

The Montana University System Writing Assessment

TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL

Introduction

This Writing Sample measures the foundational writing skills needed by college freshmen in the Montana University System and collects data about students' postsecondary plans. This is one of the measures that students can use to be fully admitted to four-year degree programs within the Montana University System and/or to be placed in their freshman composition courses throughout the university system. Teachers and college instructors score the essays using a holistic rubric similar to rubrics used by ACT and SAT and aligned to Montana's Writing Content Standards and the Common Core State Standards.

These directions explain the test materials and standardized testing procedures that ensure fair and equitable administration for all examinees. They are divided by testing method:

- I. **Test Booklet Methods:** A) Handwritten, and B) Word-processed)
- II. **Online Method.**

Study the section of these directions that pertain to the method of testing that you have chosen. Test booklets are mailed directly to schools from the vendor. Prompts are mailed from the University of Montana Helena. Because these writing prompts may be used for future testing, security is critical. Do not show or discuss the writing prompts with others and ask students not to discuss the prompts. Test administrators must ensure that all test materials are stored in a secure location.

Timing

Allow students a full 40 minutes to complete the MUSWA, including planning and writing their responses. An additional 10-15 minutes may be needed to distribute and collect tests and complete **Student Information**. If your class periods are shorter than 55 minutes and you are using the paper booklets, please schedule time for students to complete the first page of their test booklets prior to the one class period when students write their essays.

Materials Needed

For Paper Testing:

- One Montana University System Writing Sample booklet per student (mailed from vendor)
- One Teacher Header Sheet per classroom tested (mailed from vendor)
- Pencils to bubble in answers on the Student Information sheets
 - Dark blue or black pens for the written response in the Test Booklet OR
 - Computers and paper

For All Testing:

Enough two-sided *Student Directions/Writing Prompts* pages for each teacher's largest class (mailed from UM Helena)

For Online Testing:

- Computers with a processor speed of at least 250 MHz;
- A browser that handles at least Javascript 1.1 (e.g. Internet Explorer version >4 or Netscape/Mozilla version >3 or Firefox version >0.99);
- A high school connection bandwidth >100 Kbits/second which should handle testing 50 students simultaneously. (If the bandwidth is lower, then the school must test fewer students at a single time); and
- Paper for pre-writing.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities who plan to attend college should be given accommodations necessary to participate in the writing assessment, such as: extended time, individual administration, alternative setting, assistive technology, or having prompts and directions read or interpreted.

I. Test Booklet Methods (Handwritten or Word-Processed)

Instructions for Administration of the Student Information Sheet

Read instructions aloud to students *exactly as they appear in the boxes below*. Begin by saying:

This test is designed to learn how well high school students are prepared for the kind of writing most often required in college. Your score will be reported to your high school and to the Montana University System to determine if you are prepared to enter a college-level composition course.

First, you will provide some information about yourself. I will hand out your test booklets with a Student Information Sheet on top. Does everyone have a pencil to fill out this information?

Hand out the test booklets. Make sure each student has one booklet and a pencil. Say:

Please print your full last name, given first name, (example: Donald, not Don) and middle initial in Block A and fill in the corresponding circle below each letter.

(Block B is not required, but is designed for OPI's Unique Student Identifier or for district Student ID numbers to help sort electronic reports.) You may say: 1) **Ignore Block B**; or 2) **Put your "district" Student ID number in Block B**; or 3) **Put your OPI Student ID Number in Block B**.

Fill in the correct circles for date of birth, grade, gender, and racial/ethnic group. Finally, read the questions in blocks G, H and I. Fill in the answers as accurately as you can.

If students will not have the full 40 minutes to read the prompts and write their essays after completing the Student Information Sheet, collect the test booklets so that they can be easily distributed to students for the testing period the next day. Do not give them the prompts unless they will write immediately.

Distributing Prompts

You should have a double-sided **Student Directions and Writing Prompts** page for every student in your class. There are three different forms of this sheet (**Set One** for Day One or Morning, **Set Two** for Day Two or Afternoon, and **Make-Up**), each with a choice of two prompts. Count these pages and hand them out, ensuring that the "Student Directions" side faces up and students are reading it until you tell students to begin. After testing, these prompt pages will be collected. If you are testing more than one class, ask students not to write on the prompt sheets, since you will need to distribute them again to another class period.

