Peer Connections
2013

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Agenda

- Introduction
- The Essay Section
  - planning time
  - understanding the prompt
  - brainstorming strategies
  - essay structure and practice
- The Multiple Choice Section
  - question types
  - strategies and practice
- Preparation for the WST
Introduction to the WST

- GWAR (Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement)
- Taken prior to enrollment in 100W (after passing English 1B)
- Two Parts
  - 60 minute Essay
  - 45 minute Multiple Choice test (72 questions; 1 and 3 point questions)
- Score report within 4-5 weeks

Photos from thewaytocollege.com and superstock.com
What do I need?
(Refer to Information Bulletin)

- Pens for the essay section (black or blue)
- Pencils with eraser top for Multiple Choice
- Paper Dictionary for Essay

Photos from montrealpens.com and keetsa.com
## Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Waiver Eligible (depending on major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Waiver Eligible (depending on major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Combination of Scores</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective scores are reported in standard score terms.
Scoring Guidelines

- Six point scale for essay
  - 6 is the highest
  - 1 is the lowest

- Two readers

- Readers’ scores are added to make essay out of 12.
Your essay score...

- Is determined by 2 readers who grade your essay from 1-6
- Is graded on the following:
  - Maturity of thought and expression
  - Understanding and response to the topic
  - Organization, support, and development
  - Fluency with language, syntactic variety
  - Grammar and sentence mechanics

WST Scoring Guideline from the Testing Office
Scoring Guidelines: Passing Essays

- **6** – demonstrates superior competence in writing on both rhetorical and syntactic levels.

- **5** – demonstrates clear competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it may have occasional minor errors.

- **4** – demonstrates competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels.
Scoring Guidelines: Developing Essays

- **3** – may demonstrate some developing competence in writing, remains flawed on either the rhetorical or syntactic level or both.

- **2** – suggests limited competence in writing.

- **1** – may reveal the writer’s inability to comprehend the question, may be incoherent or impressively illogical. A paper that is severely underdeveloped falls into this category.
Direct or Guided Prompt

For this type of prompt, the essay structure is given, or suggested.

- Multi-part question
- Argument

“Describe a special skill that you have acquired on your own. How did you first become interested in acquiring this skill, and how have you been able to utilize it in your life?”

“College students should have the liberty to choose their own coursework. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?”
Open-Ended Prompt

In this type of prompt, students

■ may have few guidelines
■ determine the structure/organization

“Describe the ideal work environment.”

“Describe a pastime that has helped you persevere through a difficult time in your life.”
Quote Prompts

In this type of prompt, you will read a quotation and might be asked to

- interpret it in your own words
- agree or disagree
- apply it to your own life

“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”
– John F. Kennedy

“It is not the hours we put in on the job, it is what we put into the hours that counts.”
– Sidney Madwed
You have 15 minutes to prepare before writing your essay. How do you use this time?

- Read and **reread** the prompt.
- **Mark** the prompt.
- Brainstorm and outline.
Marking the prompt

- Prompt Analysis
  - There is often *background* information to help you understand the topic. Read this carefully.
  - Find key words that tell you what to do.
  - Underline or circle them.
  - Number each task you are asked to do.
Practice!

Many skills are used daily, and others skills are only used in special situations. In fact, it is often said that the less we use a particular skill, the more this skill deteriorates. Conversely, those skills we practice often, tend to improve. Some people even say “Use it or Lose it.” Describe a special skill that you have learned. How did you first acquire this skill, and to what extent have you been able to utilize it in your life?
Many people learn skills that they use daily, and others learn skills and only use them in special situations. In fact, it is often said that the less we use a particular skill, the more this skill deteriorates. Conversely, those skills we practice often, tend to improve. Some people even say “Use it or lose it.”

