El Paso Area College Readiness Initiative

Placement Testing
Overview
(last updated: October 5, 2007)
El Paso College Readiness Initiative

- The University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College have partnered with the El Paso area school districts to ensure that college-bound high school graduates’ initial enrollment is into entry-level college courses.
- The ACCUPLACER Tests (used by UTEP and EPCC for college course placement) will be administered to eligible students while they are still in high school.
- Intervention activities will be provided at the high school to assist students to become “college ready”.
What is ACCUPLACER?

- A Texas Success Initiative Instrument
- Placement Instrument
Texas Success Initiative

- **State Law: Texas Success Initiative (TSI)** mandates that any new undergraduate student entering a public Texas institution of higher learning must be assessed for readiness to enroll in college-level academic coursework.

- Incoming students must take one of the TSI approved tests before starting college.

**Scores needed to satisfy TSI:**
Reading: 78-120
Writing: Essay score of 6-8 or an essay score of 5 with 80-120 in Sentence Skills
Math: 63 (Elementary Algebra)
TSI Requirements

- If you do not pass all portions of ACCUPLACER the first time you take it, you may be required to retest again or complete specific coursework until you satisfy TSI requirements.

- You should discuss your options with a counselor or advisor prior to retesting.

- When you apply for admission to college, the admissions office can determine if you are exempt from taking any portion of the ACCUPLACER tests for TSI purposes.
Placement Instrument

- ACCUPLACER is also an assessment/evaluation instrument that some institutions use to help determine course placement.
- Your scores will determine what reading, writing, and math courses you will take.
- Your test scores will be shared with EPCC and UTEP for course placement purposes.
- Your ACCUPLACER scores will count at both UTEP and EPCC. They may also count at other Texas institutions.
TAKS vs ACCUPLACER

- The TAKS test was created to determine a student’s readiness to graduate from high school.

- The ACCUPLACER helps determine a student’s readiness for college level work.

- Your TAKS scores, if high enough, can exempt you from having to take some portions of the ACCUPLACER for TSI purposes. However, most institutions will still require that you take a placement test. At UTEP and EPCC, that test is ACCUPLACER.
SAT vs ACCUPLACER

- The SAT was created to help determine a student’s readiness for college level work. Many institutions require SAT scores as part of the admissions’ process.

- SAT scores, if high enough, may exempt you from having to take portions of the ACCUPLACER for TSI purposes.

- Most institutions will still require you to take a placement test.

- ACCUPLACER scores may not be used to determine admissions’ status.
### Exemptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT Exemption for TSI</th>
<th>ACT Exemption for TSI</th>
<th>TAKS Exemption for TSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1070 combined with at least a 500 math and at least a 500 verbal score</td>
<td>23 combined with a minimum of 19 in English and a 19 in math</td>
<td>2200 for math; 2200 for language arts and a minimum of 3 in the writing subsection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember! Regardless of how high your SAT, ACT, or TAKS scores might be, most institutions are still going to require you to take a placement test. At EPCC and UTEP, the placement test is ACCUPLACER.
What do you need to know about ACCUPLACER?

- Computer Adaptive Test (CAT)
- Time
- Test Elements
- Cost
- Security Requirements
The ACCUPLACER is taken on computer. It is not a paper and pencil test.

All portions of the test are multiple choice except for the essay.

For multiple choice sections, you must submit an answer in order to move on to the next question.

The ACCUPLACER is a branching test.

- When you answer a question correctly, then you branch to a harder question (and a higher placement).
- When you answer a question incorrectly, then you branch to an easier question (and a lower placement).
You will have four hours to complete the ACCUPLACER Tests.

You have one hour to complete your essay.

After you submit your essay, you will complete the reading and math test sections.

If you score a “5” on your essay, then you will complete the Sentence Skills test as your last test section.

You must complete all sections of the test. Budget your time.

