

RTW English Placement Test Preparation Packet

Purpose of the RTW

The RTW is used by English faculty at the City Colleges of Chicago to place new students into the appropriate English course. This is not a PASS/FAIL test. Instead, it is a place for you to demonstrate your reading and writing skills. City Colleges offers a variety of courses that aim to equip students with the reading and writing skills needed to succeed in higher education. The test consists of ten short-answer questions. The goal of the RTW is to be an assessment that recognizes that all learners come to college with different backgrounds and experiences.

Description of the RTW

On this test, you will read two texts on a similar topic. The first text gives general knowledge about the topic, and the second one presents an author's views and opinions about the topic. You will have the option to highlight the texts and type notes. After carefully reading each text, you will answer five questions about these texts. Some of the questions will require you to write short answers, and others will require you to write one or more paragraphs. This is an opportunity for you to show that you understand the texts and can communicate your ideas clearly in writing. In addition, you will answer five more questions, where you will write about yourself and how you feel about this test. You will have three hours to complete this test.

Holistic Scoring

Your test will be scored holistically. This means that English faculty scorers look at all of your answers together to determine the best course for you. We do not assign points to each question, so do not let yourself get stuck on any one question. You will not be able to leave a question blank. If you have trouble answering a question, do your best to explain why.

Frequently Asked Questions

★ **Who scores my test?**

Your test will be assessed by faculty who teach English courses at CCC. Your placement test will be read by two English faculty members who will assess your test independently. If needed, a third faculty member will review the test and make a final assessment.

★ **Will faculty scorers see my personal information?**

No. The faculty will not see your name, gender, or age to allow for fair scoring. Faculty scorers only view the answers provided; they do not see your highlights or notes.

★ **Why do you ask about my educational background and the languages I speak?**

We ask about your educational background and the languages you speak so that we can consider these factors when determining the best placement for you. Note: English language learners are never automatically assigned to ESL courses.

★ **When will I know my English placement?**

You will receive your English placement within 24-72 hours of testing. The score and course placement will be visible in your CCC Student Portal.

Helpful Tips

✓ **Be prepared.**

Review this preparation packet alone or with a **CCC tutor** before testing. Read the sample paired texts and answer the questions using complete sentences and your own words.

✓ **Give yourself time.**

If you are testing on campus, arrive at the **Testing Center** early and when you have time to complete the test in one sitting. Bring a photo identification. Scratch paper and pencils/pens will be provided.

✓ **Schedule testing accommodations if needed.**

If you would like testing accommodations, call or visit one of our **CCC Access Centers** ahead of time to ensure you receive the support you need.

✓ **Fuel your mind and body before testing.**

Prioritize a good night's sleep before the test. Make sure you are well-rested, fed, and hydrated, so that you think clearly and perform your best.

✓ **Stay calm and confident.**

Remember, you cannot fail this assessment, but faculty are looking closely to determine your ability to read and write at a college level. Before you begin, take a deep breath. During the test, maintain a positive mindset. Stay calm, read instructions carefully, and approach each question thoughtfully. There is no need to rush; you may use up to three hours to complete the RTW.

✓ **Compose your own responses.**

Answer each question as fully and completely as you can, using your best writing skills. Include as many specific details as possible. Note: It is essential that you do not plagiarize or use AI to complete your responses. Both are forms of cheating that violate the **City Colleges of Chicago policy**.

✓ **Trust the Results**

The placement indicates your current ability in academic English and places you into a course where you are most likely to be successful. Remember, an English placement test is a tool to assess your current level of proficiency, and it's okay if you don't know every answer. Do the best you can and get ready for your academic journey at the City Colleges of Chicago!

RTW Preview

Here is an example of paired texts like the ones you'll read when you take the RTW:

READING 1

An excerpt from *Sociology Today*, Chapter 7: Society from a Moral Perspective

Fairness is a complex concept, yet most humans seem to understand what is considered fair and unfair in their own communities. One way that sociologist researchers learn about a culture's ideas of fairness focuses on the allocation of resources or what they call "distributive justice." The allocation of resources means how we divide up valuable resources between people in our community. To simplify, you can think of it as you might think of a group of children with a teacher. The teacher has brought a box of 40 ice cream cones for the children. There are 35 children, so after everyone has an ice cream cone, there are five left in the box. Our sense of fairness, as taught to us by our community, may tell us what to do with the remaining ice cream cones. They cannot be saved; they will melt. So, should the teacher throw them away, denying anyone a second treat? Should the teacher give them to the children in the group who never seem to have enough to eat? Should the teacher find a way for the children to compete for the treats? A teacher in such a situation would surely hear a lot of viewpoints on what would be "fair" in that situation!

Developing a Sense of Fairness

One striking feature of adult fairness is that people are sometimes willing to pay a cost to avoid inequality. Children will often strongly protest receiving less than others, showing a focus on unfairness to themselves. Once children grow older, they engage in decisions that correct or prevent unfairness to others. This development marks a key shift towards understanding fairness as a social norm. Adults are more likely to sacrifice their own wellbeing in the name of fairness for all.

READING 2

An adapted excerpt from "An Equal Society isn't Good Enough," by Rhiannin Bunney

Growing up in the United States is interesting. We call ourselves an equal society because of the myth that the United States runs on a pure meritocracy, that each person will achieve success according to their own strengths and skills. However, not only is that untrue, but it's also not a good goal to have in the first place. The United States should be aiming for an equitable society, not an equal one.