Describe a special skill that you have learned. How did you first acquire this skill, and to what extent have you been able to utilize it in your life?
Brainstorming Strategies

**Clustering**

- First aid (skill)
  - Learned from lifeguard job 2010
  - Help others and feel confident
  - Work under pressure (calm)
  - CPR/AED
  - Basic first aid
  - Helped during a car accident – Paul last July

**Listing**

- First Aid/CPR/AED
- Learned last summer
- Lifeguard job
- Used it during that job
- Used it during a car accident
- Developed my confidence
- Able to work under pressure

**Outlining**

**I. Intro**

A. First Aid is a useful skill
   1. good for jobs
   2. help in an emergency

B. Thesis – First Aid has been helpful in my life and used in difficult situations

**II. My experience**

A. How/what I learned
   1. lifeguard training/summer job 2010
   2. basic skills, CPR, coping with pressure

B. How I’ve used this skill
   1. Difficult situation (Paul’s car accident)
Practice!

Choose a brainstorming technique and practice it with this topic:

“Many people learn skills that they use daily, and others learn skills and only use them in special situations. Describe a special skill that you have learned. How did you first acquire this skill, and to what extent have you been able to utilize it in your life?”
Funnel Format - Introduction

- **Universal Truth or Hook**
  - Related to the Topic
  - Applicable to most people

- **General**
  - Informs the reader about your topic and your experience

- **Thesis**
  - Presents your main idea(s) and argument(s)
Thesis Statements

- A sentence (or two) that summarizes the main point of your essay and previews your supporting points.

- **TOPIC** + **COMMENT** = **THESIS**

- Learning how to dance from my salsa instructor showed me how to appreciate music, other art forms, and my health.
Practice!

Use the items you wrote down during brainstorming to write a thesis for this prompt:

“Many people learn skills that they use daily, and others learn skills and only use them in special situations. Describe a special skill that you have learned. How did you first acquire this skill, and to what extent have you been able to utilize it in your life?”

Remember:

TOpic + COMMENT = THESIS
Tips for Body Paragraphs

- Write topic sentences.
- Use the *tell and show* method
  - Tell the reader something.
  - Give an example to ‘show’ the reader what you mean.

  **Tell:** I became a much healthier person after taking the stress management class.
  **Show:** In fact, since taking the class I have lowered my blood pressure, started an exercise plan, and reduced my stress level tremendously.

- What else can I write...?
  - Why is this important?
  - What were you thinking during the event/process?
  - What changed? What stayed the same?
  - What do you think will happen in the future?
Tips for Body Paragraphs

- Use imagery and detail.
  - 5 senses
  - “set the scene”
  - Dialog, thoughts

- Use personal examples.
  - life experience
  - experience of others
  - who, what, where, when, why, how

- Vocabulary
  - Use a variety of vocabulary.
  - Avoid repetition.
Practice!

Pick one topic from your brainstorm and make a list of details that you will include in your paragraph. You might answer the following questions:

Who?
What
Where?
When?
Why?
How?
Funnel Format - Conclusion

- **Summarize Main Points**
  - Summarize the focus of the essay

- **Expand your ideas and offer analysis**
  - What did you learn from experience?
  - How has the topic proven to be significant?

- **Closing Statement**
  - Leave the reader with something to think about
Multiple Choice

- Punctuation 8%
- Grammar 11%
- Sentence Structure 25%
- Strategy 21%
- Organization 14%
- Style 21%

(Breakdown as of 5/2009. May be undergoing revision.)
Multiple Choice

- Scan
- Understand
- Eliminate
- Pick
- Guess

The following questions are taken from Barron’s CSU Writing Exams book.
General Test-Taking Tips

- Scan the test passage and questions.
- Answer what you know first.
- Closely re-read the passage for difficult questions.
- If unsure --star it or guess, and return later.
- Cross out incorrect answer choices.
- Look for the best answer, not only a correct one.
- Underline, star*, or circle key words or ideas.
- Do not leave any questions blank – GUESS if time runs out.
Multiple Choice Question
Type: Usage / Mechanics

- GRAMMAR (11%)
  - Subjects, nouns, verbs, pronouns

- PUNCTUATION (8%)
  - Commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, parentheses, apostrophes, quotation marks

- STRUCTURE (25%)
  - Independent clauses, adjectives and adverbs, conjunctions, and parallelism
Multiple Choice Tips

- Determine the correct selection before looking at the options.
- Eliminate the options that do not demonstrate the proper usage.
- Identify whether the sentence is complete (independent) or a fragment (dependent).
The very idea of a community among nations are unique. From the city-states of ancient Greece to the modern nations of our era, communities have to join forces to defend their individual interests.

1. A. NO CHANGE  
   B. had been  
   C. is  
   D. were  

2. F. NO CHANGE  
   G. had  
   H. will have had  
   J. have had
Parallelism

Operators and manufacturers of nuclear reactor power facilities are making increased use of robots to improve operations and maintenance, lower operating costs, increasing plant availability and equipment reliability, enhanced worker safety, and reduce exposure to radiation.