Most students easily complete the ACCUPLACER Tests within the time limit.
Subjects

- **Writing**
  * You will write a persuasive essay. If you receive a 5 on your essay, then you will complete the Sentence Skills portion of the ACCUPLACER. The Sentence Skills section consists of 20 questions.

- **Reading**
  * The Reading section consists of 20 questions.

- **Mathematics**
  * Everyone starts with the Elementary Algebra portion (12 questions).
  * Depending on how you answer those questions, you will either branch to the College Level portion of the test (20 questions) or you will branch to the Arithmetic portion of the test (17 questions).
Cost

- Your high school Principal or Counselor will advise you if your first test will be free (no cost to you) or if a nominal fee will be charged to cover the cost of your first test or any retests at your high school.

- Retest costs depend upon where you retest. It is best to retest at your high school.

- If you take a retest at either EPCC or UTEP, then you will pay their retest fees:
  
  **EPCC Retests:** $15 (flat fee for one or all sections)
  
  **UTEP Retests:**
  - $20 for Writing Retest
  - $10 for Reading Retest
  - $20 for Math Retest
Security Requirements

- Photo ID
  - U.S. Driver’s License, Military ID, Alien Registration Card, or ID issued by Department of Public Safety
  - Passport
  - High School ID Card (not valid when you take the ACCUPLACER at UTEP)
  - Identification by a School Counselor
  - U.S. High School Yearbook

- Calculator
  You do not need to bring a calculator. You will use the pop-up calculator function on the ACCUPLACER test.
  (Should you choose to retest at EPCC, you will need to bring a 4-function calculator. Should you retest at UTEP, a calculator will be provided to you.)
Know This/Believe This

ACCUPLACER scores determine

- into which courses you will place
- how much time it will take to complete your degree
- how much your college education will cost

Taking the ACCUPLACER while you are still in high school is a great opportunity for you!
Time Consequences

- Higher scores on ACCUPLACER mean higher placement, which results in you spending fewer semesters in college.

- Lower scores on ACCUPLACER mean lower placement, which results in you spending more semesters in college.

- If your ACCUPLACER scores show that you are not yet college ready in a specific discipline, then you will be placed in developmental education courses and this results in your spending more semesters in college.
Cost Consequences

Time equals Money!

- Lower scores on the ACCUPLACER mean lower placement.
- Lower placement means additional classes.
- More classes means you will pay higher tuition costs.
**Developmental Education**

- Most institutions of higher education have a developmental education program.

- Developmental education courses are classes that help the student become college ready.

- Developmental education courses may be mandated, but they do not count towards graduation.

- EPCC and UTEP both have developmental education programs.
Developmental Education Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITING</th>
<th>MATH</th>
<th>READING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 0309</td>
<td>MATH 0300</td>
<td>READ 0307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 0310</td>
<td>MATH 0301</td>
<td>READ 0308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 1301</td>
<td>MATH 0303</td>
<td>READ 0309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MATH 0305</td>
<td>Exit to college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MATH 1314</td>
<td>level courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Developmental Education Courses begin with “0”
These courses must be completed at EPCC.

**Developmental Education Sequence**

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<tr>
<td>ENGL 0309*</td>
<td>MATH 0300*</td>
<td>READ 0307*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 0311</td>
<td>MATH 0301*</td>
<td>READ 0308*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 1311</td>
<td>MATH 0310</td>
<td>READ 0309*/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MATH 0311</td>
<td>ENGL 0310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MATH 1320</strong></td>
<td>Exit to college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(or other college level math course)</td>
<td>level courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These courses must be completed at EPCC.*
Remember!

- The ACCUPLACER is *not* a pass/or fail test.
- The ACCUPLACER’s placement scores merely indicate a starting point.
- You can prepare for the ACCUPLACER before you take it the first time.
- If you do not like your initial placement after you test the first time, you will be offered opportunities to work on those skills you still need. Then, you can retest.
Test Elements

- **Writing**
  
  You will write an essay that is approximately 300-600 words in length.
  