What is the difference? In theory, an equal society gives each person the same resources: the same educational opportunities, the same cultural experiences, the same career preparation, etc. In contrast, an equitable society seeks to offer whatever resources are needed to give each person the same opportunities for future success. This means that those who need more educational support will receive it, even if it means that the amount of educational support is not equally distributed to every student.

Equity is better than equality because it accounts for inequality of circumstances. If you grew up in poverty, equity recognizes that you may not have had the same opportunities as someone who grew up wealthy. If you grew up in a violent neighborhood, equity recognizes that you may not have experienced the same benefits as someone who grew up in a safe place. In these situations, an equity-focused society recognizes the need for some people to receive more than their "fair share" in order

to get a “fair shot.” To clarify, an equitable society isn’t one where we institutionalize the pity we feel for those less fortunate. Instead, it’s simply a society in which a certain basic quality of life, including safety, food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and other standard needs, is guaranteed.

Changing our focus from equality to equity does not necessarily constitute a drastic change for many of us. What would change would be things like not allowing disabled people to live in poverty simply because they cannot work. Many in our society believe that disability payments do that now, but the truth is that disabled people are forced to live in poverty while accepting disability payments. An equitable society wouldn’t allow that kind of institutional harm because equity understands differences in need, while an equality-focused society provides the same supports for everyone. Our basic sense of fairness should tell us which one is best.

You will be asked to explain the main idea, explain how the authors support their ideas, interact with vocabulary, make some inferences about the author’s feelings about the subject, and share your own experiences and opinions.

To prepare, here are some questions you can answer about the sample passages above:

1. What are the readings about?
2. What did you learn from the first reading?
3. What is the author’s main idea in the second reading?
4. How is that main idea supported?
5. What vocabulary words seem important in these readings? Can you think of synonyms for these words?
6. What do you know about this topic?
7. Can you share your experience with this subject?

CCC Tutors can help you review paragraph development, sentence structure, grammar, and mechanics before you take this exam.

RTW SCORING RUBRIC

This is a holistic rubric, which considers the entire submission to determine the best placement.

English placement scores	
6 = ENGLISH 101	<p>Responses demonstrate an ability to draw connections that show strong critical thinking, an ability to identify main points, discern and provide supporting details, and make inferences. Most of the responses include logically developed ideas that are aligned with evidence from the text or personal experiences, depending on the question. Responses contain a variety of sentence structures used effectively, a command of English syntax, and appropriate punctuation that is relatively free of distractions. Responses include instances of successful use of academic language.</p>
5 = ENGLISH 101/97	<p>Responses demonstrate that the main ideas of the texts were understood and summarized, but some nuances are missed; connections are made, though they may not be substantive. Responses show an attempt at longer sentences; however, there may be errors like run-ons or fragments. Responses are generally easy to understand and are not hindered by sentence-boundary errors. Responses show effective communication of basic ideas, though there is some confusion when communicating more complex ideas. Responses show some use of academic language with occasional unsuccessful attempts.</p>
3 = ENGLISH 96	<p>Responses demonstrate that the main ideas of the texts were understood on a basic level but inadequately summarized; little to no connections are made. Responses include basic ideas that are sometimes communicated ineffectively. Responses are mostly simple sentences with pervasive errors, such as run-ons or fragments, that hinder understanding. Responses contain mostly basic vocabulary with some misspelled or confused words.</p>
1 = FS WRIT 93	<p>Responses show that the main ideas of the texts were not fully understood and not summarized. Responses are mostly incoherent expressions with fragmented thoughts and incohesive expressions. Responses contain unclear or garbled syntax and frequent misspellings.</p>
ESL placement scores	
33 = ESLINTG 100	<p>Responses demonstrate moderate to advanced comprehension of the overall texts and differentiation of main ideas from supporting details. Responses show an emerging ability to support a position and convey abstract concepts, with limited effectiveness. Responses contain moderate to advanced control of most writing conventions in the English language (mechanics); mastery of basic verb tenses (including irregular verbs); limited control of more advanced verb tenses, aspects, and moods; as well as attempts at compound and complex sentences. There is minimal L1 (first language) interference. Responses include basic use of Academic Word List vocabulary; moderate-to-advanced control of word forms; and some variety of word choice, with occasional misuse.</p>

22 = ESLINTG 99	Responses demonstrate moderate understanding of main ideas and important information from the texts and basic understanding of specific details. Responses show multiple but mostly unconnected ideas, with minimal ability to support a position. Responses indicate moderate control of writing conventions in the English language (mechanics); moderate control of basic English word order (syntax); emerging control of basic verb tenses; reliance on simple sentences; and moderate L1 (first language) interference. Responses include control of high-frequency and personalized vocabulary with some attempts at Academic Word List vocabulary; moderate control of word forms; and some variety of word choice, with frequent misuse.
11 = ESLINTG 98	Responses demonstrate limited understanding of main ideas and important information from the texts. Responses are mostly unstructured, with fragmented thoughts and incohesive expressions. Responses indicate little to no control of writing conventions in the English language (mechanics); little to no control of basic English word order (syntax) or basic verb tenses; significant L1 (first language) interference. Responses include minimal control of high-frequency and personalized vocabulary; extremely limited variety and/or frequent misuse of words; and little to no control of word forms.
Non-placement Scores	
88	Use comment box to note reason for score: plagiarism, blank test/retest request, Adult Ed ESL referral, Adult Ed ABE referral, FS ESL referral, etc.
0	Technical glitch, staff demo test, dummy test

Effective 11/4/24