Teacher Header Sheets

While students are testing, please complete a separate Teacher Header Sheet for each class. The Teacher Header Sheets link the Student Information Sheets to the school, class period, and teacher.

After students have the test booklets and prompts, read Instructions for you testing mode:

A. Handwritten (page 3)

OR

B. Word-Processed (pages 4-5)

A) Instructions for Administration of the Handwritten Writing Sample

Point out the Student Directions for Handwritten Essays and read aloud if you think necessary. Then say:

Please read the “General Directions” explaining how your writing will be scored. You may refer to these criteria (focus, organize, etc.) as you write. (Pause.)

On the back of the Student Directions page, you will find “prompts” about two hypothetical situations. You should write about the one that interests you more. You will have 40 minutes to plan and write your essay.

Now, turn the *Directions* over, read the two prompts, choose one of them, and begin by planning your essay. Please do not write on the Directions/Prompt sheet. I will announce when ten minutes remain.

Walk quietly around the room during testing to ensure examinees are working independently. When exactly 10 minutes of the test period remain, say:

You now have 10 minutes remaining. Conclude your thoughts and proofread your essay.

When 9 minutes have elapsed, say:

You have one minute left to finish. (Wait one minute.) Stop writing now. Put down your pen, close your test booklet, and place the *Directions/Prompts* sheet on top of your test booklet. I will collect your tests individually. Please remain seated until I dismiss you.

Instructions for Collecting, Destroying and Returning Test Materials

Collect a test booklet and a **Student Directions/Prompts** sheet from each student. Before you dismiss examinees, count the booklets and **Directions/Prompts** sheets to verify that you have the same number you passed out. After all materials have been collected and accounted for, dismiss the examinees.

Please tear the **Student Information** Sheets from the front of the student test booklets and bundle **each class** set of scan sheets under a completed **Teacher Header** Sheet. Please use a folder or folded paper to keep each class’s data pages together and separated from other classes. Stack test booklets under these bundles.

Please store all testing materials in a secure location until you can:

- Mail all Test Booklets with Student Information Sheets, Teacher Header Sheets, and questionnaires in return envelopes or boxes as soon as possible, or
- Bring all materials to the Training of Trainers session if someone from your school is attending and if you have tested before February 18.
- **Shred and dispose of the Directions/Prompts** sheets to maintain prompt security.

You need not return this manual. Return test materials to:

Jan Clinard
University of Montana Helena
1115 North Roberts Street
Helena MT 59601-3098

B) Instructions for Administration of the Word-Processed Writing Sample

Note to Test Administrators: Because word-processed documents will be collected from students in different ways, it is not possible to describe all possible scenarios here.

The capacity of your computer lab, the availability of assistants, and the length of your class period will dictate which of the following options will be used to submit student work:

1. *students will print out their papers and insert them into the test booklet; or*
2. *teachers or assistants will print out the papers after students have been dismissed (from files or disks).*

Test administrators should make every effort to ensure that the test is administered in a way that ensures the security of writing prompts and students' papers. One method is to create special class period folders for each teacher in a network drive. Students save essays to those folders, quit the word processing software and do not touch the computers. As soon as every student finishes, the technician moves the folder to his hard drive and prints (during the next period). Each Writing Sample must be deleted before another student uses the computer. We suggest that you begin the testing period with students at their computer stations and a word processing program opened. Careful monitoring is required.

Read instructions aloud to students, **as they appear in the boxes below**. Begin by saying:

Please read the "General Directions" explaining how your writing will be scored. You may refer to these criteria (focus, organize, etc.) as you write. (Pause.)

On the back of the Student Directions page, you will find "prompts" about two hypothetical situations. You should write about the one that interests you more. You will have 40 minutes to plan and write your essay.

In the upper right corner of your page, type or write the initials of your first, middle, and last name, and the test booklet serial number found at the bottom of the test booklet.

Now, turn the *Directions* over, read the two prompts, choose one of them, and begin by planning your essay on scratch paper, then word processing. Please do not write on the Directions/Prompt sheet. I will announce when ten minutes remain.

Walk quietly around the room during testing to ensure examinees are working independently and are not exploring the Internet. When exactly 10 minutes of the test period remain, say:

You now have 10 minutes remaining to complete. There must be no talking until all work on the test has been completed.