  You may be asked to complete the Sentence Skills section that has 20 questions.

- **Reading**
  
  You will answer 20 questions.

- **Math**
  
  You will start with Elementary Algebra and answer 12 questions. You will either branch to Arithmetic and answer 17 questions or to College Math and answer 20 questions.
Writing

- **Skills**
  - Demonstrate knowledge about using standard forms of written English.
  - Connect ideas appropriately.
  - Maintain consistency in writing.

- **Essay Format**
  - Prompt/topic will be provided.
  - The essay must be multi-paragraph.
  - The essay must be 300-600 words in length.
  - The essay must be persuasive.

- **Sentence Skills**
  - The questions will be multiple choice.
Essay Skills

- Focus – Keep your main idea clear.
- Organization – Your essay should follow a logical sequence and structure.
- Development and Support – Elaborate and provide supporting details.
- Sentence Structure – Sentences should be complete and effective.
- Mechanical Conventions – Your writing should be free from mistakes in usage and mechanics. Use good grammar.
Del Valle’s Six Steps for Passing the ACCUPLACER Essay

• **SOAP**
  – Identify the **Subject**, **Occasion**, **Audience**, and **Purpose**

• **THESIS STATEMENT**
  – Turn essay prompt into an answer to the prompt question.

• **THREE POINTS**
  – Identify 3 points to support thesis statement.

• **INTRODUCTION**
  – Rewrite the essay prompt as an introduction to include the thesis statement and awareness of SOAP elements.

• **PARAGRAPH**
  – Turn each point into a well-developed paragraph.

• **CONCLUSION**
  – Restate the main point(s) in different words. Do not introduce a new point in the conclusion.

(Source: Lynda Del Valle – EPCC Instructor)
The ACCUPLACER will evaluate your writing sample. A competently written, decently organized, nicely supported, five paragraph essay is all you need.

DO NOT skip the essay portion.

You do NOT have to write the best essay of your life to receive a college level score on the ACCUPLACER writing section. Simply write a decent five paragraph essay and you should do well.

If you pass the Writing Section of the Accuplacer, then you will place into the first level English composition course at both EPCC and UTEP.

A score of “5” on the Essay will require you to take the Sentence Skills section of the ACCUPLACER.
Some schools require each student to participate in an organized school sport chosen by the student. People at these schools argue that athletics is an important part of the educational experience and that there should be a rule requiring participation. Others argue that students should be free to decide whether or not they wish to participate in organized school sports.

Write an essay for a classroom instructor in which you take a position on whether or not participation in organized school athletics should be required. Be sure to defend your position with logical arguments and appropriate examples.

Sample Questions: Sentence Skills

**Sentence correction.** Select the best alternative/choice for the underlined part of the sentence.

1. Ms. Rose planning to teach a course in biology next summer.
   a) planning    b) are planning
   c) with a plan  d) plans

**Rewrite sentence.** Select the best way to rewrite the sentence without changing its meaning.

2. Being a female jockey, she was often interviewed.

   Rewrite, beginning with “*She was often interviewed…*”
   a) on account of she was   b) by her being
   c) because she was    d) being as she was

Reading

Skills
Topic – What is the passage about?
Main Idea – What is the author’s message?
Supporting Detail – What are the 5 “W”s & “H”? 
Context – Deduce the meaning through reading.
Inference – Read between the lines.
Purpose – Is the passage meant to entertain, inform, persuade?
Tone – What is the author’s attitude in the passage?
Understand literal and interpretive meaning.

Format
Short reading selections or sentences followed by multiple choice questions based on the information read.
Choose the best answer to the question. Answer the question based on what is stated or implied in the passage.

There are two types of pottery that I do. There is production pottery – mugs, tableware – the kinds of things that sell easily. These pay for my time to do the other work, which is more creative and satisfies my needs as an artist.

