover, it took a long time to transmit the information, and the Japanese broke the new codes anyway. (5) This is the making of the Navajo code talkers.

(6) A man by the name of Philip Johnston was a veteran of the First World War, and he remembered that sometimes they used Native American languages as codes during the First World War. (7) Navajo is a Na-Dene or Athabascan language. (8) Johnston knew Navajo. (9) He advised the military that there were certain unique facts about the Navajo language, and it made them perfect to be the medium for encoding messages. (10) For instance, at the beginning of the war, only about 30 people outside the Navajo tribe knew the language. (11) Navajo includes unusual dialects, its sentence structures are very complex, and the tones used in pronouncing words affect their meaning. (12) Moreover, Navajo was not a written language at the time. (13) No alphabet or any kind of written symbols.

(14) Convinced, the military leadership had a small group of Navajo soldiers create a code and then arranged for 400 Navajo Marines to be trained in it.

(15) At least 300 of these Marines, the code talkers, were in the front lines of every battle. (16) The Japanese never broke the Navajo code.

5. Of the following, which is the best revision of sentence 5?
 - (A) This is the reason for why the Navajo code talkers came into being.
 - (B) This was why the Navajo code talkers were created, it was to find a solution to a serious situation.
 - (C) The Navajo code talkers, who formed for these important reasons, solved the problem.
 - (D) Because of this desperate predicament, a group of Marines, the Navajo code talkers, were turned to.
 - (E) In response to these problems, a group of Marines known as the Navajo code talkers was formed.
6. In context, which is the best place to put the following sentence?

Johnston was able to demonstrate that Navajo speakers could send, receive, and translate a three-line message in 20 seconds, while a coding machine took 30 minutes.

 - (A) After sentence 4
 - (B) Before sentence 6
 - (C) After sentence 10
 - (D) After sentence 11
 - (E) Before sentence 14

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.

Questions 7 and 8 refer to the sentences below.

(1) Research on early learning suggests that the process of making sense of the world begins at a very young age. (2) Children begin in preschool years to develop rudimentary understandings (whether accurate or not) of the phenomena around them (Wellman 1990). (3) Those initial understandings can have a powerful effect on the integration of new concepts and information. (4) Sometimes those understandings are accurate, providing a foundation for building new knowledge. (5) But sometimes they are inaccurate (Carey and Gelman 1991). (6) In science, older students often have misconceptions of physical properties that cannot be easily observed.

(7) In humanities, their preconceptions often include stereotypes or simplifications, as when history is understood as a struggle between good guys and bad guys (Gardner 1991).

7. In sentence 5, the information in parentheses indicates that
- (A) two books on the topic were published in 1991
 - (B) the information in the sentence was found in a source that has two authors
 - (C) Carey and Gelman are proponents of a theory that the writer wishes to discredit
 - (D) the sentence is a direct quote from a work by Carey and Gelman
 - (E) Carey and Gelman wrote a book on the topic
8. The purpose of sentence 3 is to
- (A) paraphrase the information given in sentences 1 and 2
 - (B) summarize an argument made by Wellman
 - (C) introduce an example of a concept that is understood by young children
 - (D) point out an important implication of the information given in sentences 1 and 2
 - (E) present a subject not addressed by other researchers

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.

Questions 9 and 10—refer to the essay below.

The following passage is an early draft of an essay.

(1) It is difficult for consumers to evaluate the quality of unfamiliar products. (2) Short-lived products make the situation especially difficult, as consumers are faced with the additional challenge of making rapid decisions about which products to buy. (3) Joseph Lampel explains that, as a result, consumers rely on experts who specialize in evaluating product quality. (4) In turn, the credibility of the information providers depends on their independence: they must not have a financial interest in the success or failure of the products they review.

(5) This relationship between consumers, short-lived products, and product evaluators can be illustrated by the market for first-run movies. (6) The hypercompetitive film industry is one in which many “individual products must struggle to gain the attention of consumers, and they only have a short time during which to translate this attention into sales.” (7) As moviegoers have difficulty knowing whether they will enjoy a film before they see it, and because many new films are released each week, they need the services of product evaluators—professional movie reviewers—to help them make informed decisions. (8) Moreover, as Joseph notes, because positive reviews attract consumers (and negative reviews may keep them away), movie reviewers have considerable power in the movie industry.

9. Which of the following best describes the relationship between sentences 1 and 2?
- (A) Sentence 1 presents a claim, and sentence 2 presents information to evaluate the claim.
 - (B) Sentence 1 describes a problem, and sentence 2 describes a situation in which the problem is particularly evident.
 - (C) Sentence 1 proposes a theory, and sentence 2 explains how that theory was developed.
 - (D) Sentence 1 reveals a surprising phenomenon, and sentence 2 elaborates on that phenomenon.
 - (E) Sentence 1 describes an approach to a problem, and sentence 2 presents an objection to that approach.
10. In context, the purpose of sentence 4 is to
- (A) suggest that information providers take unfair advantage of consumer uncertainty
 - (B) point out that information providers lose credibility when the products they recommend do not sell well
 - (C) imply that information providers are usually unscrupulous
 - (D) highlight an important characteristic of information providers
 - (E) lead the reader to question the veracity of a statement about information providers

Credit Recommendations

The American Council on Education has recommended that colleges grant 3 credits for a score of 50, which is equivalent to a course grade of C, on the CLEP College Composition Modular exam. Each college, however, is responsible for setting its own policy. For test takers with satisfactory scores on the CLEP College Composition Modular examination, colleges may grant credit toward fulfillment of a distribution requirement, or for a particular course that matches the exam in content. Check with your school to find out the score it requires for granting credit, the number of credit hours granted and the course that can be bypassed with a passing score.

Answers to Sample Questions: 1) D; 2) D; 3) B; 4) E; 5) E; 6) E; 7) B; 8) D; 9) B; 10) D.