When 9 minutes have elapsed, say:

You have one minute to finish. (Wait.) Stop work now. (Then, tell students how you will collect the Writing Samples, such as:)

1. **Print your paper, get it from the printer, insert it in the test booklet, and delete your file. OR**
2. **Leave your computer station with the file open so that someone else can print your work. OR**
3. **Save your file to the special folder _____; then quit your word-processing program. OR**
4. **Save your file to the diskette you have been provided and make sure it is labeled properly.**

Allow time for students to complete the steps according to your instructions. Then collect the test booklets with essays and **Directions/Prompts** sheets, ensuring that the student's essay and his/her own test booklet are paired correctly so that the test serial number on the student essay, information sheet, and score sheet match.

Delete the file from the student's machine or from the network folder.

Instructions for Collecting, Destroying and Returning Test Materials

Before you dismiss examinees, count the booklets and **Directions/Prompts** sheets to verify that you have the same number you passed out. After all materials have been collected and accounted for, dismiss the examinees.

Please tear the **Student Information** Sheets from the front of the student test booklets and bundle **each class** set of **Student Information** Sheets under a completed **Teacher Header** Sheet. Please use a folder or folded paper to keep each class's data pages together and separated from other classes. Stack test booklets under these bundles.

Please store all testing materials in a secure location until you can:

- Return all Test Booklets with Student Information Sheets, Teacher Header Sheets, and questionnaires in addressed return envelopes or boxes as soon as possible, or
- Bring materials to the Training of Trainers session if someone from your school is attending and if you have tested before February 18.
- **Shred and dispose of the prompt pages** to maintain prompt security.

You need not return this manual. Return test materials to:

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II. Online Method

Instructions for Teachers to Register Classes

Before your class is to be tested, open an internet browser program (e.g. Internet Explorer) on a computer with an internet connection and proceed to the online Writing Assessment URL www.muswa.com. Select the Teacher button and click on **Start**. This will take you to a login page. Select your school from the drop-down list, type in the school pass code that has been supplied to you, and click on the **Login** button. This will bring up an online **Teacher Header** form that you must fill out completely. Submitting this information serves to register your class with the online software. You may upload a **plain text** file containing your student's names (Last, First, MI) either on the Teacher Header form by going to the URL www.muswa.com/uploadlist.html OR students may type in their names individually when they login (below). The final online page will provide you with a unique six digit **Class Code** that your students will need for their online login process. **Copy and save the code number!**

Instructions for Student Login and Information Sections

We suggest that you begin with the students at their computer stations and an internet browser program opened. Careful monitoring is required. Read instructions aloud to students **exactly as they appear in the boxes below** (substituting your unique six-digit **Class Code** for the **123456** number). Begin by saying:

This test is designed to learn how well high school students are prepared for the kind of writing often required in college. Your score will be reported to your high school and to the Montana University System to determine if you are prepared to enter a college-level composition course.

In your internet browser, proceed to the testing site URL www.muswa.com. On the website, select the Student Task and click on the Start button. On the login page, first select our school and then select this class from the Teacher/Period drop-down list. Finally, enter **123456 for the class code and click on the Login button. Is everyone logged into the site?**

Make sure each student has successfully logged into the online testing site. Say:

Now, you will provide some information about yourself. If you uploaded student names, say: Select your name from the drop-down box. If not, say: Enter your last name, given first name, (example: Donald, not Don) and middle initial.

(The Student ID number is not required, but is designed for OPI's Unique Student Identifier or for district Student ID numbers to help sort electronic reports.) You may say one of the following: 1) **Ignore Student ID**; or 2) **Enter your "district" Student ID number**; or 3) **Enter your OPI Student ID Number**.

Click on your date of birth, grade, gender, and racial/ethnic group. Read the questions and answer as accurately as you can. When done, click on the 'Submit Student Info' button. On the next page, if you need to correct any of your information, click on the 'Update Student Information' link at the top of the page. Finally, read the online Student Directions page that comes up, but stop there for now. (Pause) Any questions?

Make sure each student has successfully completed the Student Information form and recorded his/her Session ID number. Wait while students read the final set of instructions.

(If a student forgets to record the Session ID number, you may access this information by going to <https://www.muswa.com/teacher.html> and selecting the first option "student information." You will need your class code to access this information. This screen will show all students registered under this class code along with the individual Session ID's.)

