

# Preparing for the WritePlacer®

Testing Information and Strategies from the Iowa Central Reading and Writing Center

## About the Test

The ACCUPLACER® WritePlacer® exam measures the student's ability to effectively communicate in an organized, supported essay to readers on a provided subject.

1. You have 60 minutes to complete the test once the screen with the test question opens.
2. When ten minutes are remaining, a countdown clock will appear on the screen.
3. A word count is available on the screen at all times. When finished, your essay should be 300-600 words.
4. Your response will be graded on the following writing skills:
  - a. Purpose and Focus – The extent to which the writer presents information in a unified and coherent manner, clearly addressing the issue.
  - b. Organization and Structure - The extent to which the writer orders and connects ideas.
  - c. Development and Support - The extent to which the writer develops and supports ideas.
  - d. Sentence Variety and Style - The extent to which the writer crafts sentences and paragraphs demonstrating control of vocabulary, voice, and structure.
  - e. Mechanical Conventions - The extent to which the writer expresses ideas using Standard English.
  - f. Critical Thinking – The extent to which the writer communicates a point of view and demonstrates reasoned relationships among ideas.
5. The essay will receive a score of 0-8 based on the above criteria. A score of 0-2 will place a student in Basic Writing, a score of 3-4 will place a student in Elements of Writing, and a score of 5 and higher will place a student in Composition I.
  - o Students earning a 4 on the WritePlacer® and a 66 or above on the ACCUPLACER® Reading Comprehension exam will also place into Comp I.
6. You CANNOT fail the test. The exam assesses your writing skills and will place you in the class in which you are most likely to be successful. You may retake the test in the future if you feel your score does not accurately reflect your skill level (testing fees may apply).



**IOWA CENTRAL  
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All testing info (times, contact information, placement chart, etc.) may be found here: <http://www.iowacentral.edu/ARC/testing.asp>

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## **Steps for Writing a Timed Essay**

**Note:** While these suggestions should help you craft a stronger response, they do not guarantee placement in any particular class.

- 1. Read the test question and the given quote very carefully.** Throughout the test, re-read the question and quote as many times as you need to make sure you are responding appropriately.
- 2. Your goal is to thoughtfully answer the question in 300-600 words.** Remember there is no right or wrong answer to the question. The test is concerned with your writing skills, not your position on the issue. However, make sure to choose a side, as not adequately answering the question will negatively impact your score.
- 3. Before you start typing your response, do some pre-writing** to help you create a more focused and well organized response.
  - On a piece of scratch paper, take **five to ten minutes** to brainstorm how you'll answer the question. Consider creating an outline or concept map to explore your ideas.
  - **Decide what your opinion is on the issue being asked about.** Write this out in a complete sentence that can serve as the foundation for your thesis statement.
  - **Consider using words from the question and/or the given quote** (or synonyms for those words) in the thesis statement to make sure you are adequately addressing what is being asked.
  - Come up with at least **three solid examples** to help illustrate your view. How can you justify/prove your opinion? What shows your opinion on the issue has merit and is worth considering? Try to preview these three examples in your thesis statement to set up the rest of the essay and make it more organized and coherent.
- 4. Start typing your response.** Give yourself **30-40 minutes** to do this. The response should have a brief introduction paragraph setting up the issue and ending with your thesis statement, multiple body paragraphs supporting your overall view using examples, and a conclusion paragraph that reiterates your main point.
- 5. Other tips:**
  - Hit ENTER twice to insert a line of blank space between each paragraph.
  - Do NOT indent paragraphs.
  - Write in complete sentences.
  - Try to vary your sentence style and length.
  - Use transitional words and phrases to connect ideas.
- 6. After writing the essay, take another five to ten minutes to re-read** it to make sure you have
  - a. completely answered the question
  - b. included a strong thesis statement that sets up your support
  - c. organized the response in several paragraphs
  - d. shared and explored solid examples to support your view
  - e. connected ideas with transitional words and phrases
  - f. avoided mistakes with grammar, punctuation, and mechanics

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