Writing Skills Test (WST) Workshop: Multiple Choice

San Jose State University
Peer Connections

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Agenda

- Introduction
- 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>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>69</td>
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<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>Fail</td>
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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.
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%)**
  - Word choice, economy and clarity in writing
General Test-Taking Tips

- Go through the test passage first
- Scan the questions and answer what you know first
- Re-read the passage in closer detail to answer more difficult questions
- If it’s taking too long to answer, star it and return later
- Do not leave any questions blank – **GUESS** if time runs out
Reading Test-Taking Tips

- Cross out answer choices you are certain are not correct. This will help you narrow down the correct answer choice.

- Remember: Look for the best answer, not only a correct one.

- Underline, highlight, or circle
  - Key words in the question, important sentences
Rhetorical Style/Strategy

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?
Practice: Rhetorical Strategy

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?)*
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.

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.

The audience of this passage is likely

a. board of education officials
b. teachers
c. parents
d. teens
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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.

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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.
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Suppose at this point the writer decided to add more information. Which information would be most logical?

a. the names of several famous modern literature critics.
b. a list of the five major schools of literature 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
  - Proper Names
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 our 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

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

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Putting Paragraphs In Order

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Multiple Choice Question
Type: Usage / Mechanics

- **GRAMMAR (11%)**
  - Adjectives and adverbs, conjunctions, subject-verb agreement, pronouns

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

- **STRUCTURE (25%)**
  - Modifying clauses, modifiers, and shifts in construction
Multiple Choice: Grammar Questions

- Identify the type of grammar question (*subject-verb, pronoun, verb tense, adjective & adverbs, conjunction*)
  
  **Hint:** Note the differences in the answers.

- Identify the core sentence and eliminate non-essential information

- Identify the main subject, noun, or clause being modified

- Use process of elimination to narrow down the best option
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

Passage taken from the WST Information Bulletin
The president of the Board of Trustees are making a decision about tuition increases tomorrow.

The school will have had severe financial problems in the past few years and needs to raise money so that each student is properly supported.

Passage taken from the WST Information Bulletin
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
Smoking for an extended period of time can negatively affect a person’s lung and heart function and ultimately prevent them from achieving their optimum health.

A. NO CHANGE
B. Prevent one from achieving their optimum health.
C. Prevent one from achieving his or her optimum health.
D. Prevent him or her from achieving their optimum health.
Multiple Choice: Punctuation

- Try to fill in the correct punctuation first without looking at the options
- Eliminate the options that do not demonstrate the proper usage of the punctuation
- Identify whether the sentence is complete (independent) or a fragment (dependant)
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 worlds creative geniuses experienced miserable lives, 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,
How to Prepare

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 what 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
How to Prepare

- Practice WST multiple choice online at http://www.evc-cit.info/wst/
- The Everyday Writer Exercise Central: [link]
- Purdue’s Online Writing Lab: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/
- How to Study: http://www.how-to-study.com/study-skills/
- Study Guides & Strategies: http://www.studygs.net/
- 501 Writing Prompts published by Learning Express
- Elements of Style by William Strunk and E.B. White
- Rules for Writers by Diana Hacker
- The Goof Proofer by Stephan J. Manhard
How to Prepare

- Practice test
- Practice reading comprehension and speed reading
- Developing rhetorical analysis
Multiple Attempts

- You can enroll in ENGL or LLD 100A, and pass, to meet the WST requirement.

- Continue practicing and taking writing courses to assist you in meeting University writing standards.

- Visit tutors to review specific test taking/writing skills.
Handling Text 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.
- The morning of the exam, take 10 minutes to write down your fears and thoughts to **clear your mind** and to focus.

SJSU Campus Resources

- Peer Connections
  - SSC 600: www.peerconnections.sjsu.edu

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

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

- Disability Resource Center
  - Admin 110: www.drc.sjsu.edu/

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