With which of the following statements would the author agree?

a) artists have a tendency to waste valuable time  
b) creativity and mass production are incompatible  
c) most people do not appreciate good art  
d) pottery is not produced by creative artists

Choose the best answer to the question or the best way to complete the statement.

The Midwest is experiencing its worst drought in fifteen years. Corn and soybean prices are expected to be very high this year.

What does the second sentence do?
   a) It restates the idea found in the first.
   b) It states an effect.
   c) It gives an example.
   d) It analyzes the statement made in the first.
Math

• **Skills**
  - **Elementary Algebra** measures skills in three primary areas: signed numbers and rational numbers; equations, inequalities, algebraic expressions; and word problems.
  
  - **Arithmetic** measures skills in three primary categories: whole numbers and fractions; decimals and percents; and applications and problem solving.
  
  - **College Level Math** measures proficiency from intermediate algebra through pre-calculus: algebraic operations; coordinate geometry; functions; solutions of equations and inequalities; trigonometry; and applications and other algebra topics.

• **Sample Questions**
  - **Multiple Choice**
Math Assessment

Begin with Elementary Algebra*
12 Questions

Score 0-62
Arithmetic Test 17 Questions

Score 63-120
College Level Mathematics 20 Questions

*Everyone begins with Elementary Algebra. You branch to either easier or more advanced math problems depending on your Elementary Algebra score.
Sample Questions: Elementary Algebra

1. If Lynn can type a page in p minutes, what piece of the page can she do in 5 minutes?

   a) \( \frac{5}{p} \)  
   b) \( p - 5 \)  
   c) \( p + 5 \)  
   d) \( \frac{p}{5} \)

2. If \( 8x + 5x + 2x + 4x = 114 \), then \( 5x + 3 = \)

   a) 12  
   b) 25  
   c) 33  
   d) 47
1. What is the improper fraction represented by the following figure?

   a) $2 \frac{2}{3}$  b) $\frac{7}{6}$  c) $2 \frac{5}{8}$  d) $\frac{8}{3}$

2. $10 + 3 =$

   a) 7  b) 13  c) 30  d) 40

1. The average of three numbers is V. If one of the numbers is Z and another is Y, what is the remaining number?

   a) ZY-V   b) Z/V-3-Y   c) Z/3-V-Y   d) 3V-Z-Y

2. If the 1st and 3rd terms of a geometric sequence are 3 and 27 respectively, then the 2nd term could be

   a) 6   b) 9   c) 15   d) 18
Dealing with Test Anxiety

- Relax
  - Close your eyes.
  - Monitor your breathing for a few minutes.
    Breathe in through your nose for the count of five and out through your mouth for the count of five. Continue until you feel more at ease.
  - Change positions.
  - Try some isometric exercises in your seat. Tighten various muscle groups throughout your body starting with your feet for a count of five, then release.
Remember

- You’re taking the ACCUPLACER for the first time while you are still in high school.

- If you don’t like your initial results, you have time to work on the skills you need and to retest before you ever get to college!

- You have time on your side. Take advantage of it!
You can prepare...NOW!

You have many resources that you can use to help prepare you to take the ACCUPLACER.

- Helpful Websites:
  - http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/accuplacer/
  - http://www.epcc.edu/testingservices

- Study guides

- Tutoring
High School Prep

- Your high school counselors and teachers can provide you with information about what resources are available at the high school to help you prepare for the placement tests.

- Take advantage of the resources available to you!
Don’t freak out!

Time is on your side while you are still in high school.

- Prepare to take the ACCUPLACER by reviewing.
- Should you place into developmental education courses, interventions will be provided to you.
- Once you complete the intervention, you may retest.

After you graduate, you can still improve your scores!

Some students may need to begin in a developmental education class to ensure college success. That’s okay too.
A few hours now...brings you closer to your goal.

You hold the key to your future.

Good Luck!