Distributing Prompts

You should have a double-sided **Student Directions and Writing Prompts** page for every student in your class. There are three different forms of this sheet (**Set One** for Day One or Morning, **Set Two** for

Day Two or Afternoon, and **Make-Up**), each with a choice of two prompts. Count these pages and hand them out, ensuring that the “Student Directions” side faces up and students are reading it until you tell them to begin. After testing, these prompt pages will be collected. If you are testing more than one class, ask students not to write on the prompt sheets, since you will need to distribute them again to another class period. Also, PLEASE make certain every student has a blank sheet of paper for pre-writing.

Instructions for Administration of the Online Writing Sample

Point out the Student Directions for Online Essays on the two-sided Directions/Prompts, reading portions aloud if you think necessary. Then say:

Please read the “General Directions” explaining how your writing will be scored. You may refer to these criteria (focus, organize, etc.) as you write. (Pause)

On the back of the Student Directions page, you will find “prompts” about two hypothetical situations. You should write about the ONE that interests you more. You will have 40 minutes to plan and write your essay.

Now, turn the *Directions* over, read the two prompts, choose one of them, and begin by planning your essay on scratch paper. Do not write on the *Directions/Prompt* sheet. I will announce when ten minutes remain.

Then say *something like this*:

Click on “Online Essay Form.” You are now on the page where you will use a pull-down menu to indicate which prompt you selected, paste your essay into a text box, and eventually submit it. Open Microsoft Word and type your essay.

Walk quietly around the room during testing to ensure examinees are working independently and are not exploring the Internet. When exactly 10 minutes of the test period remain, say:

You now have 10 minutes remaining. Conclude your thoughts and proofread your essay. Once you are finished, cut and paste the text of your essay into the online essay box. You may need to TAB again to keep paragraph indentations intact. Then, “submit” your essay by clicking on the submit button. If you are certain you are completely finished, click OK to confirm.

To ensure that all students submitted their essays please go to the following website: <https://www.muswa.com/teacher.html> and select the first option “student information.” You will need your class code for each period that you have registered. Once you have entered the information you will see the following screen:

MUSWA - Class Student Information

For teacher Pierce, Mechelle M 4th period class (code = 849125) at APMS Test, there are 6 total registered students; 2 with submitted essays and 4 without. The table(s) below give the student information. All times in the table(s) below are given in PST.

Students With Submitted Essays

Name	Registered	SessionID	Submit Essay Date	BatchFile	Upload Date
Doe, Jane	11:18 AM, 03 Jan	987636	11:19 AM, 03 Jan		
Jones, John	08:51 AM, 21 Dec	317591	08:52 AM, 21 Dec	essay_batch00001	11:15 AM, 21 Dec

Students Registered Without Submitted Essays

Name	Registered	SessionID	Start Essay Date
Duck, Daffy	11:25 AM, 03 Jan	907361	
Jackson, Mike	11:24 AM, 03 Jan	667937	
Mouse, Mickey	08:49 AM, 21 Dec	849125	08:50 AM, 21 Dec
Smith, John	11:20 AM, 03 Jan	160134	11:20 AM, 03 Jan

The first 2 students registered but did not start their essay. The last 2 students started their essay but did not submit.

The example displays all information about this class including:

- The total number of registered students (in this case, 6 students);
- The total number of students that have submitted an essay (in this case, 2 students);
- The total number of student that have not submitted an essay (in this case, 4 students);
- Session ID numbers for each student.

Please carefully review the names under “Students Registered Without Submitted Essays.” If their essays have not been submitted, these students will not receive a score. Students without submitted essays must log back in using the Session ID number and resubmit essays as described above.

Instructions for Collecting, Destroying and Returning Test Materials

Collect the ***Student Directions/Prompts*** sheet from each student. Before you dismiss examinees, count **Directions/Prompts** sheets to verify that you have the same number you passed out. After materials have been collected and accounted for, dismiss the examinees.

You may use these ***Directions/Prompts*** sheets again with another class. Please store in a secure location until you can **shred and/or dispose of the prompt pages so they cannot be retrieved, maintaining prompt security.**

Please go to website (<http://mus.montana.edu/writingproficiency/index.htm>) to download and complete teacher questionnaires or use the enclosed questionnaire, which you may bring to training/scoring sessions or mail to:

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