1. A. NO CHANGE
   B. increases
   C. increase
   D. increased

2. F. NO CHANGE
   G. enhancing
   H. enhances
   J. enhance
In today’s society, being a woman does not automatically mean exclusion from certain jobs; studies show that women are more likely to be considered for physically demanding jobs today, especially if she is between the ages of 25-39.

A. NO CHANGE
B. they are between
C. she’s between
D. he or she is between
Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky is a topical novel dealing with philosophical doctrines, political and social issues widely discussed in Russia just after the 1861 reforms. By most critical essays, treating Dostoevsky’s work has employed psychological or biological points of view.

1. A. No change
   B. politically
   C. politics,
   D. that are political

2. F. No change
   G. Because of most critical essays
   H. Most critical essays,
   J. Most critical essays

3. A. No change
   B. have employed
   C. should employ
   D. employ
What lies behind the creative genius of our greatest authors has been the subject of speculation over the past two centuries. There is little doubt that many of the world's creative geniuses experienced miserable lives most often, they suffered a personal and extreme brand of deprivation that profoundly affected the quality of their lives.

1. A. No change
   B. authors’
   C. authors,
   D. author’s

2. F. No change
   G. world’s
   H. worlds’
   J. world’s,

3. A. no change
   B. lives:
   C. lives--
   D. lives,
Multiple Choice Question
Types: Rhetorical

- STRATEGY (21%)
  - Expression for audience and purpose, supporting material used for passage

- ORGANIZATION (14%)
  - Order, coherence, and unity of ideas, statements, and paragraphs

- STYLE (21%)
  - Tone, word choice, economy and clarity in writing
Rhetorical Strategy Tips

Skim and annotate the passage. Identify the following elements:

- **Key words and sentences** (What words or phrases seem important to the passage?)
- **Main idea of the passage** (What is the passage about?)
- **Purpose of the passage** (What is the passage trying to do?)
- **Tone or style of writing** (What voice is the writing using?)
- **Audience** (Who could be reading this?)
Example question types:

- Who is the audience for this passage?
- How is this passage arranged?
- Which of these sentences would best support the ideas in paragraph 4?
- Suppose the writer wanted to change x, which sentence would be best...
- What kind of details would be best
- Which sentence would be a good introductory sentence to paragraph 3?
- What is the most logical order for the paragraphs in this passage?
According to the American Cancer Society, there is a 20% increase in the number of teen smokers and a similar decrease in the number of anti-smoking programs in middle schools. Therefore, there is a great need to develop these new community and school programs to target teens at risk for developing a smoking habit. Although costly, such programs are proven to produce long term benefits.

1. Readers are most likely to regard the passage as:
   a. informative
   b. persuasive
   c. inspirational
   d. pleading
According to the American Cancer Society, there is a 20% increase in the number of teen smokers and a similar decrease in the number of anti-smoking programs in middle schools. Therefore, there is a great need to develop school programs to target teens at risk for developing a smoking habit. Although costly, such programs are proven to produce long-term benefits.

2. The audience of this passage is likely
   a. board of education officials
   b. teachers
   c. parents
   d. teens
According to the American Cancer Society, there is a 20% increase in the number of teen smokers and a similar decrease in the number of anti smoking programs in middle schools. Therefore, there is a great need to develop these new school programs to target teens at risk for developing a smoking habit. Although costly, such programs are proven to produce long term benefits.

3. Suppose at this point the writer decided to add more information. Which information would be most logical?
   a. a case study of a teen affected by smoking
   b. a history of the tobacco industry’s marketing to teens
   c. statistics from similar programs in other school districts
   d. no information is needed.
Modern literary criticism is a literary specialty composed of many different and dissonant parts. There are, however, five major trends in contemporary criticism that take into account almost every significant critical essay written in the twentieth century. It is the critics’ differing opinions on the purpose of literature that create the division or schools of modern criticism.

4. Readers are most likely to regard the passage as:
   a. informative
   b. persuasive
   c. inspirational
   d. pleading
Modern literary criticism is a literary specialty composed of many different and dissonant parts. There are, however, five major trends in contemporary criticism that take into account almost every significant critical essay written in the twentieth century. It is the critics’ differing opinions on the purpose of literature that create the division or schools of modern criticism.

5. The audience of this passage is likely
a. college or college-bound literature students.
b. remedial readers who require supplemental materials.
c. students interested in the scientific method.
d. foreign students preparing for an English proficiency test.
Modern literary criticism is a literary specialty composed of many different and dissonant parts. There are, however, five major trends in contemporary criticism that take into account almost every significant critical essay written in the twentieth century. It is the critics’ differing opinions on the purpose of literature that create the division or schools of modern criticism.

6. Suppose at this point the writer decided to add more information. Which information would be most logical?
   a. the names of several famous modern literary critics.
   b. a list of the five major schools of literary criticism.
   c. a list of significant critical essays written in the 20th century.
   d. a definition of modern literature.
Putting Paragraphs In Order

- Clues to Putting Paragraphs Together
  - Introduction or Conclusion
    - General/Specific
    - Specific/General
  - Topic Sentences
  - Transitions
  - Days, Months, Years
  - Names
Putting Paragraphs In Order: Example 1

1. “It will have a big impact,” Macaulay said concerning the strike going to next year. “Mainly for the safety of ourselves as well as guests that we have over at hour house,” he said regarding inspections.

2. A strike of San José building inspectors could affect off-campus SJSU residents, said Tom Briam, president of the Association of Building, Mechanical, and Electrical Inspectors.

3. Macaulay said if the strike continues the fraternity will have to rely on its alumni to find a way to get the house inspected.

4. Tyler Macaulay, a senior business management major and president of Beta Theta Pi, said his fraternity is not highly affected by the strikes now because they just had inspections a couple of months ago, but they will be affected if the strike continues next year.

A) 2,1,3,4  
B) 1,2,4,3  
C) 2,4,1,3  
D) 1,3,4,2

Putting Paragraphs In Order: Example 2

1. More flowed at Concord, and much more along the route of the British as they retreated to Boston, harassed most of the way by an aroused citizenry.

2. About 77 militiamen confronted the redcoats when they plodded into Lexington at dawn.

3. What once had been merely protest had evolved into open warfare; the American War of Independence had begun.

4. After some tense moments, as the sorely outnumbered colonial were dispersing, some blood was shed.

   A) 2,1,3,4
   B) 1,2,4,3
   C) 2,4,1,3
   D) 1,3,4,2
Handling Test Anxiety

- **Review** preparation materials for the exam in advance. **Practice** online.
- **Breathe.** Taking deep breaths can help calm anxiety.
- **Walk** by the testing location before the exam day to know where it will take place.
- **Pre-pack** all materials, relax, and sleep well the day before the exam.
- **Focus** on doing your best in that moment, not on the outcome.

How to Prepare: Essay

- Annotate and analyze the prompt.
- Pre-write and brainstorm ideas for 15 minutes.
- Develop ideas into developed paragraphs.
- Practice 1 hour for pre-writing and writing the essay.
How to Prepare: Multiple Choice

Barron’s How to Prepare for the California State University Writing Proficiency Exams

- Time yourself and take the sample multiple choice tests (A-C).

- Correct your answers using the answer keys and explanations.

- Identify the area(s) of writing you want to improve (i.e. punctuation, tenses).

- Practice speed and rhetorical reading strategies with textbook chapters and news articles.

Photo from betterworldbooks.com
Options for Not Passing the WST

1) Register for the next WST exam and:
   - Continue practicing and taking writing courses to assist you in meeting University writing standards.
   - Visit tutors to review specific writing skills.
   - Schedule a WST coaching session to review essay development strategies.
   - Attend the WST Workshops at Peer Connections.

2) Enroll in ENGL or LLD 100A and obtain a grade of C or better to meet the WST requirement.
SJSU Campus Resources

- Peer Connections
  - SSC 600: WST resources peerconnections.sjsu.edu/workshops/wst_assistance/index.html
  - Spartan Success Portal (online workshops): www.studentlingo.com/spartansuccess

- Writing Center
  - Clark 126: www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/

- Testing Office
  - IS 228: testing.sjsu.edu

- Accessible Education Center
  - Admin 110: www.sjsu.edu/aec

- Counseling Services
  - Admin 201: www.sjsu.edu/counseling/
  - Spartan Success and Support Series Workshops